L.I.S.A

Nicholas Nicola

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Acknowledgements

Remarks on the publication

Firstly, the author wishes to acknowledge that along with this traditional hard copy version of L.I.S.A there is a lengthier experimental format of it which can be found on the following website:

http://nicholasnicolaetchings.synthasite.com/

(*Please refer to the Writing section which means scrolling down towards the bottom of the website's sidebar).*

Due to publication restrictions what has been excluded is a large part of the Appendix which in full runs to approximately an extra hundred and twenty odd pages; as well as a few experimental visual pieces that were originally placed in the main text but which are not overtly essential to a basic understanding of the overall narrative; this situation is akin to a computer disc which includes the extra scenes and other background material of a film one has seen at the cinema. (The far more detailed – one may say 'meandering' - online version of the novel can be viewed as The Directors Cut'). Otherwise for continuity purposes there have only been a few changes to the formatting of the main text as well as minor variations to the wording. (It should be noted that it is possible to 'play' with the novel as it is in 'chapters fragments' so as to express reality in a multi-faceted fashion; much like a Cubist painting). For the reader who is interested in the experimental online version he or she can liberally download it as a pdf file; otherwise the reader maybe interested to simply peruse 'onscreen' the Appendix or just look at highlights for - as the writer - it has been a very difficult decision to edit many sections out; but it has been an essential task for the literary purposes of this present work. In the online Appendix the reader can review more philosophical insights of most of the central characters; a few of which have been repeated or further expanded from the main narrative; one observation has been extracted for the Notes: the Myth of Er while at the end of this publication - in a final section entitled 'CAT' - there are further 'commentaries' selected from the Appendix.

Small type

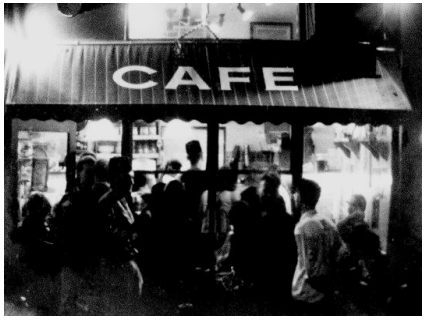
In the chapter *The Invasion of the Mind Snatchers* - which is in the third part of the novel entitled Eternity - there is one example of a small font word 'visual piece.' It involves lists of movies, movie actors and television programs. All of these paragraphs are not meant to be read as such but rather 'scanned' with the eye in much the same way one may scan an image. I should also note that another obvious visual piece in this publication is the pattern of rows of circles and lines in **THE TRANSMISSION OF ETERNITY** & **THE TRANSMISSION OF DEATH**.

Thanks and dedication

I wish to express my deepest gratitude to Dr. Gerard Goggin for his professional encouragement.

A thank you also to Susana and Nada (also known as 'Susana') for one or two rather astute suggestions with the overall presentation of the novel.

This may also be an appropriate point to make mention of a dedication to the 'Black Fez': along with my good friends Doug (Mr. 'Black Fez' himself as he wore one) and 'D Fenwick', for many years we would organise these rather casual 'amateur' poetry evenings in cafes or houses on about three - sometimes four - Sunday nights per year. They were the Nights of the Black Fez whereby people would read out their own work or the work of their favourite writer; or even play a musical instrument or even describe an artistic piece etc, the forum was all very open and they were always enjoyable, inspirational evenings.



Black Fez Poetry Evening. Curiosity Cafe. Balmain circa early 1990s.

Research

In order to belatedly stave off any criticism of 'intellectual plagiarism' I wish to state that a fair amount of literature was referred too during the writing process. An exhaustive academic research list - of both literature and poetry - can be found at the end of the online version. I admit I have been unable to keep tabs on every source (the author is happy to have the reader make him aware of any overlooked source) and it should also be noted that many news and other information programs on Radio National and NewsRadio were also useful - Starstuff, Poetica, Late Night Live and Hindsight come to mind. Innumerable television documentaries, newspaper articles and websites covering anything from the nature of the universe to hotons to mythology to international politics to the likes of Captain Thunderbolt, Edward Muybridge, William Kentridge, Joseph Bueys and Marcel Duchamp and many others were also looked at. My nineteen-seventies version of Encyclopaedia Britannica as well as Encarta encyclopaedia on the internet were also very handy. I would also like to state that in regards to much of the classical mythology that is mentioned in the book some of the

explanations that Cat states or thinks are no more than mere paraphrases of already succinctly written descriptions. (Without exception all the literature here would be found in Cat's personal library – he could be nicknamed: 'Catipedia.'). There are also excerpts from popular culture mentioned by the characters which I usually acknowledge in the Notes at the end of the book. Two books which I wish to make special mention are Penelope Reed's *The Idea of the Labyrinth* and Florence & Kenneth Wood's *Homer's Secret Illiad*.

Further comments

Although this literary work is an act of the human imagination in some regards I consider it to loosely be a 'historical novel.' (Although I refer to events and places that occurred and existed from the early 1980s to 2000s as happening in only a time span of a few years. I think of Joseph Heller's remark at the beginning of Catch 22 where he cites that although his novel occurs on the Mediterranean island of Pianosa it is obvious that it could not accommodate everything that happened on it. In much the same way the events in my work are far more expansive than the small 'historical island' in which it is claimed that they occurred). However, in no way can this piece of literature be considered 'autobiographical.' Although some scenes that have been written use real events as a 'springboard' the overall structure of the book is purely a product of my mind. (However, the writer does attest that the miracle of the backgammon piece did occur in a café at Darlinghurst (which an old friend - Kristina - who I was with can verify) and a bird once did fly out from underneath the author's jacket at the Bar Italia in Leichhardt where I was with another group of friends for lunch; also a bunch of dry flowers did once waft down from a high rise building of units in Ultimo to land at the author's feet – which curiously occurred after seeing a Tibetan sand mandala ritual at the Powerhouse Museum. There is also a space apparatus called L.I.S.A. in deep space). That also goes with the characters. However, I wish to acknowledge that Michael's uncle ('Zeus')is based on my father & that the aunt with MS is based on my mother.

I did have an acquaintance who did tragically die of A.I.D.S but in *no way* did she resemble Lisa. (In *all ways* she was the anti-thesis of a character like Lisa). The only two common features is (1) she passed away on William Blake's birthday – 28 November and her funeral was on December 1 – World Aids Day and (2) is that I did once show her an Aboriginal batik from Central Australia in hospital as she had cruelly lost the ability to use her drawing hand. (From memory I believe she had been a fashion design student). At her funeral I was awestruck when the minister displayed a cloth piece with a design on it which she had apparently attempted to bravely do while gravely ill. It was at this moment that the germination for this book occurred.

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Nicholas Nicola

'Director's Cut.' February. 2008.

NOTE TO READER: **ON SMALL TYPE SECTIONS.**

There are several 'visual pieces' in the novel's main narrative as well as in the appendix; which are *not necessarily meant to be read but simply 'scanned'*; rather than seeking specific information the reader may approach these 'communications' perhaps on a more abstract, 'non-objective' conceptual level; these segments especially include the TV section in between the bordering asterix lines in *Performance Space*; **MIND TRANSMISSION** in *Human Perception*; the long PLEISTOCENE PERIOD section in *Mind Negatives;* the mental frames in *MIND CHANNEL WHIRL;* **TRANSMISSION OF ETERNITY & TRANSMISSION OF DEATH** after *Lake George;* the paragraphs in *The Invasion of the Mind Snatchers* and *Troy* which has television shows, movies and actors lists; *Oracle Night* with its literature list of books and authors and perhaps even some of the small type paragraphs in a host of chapters throughout the novel; the excerpts in *Human Perception, Vanitas, Video Mind & A Burning Mind* comes to mind. Only the most curious of readers may choose to further 'investigate' all of the above-mentioned pieces. (It would be advisable to use a considerably powerful magnifying glass).

It should also be noted that there are also many small type footnotes placed at the end of the novel and after each main appendix segment.

I wish to also say that although I do mention the following point in the ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS at the end of the book I also say it in this note: although references to real events & places etcetera occur in the text it should be made very clear that this novel is a *wholly manipulated product of my imagination* and absolutely everything within it or any person should definitely not be seen to be corresponding to any situation or anyone as 'real'. Thank you.

Frontispiece Illustration: '*The Road to Mullumbimby*.' Etching. B & W. Original size: 8" X 6". By Nicholas Nicola.

'Character is Destiny'

- **Heraclitus**

Ah! Sun-flower! weary of time
Who countest the steps of the Sun;
Seeking after that sweetgolden clime
Where the traveller's journey is done,

Where the Youth pined away with desire,
And the pale Virgin shrouded in snow;
Arise from their graves and aspire
Where my Sunflower wishes to go

- William Blake

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Prologue

- Pages 10 to 20 -

NIGHT

The Heart of the Beast

- Pages 21 to 111 -

DAY

Sanctuary of the Subconscious

- Pages 112 to 211 -

ETERNITY

The Motion of the Stars

- Pages 212 to 309 –

***Notes** – 311 to 336*

***Full APPENDIX** – 337 to 463*

Prologue

(Somewhere on the North Coast of New South Wales)

Michael

The eyes are no longer hazel (but half green half blue...) viewing the flat, blue sky… (to be physically changed…).

Creation

The pencil in the right hand touches the white empty space of the smooth page resting on both knees. On the left can be seen a shaded area of underbrush divided by a narrow hedge running straight down one side of the hill; diagonal strokes crosshatching across the page, heading towards the shadows coming from the houses; that are stretching across the road in the afternoon sun.

Athena & Zeus

A white Laser pulls up

The young female driver points her arm out like a lancer and asks in her heavy American drawl if a chemist is nearby, (she is difficult to see due to the blinding rays of the sun)

what
are you
drawing?
the stone
orchards
on the hill?
she is smiling
at her older male friend
I've given
...she's snaking her fingers through his hair...
this supreme god
a
splitting
head
ache
Oh Tin...*he grins*
she glances back…
...you're only
a visitor
(as
well)
to

this
paradise?
Okay,
Okay...we have
to go
back
to the
coast?
I believe you...too bad
I left my olive branch in
L.
A.....*she laughs*
pulls a face
like an owl
as she thunders off

Brown Eyes

Eyes return to hazel. Closing the pad. (To think towards the past…)

The Setting Sun

Walking over to see the orange sunlight on the window panes, opening the warm door...there's a cool breeze coming by the back porch...some of the dry leaves in the baskets hanging from the rafters along the ceiling are swaying...eyes absorbing the brown hues of the interior of this weatherboard...the wood ochre panels glisten with the warm streams of light which filter in from the setting sun...there is peace in this sanctuary and the only sound that can be heard are the birds twittering from the row of eucalyptus trees which run along the bottom of the slope in the backyard. The sketchpad is placed on the long kitchen counter beside the front door.

Margaret

A woman in her fifties is taking a tray of white-cross buns out of the oven.

A Labyrinth Meditation

'Look at this furnace...this hot place which can burn flesh...from this inferno is produced this substance which helps sustain human breath...'
A bun is picked up. *'Where now is death?'* Chewed. *'Yet at the mouth of hell – it is said - is the moment just passed which cannot be regained forever…'*
Morsels. Swallowed.
'...to live with regrets for a life-time...unless these errors shorten a life-span...unless much is learnt from such mistakes...to desire…from life...a second chance...'

A Premonition

The right index finger feels down the vertical line of a cross. *'This is the moment made still - here in the centre - where the unseen touches humanity's horizon is silence...from this sacred ground can sometimes be observed the vast busy orbits of time which circle this position...Time returns and returns....maybe then it would be possible to hold off time...from the precipice of time...for a spare moment...for a little time...make the second time different...or the third - perhaps...unless there is no chance...how unfair...no redemption...(perhaps)...why this feeling of awakening from a long sleep...to have stumbled out from the vast darkness of an immensely deep forest?…into fields of light and the present...before memory...after vision...to feel as if winter has been upon the soul...to feel the seasons within the minds of other people...why this crucifix on this life giving bread?…has time stopped for someone else?'*

The Relativity of Time

"Bit early in the year for them isn't it?" muses Michael.

"Hello..." Margaret glances up while wiping her sweating forehead with a tea towel. "Do you have the time?" she inquires.

"Its nearly six."

"Ta...the clock on the stove's stopped. Makes me feel as if I've stopped." Margaret rests her large frame against the kitchen counter. "While the world keeps ticking on around me..."

Michael walks over to the kitchen table and picks up a round alfoil plate that Margaret uses for her baking. Its centre is placed on the tip of the index finger then spun.

Atlas

The hot sun's reflection whirrs across the eyes. Michael cannot be seen.

"Time's for mortals."

...the voice seems very far away...

"Marg…"

...but clear…

"…like I...want to...say you're...more like...my still...finger that's...keeping up...this whirling...plate."

...the weight of the world is upon my shoulders...

The plate is spun faster...it is stopped...then spun the other way.

...to feel like a roo in front of a pair of headlights...this light casts a shadow onto the mind: the doctor shines a micro light into bruised eyes. "Bugger if I know why you stayed with him."

Margaret slightly shifts her weight against the kitchen counter.

Hades

'...the body vibrates like a tuning fork...howling like an animal...with every blow the world blurs...everything around breaks up into different angles...different fragments...the room dissolves...memories dissolve...there were happier times which hopefully will return...some new vision tries to form but does not come together...opposite energies of life inside the body press against each other...

bracing...

to withstand

this catastrophe...the primitive sound which is a female voice releases the essence of life...the vibrations explode and suddenly burst like the hot blasts of solar rays for the body is tight...no life dynamic works from within to transform this harrowing emotional energy towards some new transfiguration. There is only this brutish humiliation...there is only stone...forming within, hitting the soul...the screaming is reaching an unearthly crescendo which almost reaches silence...a shudder...Hades suddenly lies deceased upon the shattered lying body...this dead thing...(this wretched supernova)...must be moved away...in contrast ferocious living energies still violently spiral within...the body shudders again...to still be alive...but it could die...deep within it there is still some beast...a snake...biting the soul...to scream...to quiver...the feet quickstep at the perspired air...the world remains jagged...clapping outstretched hands onto the lino...the stony thing slides down the heaving chest...the night becomes cold...to be surrounded by a sense of nothing...sleep will not give me rest...or escape...to sing a lament...

to...

ascend...

from this underworld...(...there is trial and there is error...which leads the soul to follow paths spanning earth to heaven...renewed mysteriously from new wisdom stemming from old tragedy...until guided by some universal motion to some right way...)...the light...there is this flickering light which is also probing the darkest passageway of this ageing memory...there must still be hope...so could it - like that ancient star above that dingy town - be the premonition to some other paradise?'

Michael looks up. "Margaret - are you okay? You look like you've seen a-"

"A dead man...the light is blinding me. Put that silver circle down. Please!"

"Sorry Margaret! I didn't realise...are they for the cake shop?"

A Goddess as Stranger

Athena was crying. I went up to her table in the cafeteria and placed my hands on her shoulders. Athena was very grateful…everyone else that was there was ignoring this migrant woman or casting a sideway glance. I asked her what was the matter and she pointed to her meal: a couple of thin pancakes with strawberry jam. A cup of tea.

Athena thought she had ordered potato pie with a serving of vegetables. She had guessed wrongly with the menu. Athena felt humiliated.

"I'm…very hungry…"

"Eat luv…eat this! Do you want me to order the pie?"

"I don't…have much money."

"Don't worry about that! What's your name? Athena…mine's Marg…don't worry…"

I drove Athena home after we'd finished our shopping to save her the trouble of dealing with the bus. That lunch had been a horrendous moment for Athena…looking at that paltry food while everyone around her was eating full meals. We met occasionally at Roselands Shopping Mall back in the days when it still had the Raindrop Fountain. I would drive Athena home and in return she would give me a tin of cakes, pastries or biscuits she had made up especially for me in the morning. These delicacies were really delicious with their pretty patterns and sesame seeds; eventually I asked Athena for a few recipes. I met Athena's husband once. Looked a lot older than Athena…with a little effort he would eventually crack a smile…but seemed the secretive type…a bricklayer…he had very worn hard hands…found out he tended olive trees in the old country. Athena's English eventually improved and there came the day we could laugh about that tragic moment which had brought about our friendship. It's a long time ago now…more than twenty-five years…it's a pity we lost contact…a real pity…it was Athena who taught me that song I sang…

A Goddess as Friend

"I had sung it to my family and friends before coming out to Australia. As a way to be remembered. I still picture them in my mind when they also sang to me. It is this way if we ever lose touch you will always see me."

Prometheus

"They're not meant to be hot cross buns. The design is meant to be a fertility symbol showed to me by a migrant woman I once knew…but it just didn't come out the right way this time…you can have one."

"What nationality was she?"

"Greek..."

"Greek!"

"Yes! Have a bun!"

"Thanks, and are they-"

"Yes, yes! They are for the cake shop! Have to earn some extra money somehow!"

"Marg...I'll get off your back!"

Michael walks over to the living room area beside the kitchen and sits on a lounge; he bites into his bun.

"Do you want a cuppa?" asks Margaret who is wiping droplets of sweat from the ends of her spiked hair.
"Yes please. Black. Two sugars."
The buns are placed into a cake tin.
"Will the others be coming home soon?"
"I don't know. They've gone to have some fish and chips on the beach."
Michael turns on the television.

"The bushfires have left in their wake hundreds of families to pick up the pieces of their shattered lives."

A close-pan shot of a family in front of a burnt-out ruin. Nevertheless, it is the female interviewer off camera who is the first to speak.

"So both families were not insured?"
"No...I was but my brother and his wife..." the man's voice tapers off.
"We were told three months ago there was going to be some back burning. Not to worry they bloody well said!" exclaims the second brother. This man looks both weary and distressed "...we've got nothing, absolutely nothing..."

The camera scans the two families and focuses on the first brother who has bandages around his midriff. It is possible to notice a tattoo of an eagle on this man's exposed torso.

Pandora's Jar

The camera then slowly zooms in on the second brother's wife who is holding a near empty jar of Mudgee Honey.

"I was doing the kids' sandwiches when the firestorm started heading towards our farm. I was holding this jar when we had to run for it and I'm still bloody holding it. I don't know why..."The woman becomes tearful. "…but I vaguely remember as a kid hearing a story about a woman with a jar..." The woman's voice is muffled for she has begun to whimper."...she let loose...the troubles of the world." The woman is now openly crying. "…but there was one thing left in this jar...and ...and it's the same thing our family has...has got left...which is hope."

The camera focuses on the woman's hands tightening her grip.

Pillar of the Family

Wheels slowly rattle over the wooden planks of the driveway. This loud noise is accompanied by the hum of a car engine.
"They're back." Margaret opens a door on one side of the living room. She walks onto the carport.
The headlights of a rusting white Valiant station wagon stretch the woman's shadow over the fibro placed against the house along the back of the car

porch. This solid shade overlaps and deepens the shadows of the cans and boxes scattered up and down the set of wooden shelves that are attached to the white fibro wall.

Her body looks large and strong.

The still figure half in light; half in darkness: emphasises Margaret's grand stature.

"Sometimes I think I get in the way of the others," confides Margaret to Michael earlier in the day.

"Na, na," replies Michael. "I know for sure that Jason thinks you're the main pillar around this place. Occasionally he gets a bit irritated with all your nagging - I mean Margaret, you are a bloody nagger. You've just had a go at me for sleeping in!" exclaims Michael. "Yet deep down Jason's glad you are here as a bit of older wisdom to lean on. Your daughter thinks the same."

Pearl

"Maybe you're right. I don't know..." Margaret is silent; she thinks of the past.

...to wander the streets...

"Hello Marg."

"Hello Pearl..."

"What are you doing?"

...looking for a friend...

"Oh...going down to the second-hand place. I'm searching for an old chair. Then maybe go to the library. I like poetry..."

"Good for you! The only thing I get a chance to read is the Woman's Day! Goodbye Marg."

"Bye...call by some time..."

Pearl yawns (then smiles) "I'm so busy...there's already so many people on 'my catch up list'. You're not to know but I work late most nights...while in the day I have to get my beauty sleep...as it is I've just popped out to do my shopping."

Margaret stands her ground and watches the strutting movement of the other woman; she shrugs her shoulders and then ambles down the same road.

...might as well - in this wilderness - be looking for the wind...(it was never found either...however, the wind could find whoever, it was banging on the window...the whole of that night). There is weeping with the walking.

"Be still! Be still!...I am still lonely.

"Very lonely..."

A Carnival

'I knocked on your door', says the note from Athena, '...for a long time...but you were not at home...it has been a long while since we last saw each other...I wanted to invite you to come with my family to the Carnival...what has happened to your phone?'

'...the phone has been off the hook,' (considers Margaret), '...I could weep...no answer...I am late...too late...I found your note I will say...oh yes, its a shame I missed you I will say, I had a busy day I will say, it would be fun to ride on the big turning wheel I will say...oh yes, its so slow we could be on it for a long time...it would feel like a lifetime...I walk pass the turning clown heads...the twirling flames of the jugglers...the minstrel buskers, the dwarfs...pass the laughter, masks and other disguises of other performers who clutter the walk ways of the crowded fair...there are walking skeletons underneath the full moon...I walk beside them for this is how I feel...like the living dead...a mist surrounds me...surrounds my thoughts...I cannot find Athena...I could cry...out here under the night sky I feel the cold air...it is unusually cold...a sad dark cold...I walk aimlessly...following no path...feeling disturbed...I come to the hall of mirrors...I am made thin...I am made tall...I am made fat...I am made short...now my curving face covers my entire vision...this distorted world distorts me...yet I am really the same...'
"I've always stood on my own two feet!" suddenly remonstrates Margaret to Michael.

Some Sunny Day

('You never found me...and now...with the passing of the years...I have lost touch with you...' ponders Athena).
Margaret whispers: "Forever..."
("I have left..." says Athena, "...for good...")
Margaret sighs...'though not for the good. Yet we are not yet dead (-or are we?). For the moment that just passes does leave us for eternity. (I will not whisper again the word I dread). For though our lives which pass us by can leave us with a sense of waste, while we live there is still (...a stillness...)...a chance...we may..."Meet Again...6.00 P. M. - LIGHTS OFF. Silence. Age will not weary them...(...as it wearies me...) With the going down of the sun we...remember...them...(as I remember you).
Lest We Forget...LIGHTS ON. Loud noises of money machines resume "...Some Sunny Day..."
"You like that song Marg?"
"Hello. Again..."
"I saw you here before - been trying your luck on the pokies for awhile?"
"I seemed to...these days...Pearl...you never know what fate may spin my way..."
"Won anything?"
"A little...I've had a couple of lucky spins...still looking for the big one."
"Half your luck...- still living in that house?"
"I still have six weeks...on the lease. Then I head north. To my daughter's..."

Flipper

Margaret unconsciously rubs her shoulder; slow strokes of the arm down to the elbow.

'...he would get so frustrated...prodding me to near hysteria after nearly every race...there was the time he literally shoved three of his fingers into my back!...he thought those horses would fly to the finishing post! I wish they had! I wish they'd even been bloody unicorns! He was so sure they would win...but they bloody didn't...Always so drunk...drinking like a fish...his mates nicknaming him Flipper...the way he would always impishly snigger whenever he was pissed...those other women...that one bloody bitch in particular...just to look at her would turn my heart to stone...a real snake in the grass...huh...I wouldn't have been surprised if a thousand snakes had come out of her head…'

"What are you thinking?"

"Nothing really." Margaret looks directly at Michael. "To tell you the truth: I had nowhere to go after the old man died. After so many years you'd think we would have owned a mansion - like you Greeks - he never wanted to put any money into a permanent home...always for the horses and his drinking...I used to have some bruises."

"You should have left him."

"Wherever we lived it was also my home…

'...I wanted to get away from him but be near him...I was...confused. I was displaced...It was such a relief when he was gone...I never realised till then how much I felt more alone with him than without him...Hopefully...here - at my daughter's home - I have found my destiny; I can resume the rhythm of the seasons...of family life...of love...to have that sense of belonging...yes, to belong...'

...No, he had to be the one that had to leave - not me."

"You should have kicked him out!" I don't understand you Marg."

'You're right Michael I should've but it was exhausting enough keeping a grip on myself and the children. I couldn't afford to waste any spare moments that I had on worrying about him. When the children had grown up and gone I was too worn down by then. A person can become too tired to do the right thing. The washing machine's stopped."

"Guess I should hang it up and then go walkabout."

"Guess you should so I can get on with some more work."

Jason & Madeleine

Margaret does not budge from where she stands. When the Valiant comes to a standstill the end of her dress flutters along the bumper bar.

The headlights go out.

The two front car doors swing open.

Jason goes over to Margaret and gives her a big hug. "Hello Marg!" Jason licks her cheek.

"Get away from me!" laughs Margaret as she pushes the bulky torso away from her.

Madeleine opens the rear door behind her and takes out her eighteen-month-old daughter from the baby seat.

"You two boys undo your seatbelts." Madeleine's twin sons then open the car door on their side and run up to their grandmother. "We want ice cream!"

"You two are as bad as your father! Michael's bought a chocolate mousse cake so maybe we can have that later!"

"Leave your grandmother alone and get into your pyjamas. Plus No T.V.!"

"Oh mum!" complain the twins.

"You watched too much television last night! You need your energy for the big billy cart race coming up! I'll read to you a couple of stories in your room instead."

Vicky

Michael sits back down in front of the television. "Did you have a good day?" he asks Jason.

"Only when I got home to go to the beach. At work I had to cart a drowned woman to the hospital morgue. *Vicky* was her name…the lifesavers couldn't get to her in time. Her friend who raised the alarm said she was all panicky and flapping her arms as a back-rip towed her out to sea. She reckons Vicky's eyes were so wide with fear she could see the whole ocean inside her pupils."

Michael rubs his temple. "That's like how I once read how the whole universe can not only be in your mind but *is* your mind..."

The silence that befalls the room is interrupted only by the clinking of plates as Margaret places them on the kitchen bench.

"How about you?" inquires Jason. "What you get up to?"

"Just before I did a drawing of the hill. That was after just missing you. In the morning I went to Mullumbimby and drew from a spot not far from the turnoff."

The Tasmanian

The young driver in the minivan is tired and unshaven. "I've been travelling in this car from Tasmania. It's taken me a few weeks to move up the coast."

"Where do you live?"

"I don't live anywhere. This car is my home."

Michael examines the confined space of the minivan and peers at the tossed clothes and mattress in the back. "Haven't seen one of these cars for years."

"Do you live around here?" asks the driver.

"No, I'm staying with friends. Not far from where you picked me up. I'm from Sydney."

"I stayed in Sydney for about a week. Didn't like it much."

"Where abouts did you stay?"

"One of those backpacker places up by the Cross."

"The Cross isn't the greatest Sydney spot to stop at." states Michael.

"Its all seedy around there...smells...I prefer the country anyway. I hear Mullumbimby's a pretty country town."
"It's nice...has an impressive row of trees down the main street…there's a good bookshop...not far to the turnoff now..."
"I'll take you right in if you like. I was thinking of stopping there for lunch anyway."
"Na...that's okay. I'm going to draw the mountain. Where are you heading to after Mullumbimby?"
"I'm just going north. Queensland. Probably get to the very top and just turn around."
"Why not..."
"Is this it?"
"Yeah turn here."

Mt. Chincogan

"Tell us where to stop...that's impressive...it really stands out above the tree line..."
"Yeah. It's magnificent. Drop us off here on top of the ridge."
"That door handle's a bit tricky. Yeah that's it. Bye."
"Have a good trip. Bye." Michael watches the tiny van continue its journey towards Mullumbimby before he crosses over to the other side of the road.

NIGHT

The Heart of the Beast

Lisa & Melissa

"So you've just come from Mullumbimby?" asks Lisa.
Michael nods. "I like the area."
"Melissa, Melissa..." Lisa holds both her daughter's arms as she stands in front of her. She gently twists Melissa's wrists, swaying her small hips; pulls Melissa's left hand now her right hand. The mother's faint smile gives way to an upturned bottom lip that blows low stop-start bass sounds towards her daughter.
Lisa's long auburn hair rests softly down the front of her thin near flat chest that flanks the small figure of Melissa.
Both mother and daughter sit comfortably on the lino kitchen floor of the small flatette.
"Does she like to dance?" asks Michael.
"Sure...we should put the radio on and have some music. You want to do that for me? It's on that shelf above the kitchen cupboard."
"I'll need a chair."
"Just take the books off that one at the other end of the room. Its the strongest one here."
The top book is examined.
"To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And Heaven in a Wild Flower…" [1]
Lisa smiles. "I'm reading Jerusalem."
"At least that's one thing we have in common: we both like to read Blake. In that little bookshop in King St. run by that guy with the ponytail I found a nice old Penguin copy of The Songs of Innocence and Experience. I would have liked to have shown it to you but I thought it was too risky to bring it along on this trip."
"I can return Glory Days to you. I loved it. Rosie Scott has a compassionate edge."
Lisa strokes Melissa's hair and thinks of a scene where Glory sits in the dark with her sleeping daughter Rina. Glory looks out a window and comprehends a limitless universe. For Lisa it was very reassuring to think of a Downes Syndrome child – just like her beautiful little one – at peace beside eternity.
"I knew you would relate to that book." Michael places the Blake with the other novels on the floor. He takes the sturdy wooden chair over to the kitchen cupboard and stands on it to reach the radio.
"Looks antique."
"Its an old AWA."
"My old man had one of these; I've got one in my car. That's how old it is."
"I know..." states Lisa.

"Oh yeah...so you do." Michael turns on the old radio and fiddles with the tuning knob.
"The reception's bad this time of day." apologises Lisa.
"Well your flat is in a bit of a trough even though it's the top end of the street."
"I have to go upstairs to watch television." Lisa tickles Melissa.
"Yeah..." Michael is still playing with the radio.
"I was going to buy a second hand TV but even a good one of those isn't that cheap for me. Blue said not to bother. Reckoned my reception would be scratchy anyway. Like the radio."
"Is that who lives upstairs?"
"Yep," replies Lisa. "He's an old guy - must be in his sixties. Spends a lot of time swimming by the lighthouse. Like he guards it."
"Do you watch much television?"
"Not really. Sometimes I just use it as an excuse for a chat. The woman who lives in the house next to us reckons I've been able to get Blue out of his shell a bit. He's got a few stories to tell - you know how old people are," surmises Lisa. "Blue fought in Greece and Crete during the war. He was even a P.O.W."
"Was he?" Michael is interested.
"Yeah he was - its about the only thing Blue's told me about of his war days...he doesn't talk much war stuff with me. You might stand a better chance seeing you're a *bloke*!"
"Maybe..." The radio comes to life.
"He even has that book you have: the Fall of Berlin." Lisa looks towards the radio. "Sounds like you're getting something now. I didn't think it would be this much of a hassle. I think you got the Koori station."
A crooning voice of a male who states he is singing for his brothers and sisters.
"Yeah," agrees Michael. "That sounds like Joe Gia. I once saw him play up at Max's at the Petersham Inn." A rueful look. "There's a sad strength in his voice."

"We've got some Warumpi Band songs to play next then followed by Letterstick."

"*White fella. Black fella*..." Michael sings along with the radio. "Join in!"
Lisa begins to sing as she stands Melissa up and jiggles her.
Michael claps. "Go Melissa! Love to get to a Stomping Ground concert in Broome and take you with me!"

(empty space)

The song ends.

"Melissa once met some Koori dancers in Glebe who taught her to dance real swell." Lisa hugs Melissa.

"You mean in the park alongside Bridge Road?" inquires Michael. "I was doing some casual work as a teachers aide last year with children just like Melissa. The dancers from that Aboriginal and Islander dancing hall across the road would come over at lunchtime to that park and eat near us. I thought that place was associated with the Eora Centre but that didn't seem to be the case. One day, I showed these kids how to do the Zorba; it was after their regular teacher had done some tap dancing with them. Anyhow, one of the women then came up and taught these kids this bird dance."

Michael clasps his palms together in front of him then stretches out his arms to imitate a bird in flight. "You should have seen these six little kiddies follow the big bird!"

"Karin was with us when we met them. We had a really nice day and later on we went to this pizza place on Glebe Point Road where they had this couple playing a slide guitar."

"Did you know she finally went overseas?"

"I hadn't realised she'd gone..."

"I got a letter from Karin just before I came up here. She's thinking of teaching in London. Says they're desperate for teachers to work in these horrific schools but when she saves enough English pounds she'll probably travel to West Africa. She says hello to you both."

"Hear that Melissa – Karin says hello!" Lisa gazes wide-eyed at Melissa whom Lisa continues to keep upright. "Say hello back from me and Melissa if you write."

"I'll send her address up to you when I get back to Sydney."

"That'll be real nice."

"Just to let you know I got K.D. Lang at a CD promotion in some big record shop in Pitt Street to autograph a photo of these kids. Rain Class. I'd put her music on every morning in the classroom, it's soothing."

"I've got *Ingenue*. We could listen to it later. Melissa likes her music as well especially the first song: Save Me." Lisa hums then sings: "*...sailing...* "

Melissa smiles.

An Empyrean of Colour

"While I'm standing up show me where the stuff is to make us a real coffee. Just like what you can get at this new Aboriginal café at the top of Eveleigh Street."

"The percolator is in the cupboard below the radio. The coffee should be beside it."

"Found it. That's what I call organised."

"The cups are in the other cupboard."

"What will Melissa have?"

"There's a jug of water in the fridge."

"That's what we should have in this heat."
"There's orange juice if you-"
"Na, na I'll have a coffee, might wake me up."
"You feeling sleepy?"
"Just this weather, "remarks Michael. "Walking to your place from the turn-off really tired me out."
Lisa with Melissa moves over from the small kitchen area to the centre of the flat so as to catch the slowly moving sunlight. "They say it's going to reach thirty degrees today. It's so sunny all the time now. A couple of months ago it didn't stop raining for nearly three weeks."
Michael lights one of the gas rings on top of the kitchen stove to heat up the metal percolator. He sits down by a small round light green table and looks over at the adjoining narrow living room with its pale yellow fibro walls. Viewing the old worn wooden cupboards in the kitchen with their glazed rippled coloured windows with little amber, blue and emerald green squares. The mid-afternoon sunlight angles through the stained glass windowpanes, which run along the top of the back wall of the living room lighting up the brightly coloured curtains with their striking blue, yellow and red hues. Crisp streaks of tainted sunlight flood into every part of both rooms. It feels like looking into a kaleidoscope, watching this melody of colours shift and change as the sun glides upwards across the sky.
Lisa is enjoying the warmth of the sunlight, closing her eyes and tilting her head towards the rays; her arms are stretched backwards onto the fraying green carpet floor. Melissa has cuddled herself up on Lisa's lap having also wrapped her arms around her mother's hips. The radio is now playing some local music as well as songs by Kev Carmody and Archie Roach.
A look at Lisa's paintings of Sydney on the walls of the living room; these inner-city scenes with their soft lucid tones and pale hues give these pictures a positive atmospheric quality. There is another work of a terrace house in Amsterdam. Michael studies its sombre brown colours and then remembers Lisa had told him her great-aunt had painted it. His eyes meander to two small works of Hyde Park where Lisa had accentuated the overlapping of the V patterns of the shadows and sunlight along the walkways. These playful images contrast sharply to the one painting Lisa has done of Darlinghurst with a dark grey drenched street leading back to the garish harsh lights of the Cross.
The paintings suit their homemade wooden frames.
It is realised this Darlinghurst scene is the last painting Lisa did before moving north.

Night

Someone's bright floral dress
the open petals of
roses
daffodils
consider the lilies in the fields.
The warm vivid colours stand out almost as if in defiance to the hard edge metallic hues of this city evening. From the furthest point in the corner of the eye it is like spotting
soft-edge paper cut outs
floating
slicing
in a
coldly
moving
collage of
bleak machine pieces
which are
all at strange angles
continually dissecting
each other.

The heart is tight
very tight
Automatically Closed.

Michael feels the warm light on his body and recalls the night he found Lisa walking down Oxford Street with Melissa still inside her and with a sort of tense daze like expression on her face.

The body is taut. Footsteps quick and short.

A hello but it is not really heard.

Stopping at the lights on the triangular island at Taylor Square.

Standing behind Lisa with her long hair spread out by a high wind Michael looks towards the park on their left. This small grass space is well defined by the lights that blaze down from the Kinselas nightclub and the Courthouse Hotel. There are many people going in and coming out from the restaurants and coffee shops that line Oxford Street. However, Michael senses the lights are dimmer and the sounds of this noisy thoroughfare only dissolve for in Lisa's world there is only an unearthly silence.

She turns around.

Smiles.

Yet her eyes are watery.

Together they cross over to the other side of the square.

"Lets stop off at the Judgement Bar." suggests Michael.

"Good idea." murmurs Lisa.

Michael and Lisa scurry up the staircase that take them to the second floor of the Courthouse Hotel. There is a seat in the corner where they can look out of a window and beyond the large awning see the busy sprawling night traffic of Taylor Square.

"What do you want?" asks Michael.

"Just a middy." replies Lisa as she furiously searches for her Havelock tobacco in her little handbag. "I shouldn't be smoking but a couple won't hurt…" she mutters.

"VB?"

"No…orange juice..." Lisa keeps her head down as she discovers her quarry.

Michael walks up to the bar and looks up at the television screen to see a replay of the Canterbury-Canberra semi-final. Terry Lamb is exhorting his men as they huddle under the posts after Canberra have scored a try to even the match score. The room is less crowded than usual. There are even a couple of other window seats still available. It is still too early in the evening for the Judgement Bar to be full; but the few people who are there, including a group of men having a dinner party just behind Michael, look up at the screen as the sport drama continues to unfurl.

Michael glances over to Lisa and sees she is staring out the window taking quick puffs of her cigarette. He decides to keep watching the match as Canterbury desperately hold off every attacking onslaught from Canberra in the dying minutes of the match. The Canterbury players are very tired but under Terry Lamb's determined leadership they continue their tight Herculean defence as the match goes into extra time.

There are a few more people in the bar - all the window seats are now taken - but despite the general hubbub of increasing conversation many people still watch the television. The bartender even chooses to put on the sound.

"Come on Canterbury," murmurs Michael, "fuck ya..." Sipping his beer he glances once more at Lisa who still stares out the window.

There is spontaneous applause and cheering when Canterbury's Darryl Halligan boots a field goal to win the match for Canterbury-Bankstown. A bald man standing beside Michael taps him on the shoulder. "Mate, its good to see Canberrra lose. Fancy being led by Meninga - a *black*-"

"Look mate..." Michael is unimpressed; then a sudden decision to let it go – there's Lisa to worry about and so a quick walk back over to her.

"Sorry for the wait. I got caught up with the footie."

"You've been missing out on the light show." states Lisa.

In front of the Supreme Court is a large crowd around five stilt walkers. Four of them are twirling firesticks that are lit on both ends. Another performer is steadily slapping two large bongo drums. The five stilt walkers are dressed in red and black outfits with large colourful feathers strutting out from skullcaps on their heads. The four fire twirlers in this troupe also wear white theatre masks. Two weep. Two laugh. A stagehand walks up to a woman on stilts whose face is uncovered and hands her a plastic container which she places to

her mouth. The woman on stilts suddenly spurts out from her mouth a long line of flame as she raises both her arms to the night sky.

The fire breather bellows more flames as the other stilt walkers race around this human dragon forming first a circle then a diamond then a square. These dancers suddenly swirl their firesticks to the ground then quickly lift them over their heads as the drums reach a higher crescendo.

The forming rings of fire that split then intertwine with each other are mesmerising.

"They look like preying mantises." whispers Lisa.

"Yeah..." mutters Michael.

"Lets go down and have a closer look." states Lisa. "We can always come back up here later. It's a good in between place."

Ignoring the Don't Walk Lisa and Michael saunter across Oxford Street during a break in the busy traffic. Lisa jerks towards the large crowd that has grown to such an extent it is now hovering along the very edge of the busy thoroughfare.

Lisa steps back

a car glides by

a protruding claw pinches.

"Ouch!" Lisa turns around and kicks the silver rear bumper bar just before the car whizzes towards Flinders Street. The car once more blares its horn. Lisa rubs the back of her left leg as she looks forlornly at the receding vehicle.

The next car also bips its horn at the standing figure.

"That felt like a viper bite!"

"Come on Lisa! You're too much of a bloody wildflower!"

The two new arrivals quickly shove their way into the deep human ring; they soon reach the fore of the crowd and watch the five figures of light stalk their ever shrinking performance space whirling twirling their lines of flame into the void.

A pair of large thin triangles side by side each other are passed up to two of the stilt walkers who place these frames in upright positions on a stage. This twin geometry is made from long thin sticks and underneath these towering triune skeletons are many rows of thin straight lines. A long flaming torch is used to light up line after line trinity by trinity of this

Asymmetry.

(This flickering inferno

The traffic slows down
of the night

once more
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Everyone is
hypnotised
c
r
o
s
s
The fiery spectre

floating

burning

(crucifi
e
s
Memory).

A stilt walker looks up at the starless black sky: “In the evening the outlines of many objects lose definition as they mingle with the enveloping darkness.” Other stilt walkers take it in turn to speak: “The Human Condition: we move, exist in the night and in such formlessness we float like the Russian Jew émigré’s painterly lovers.” [1]
Yes, we run on thin air.”
“The Human Imagination: before memory is expectation.”
Human Vision: this moment is the future realized.”
The flames rise higher.
Lisa stares.

Purgatory

Throwing a stone into the fishpond. Walking back inside the house. A car drives by. Silence. Watching television. Sleep. Hearing the cautious turning of a key. Footsteps in the spare room. Perhaps the morning will be full of promise. Yet in the morning this bedroom is empty. A religious show on the radio. A sunny day. Again. To go out into the sunlight. A walk to the nearby park. Three children wheeling themselves around on a merry-go-round. A merry-go-round whirrs inside the head. Quickly walking back to the house. Pacing the floor impatiently. Looking at the time impatiently. Nothing to do except wait. Boredom. Going to the backyard to throw yet another stone.

The Eternal Night

"Night again, always this 'eternal night'. The past submerges yet the surface ripples it leaves behind still weave with fate."

Lisa and Michael listen closely to this soft female voice that hovers over the crackling flames.

St. Lucy

"Michael what would some people call this wheel?" Lucy peers at the forming ring of beer bottles.

"Maybe…time…" I slur. It shall be a drunken discourse.

A smirk. "What about calling it fate…?"

"You could call it that too…calling…fate…that…too…"

"That was a good band…tonight…Living With Robert…" Lucy stands up; picks up a garden pitchfork and places it between her legs as she runs around the backyard. "CULTURE! It cultivates your mind! It'll pull you out of your ignorance! Your imagination can save you! Look at artists; scientists – they're prophets who always keep prodding nature to find bits of truth." The lawn is stabbed. "While we only prod empty beer bottles!"

"Yeah well it seems that nature and people and the gods are always changing what's real to suit themselves; while we do it to suit us."

"Sometimes the truth gets changed by new discoveries: like the stars with Copernicus or those little spirals which make up everyone's DNA."

Like some Massacio saint I squat on top of a small rock ledge and contemplate. "How's us stopping at that roundabout after crossing Cook's River? Standing in the middle wat- ching all those big cars go by with their headlights shining right at us! Like wild beasts! Then moving away from us at the last second while we stayed still on that damned, infernal knoll." I rub the sharp edge of a large plastic pot. "Yet we ought to move on a smooth circle; it's said the circle is the perfect shape which best represents all this eternity…" I look up at the night sky. "It's love which keeps the stars from drifting; that makes spring come after winter; we like to think that the same spring can happen in us. Time can trap us Lucy, and, on the opposite: the

wheel of fate always tries to curve us back into that old Greek cave, " I keep rubbing the rim but now I'm doing it a little more slowly, "while any divine circle draws us outwards to a rimless universe…what we call heaven."

"Look! A shooting star!"

"Where!"

"Fooled you!"

"You're a bitch!" I flick my rollie at Lucy.

"Is that it Mick? Is that the end of the sermon?"

"Yeah, yeah that's it but keep your voice down…we want to make sure no god inside wakes up in a bad mood."

"Keep quiet, move slow – what's it really matter Mick? When the matter is a person could go insane in this world…after all, the gods suppose they can do what they like with us don't they? Our god sleeping inside will wake up with the big god sun to see our little wheel and maybe get worked up anyway!"

"If he attacks you with the pitchfork I won't complain…" I yawn. "Anyway, it's true: the gods always have the right of way; we offer them our sacrifices just to keep the peace-"

Lucy waves the pitchfork. "I'll give any god who is cruel towards us the eternal sacrifice!" Lucy lights a candle; holds it to my weary face then draws it back towards her own; the flickering light on her hair is like a crown. "Bloody hell, Mick! You're falling asleep!" A sigh. "What sort of disciple are you?"

Chinese Whispers

"Words falling like autumn leaves can also mean the universe is a withering tree! Our souls can fall from a lack of water - eternity! Our souls can fall from a lack of words - knowledge! Our souls can fall from a lack of understanding - wisdom!"

"Our souls can fall…forever!"

Catherine Wheels

The stilt walker focuses ahead: "We must live with the total workings of life that extend to the causeways of the universes that are in each nerve cell."

Whizzing catherine wheels nailed to thin wooden poles.

"These screaming sparks are like the whizzing transmission of messages that travel at the speed of light to the mind to give us breathing." The orator listens to the tiny pauses between each drumbeat. "Life can be uplifting, like the sparks that rise into the dark sky; not crushing, like the heavy drumstick beating the thin stretched skin." The stilt walker rubs her arms. "The skin is now a little wet from the sprinkling rain. The sky sheds tears. My life sheds tears. A finite river swirls inside my body. I want to be with that infinite sea: the universe…oh yes...(comes the whisper)...to have that flowing sea clasp me. The fires evaporate the raindrops on this skin, to leave a dry surface. Without water this body is a human desert."

The Boat

The morning: a large tanker The Styx with a high red plimsoll line is moored on the far side of the bay it looks a little ghostly emerging from the mist.

As if in the Congo's heart of darkness cruising down some similar waterway but it is only Blackwattle Bay at dawn on a quiet Sunday morning. Empty streets can be dimly seen by two beings in a little rowing boat. It belongs to a mutual friend who lives on an abandoned ferry The Lady Ophelia, in the middle of the bay.

It has been an overnight stay.

The darkness of the night before, the dots of yellow city pole lights, being on that big boat was surreal.

Thus this thought of the Congo in the morning.

It was easily imagined during the night (while feeling restless, not sleeping well after the little party, drinking the beers by the low flame of the glass lantern, eating Turkish Delights) of thinking how the river can lead deep inside a person, to the subconscious, a dark narrow journey to all that black inner void to that primal savagery that gets unleashed in the black river within the human personality.

A little water breeze during the night, it is freer to get lost in that wonderful fluid blue of the open sea.

The dawn. It was cloudless for those few minutes when the sun went bright orange as it overcame the silhouettes of the houses; the tall buildings, the bridges - it was then decided to go for a morning row.

A vague sense from the slight offhand ways during the night - in the close way only two lovers could tell between themselves - that there is a desire to declare 'something'.

In the rowing boat it would be said.

Descending into this vessel with that ominous feeling of heading to a tragedy, like how it is imagined men climb into boats to go to land on some hostile shore while wanting to believe they will live through the day.

It is not known as the rowing boat heaves away from the ferry of the immensity of the sadness that is to be felt, only an expectation that the unknown will be touched.

On this mysterious morning acutely feeling the unfairness of life.

Suffocating, smothered, suddenly thinking of that lieutenant in CATCH-22 who deliberately chose to go on an air raid mission to see what war was like, who boarded a plane in much the same naive fashion as being on that small boat, to satisfy what is turning out to be a dangerous curiosity, then die.

Imagining an American WWII bomber wheeling out of control; its right wing falling apart into flaming fragments, fear gripping the aircrew in that slow death spiral; the destruction of the wing as if the sun itself had melted it, to make the plane fall like a stone. The same laws of nature now sending human emotion into a lurching spin; clouding the mind so it cannot see how it is possible to arise from a similar death knell.

Timothy

Scholarly eyes on a slim smooth face that matched the elegance of that long lean body, a youthful figure that would have made a brilliant Olympic swimmer. The cultured resonance of that voice, a reminder of a privileged education; though this morning the voice was sounding a little nervous as the blond ponytail was placed underneath the jaw, lapping it up, twirling the end as it was pressed by the throb of the pulse on the neck. The explanation of certain things kept hidden until then.

Jealousy A Human Face

"I never would have guessed you liked it both ways."
"At least you know now."
"Thanks for telling me...it doesn't...it doesn't matter to me...except I'm so possessive Timothy. I'm a jealous bitch."
"I know Lisa I know at least I've told you early on before we get too serious."
"Well...if you can't hold off...well...I have no choice."

The Longest Day

To become tight-lipped, staring at the water as the eyes become watery. The day is filled with distractions.
Tensely stretched out on a beach towel wanting to sleep, to forgo this waking world. Not knowing what is happening to time.

Human Nature

On the pub T.V. is the rugby league. Lifting a white counter as eyes wander to the television screen; even though there is no real interest to watch it.

Philomela's Tapestry

A painting in a round gold frame: a glazed work on a large white dinner plate. There is a figure with a bird's body and the head of a woman like a Siren but it can be sensed she isn't such a deceptive creature. This bird-woman is holding a tapestry with the tip of her wings. Another bird-woman is looking at it. The woman holding the tapestry has her mouth tightly closed while the second woman is gasping. The tapestry displays a naked man looking gleeful in a sly sort of way while the woman is overcome with fear.
"Can you tell me anything about that picture?"
Timothy stubs his tailor made. "The woman is holding up a tapestry woven by her to reveal that her sister's husband had raped her. The woman who was raped had her tongue cut out by her brother-in-law so she couldn't tell her sister about his crime. The wife kills her only son in revenge; she then cuts up her dead son placing the pieces in a stew that she presented to her

husband. When the husband found out what his wife had done he started after the two women with an axe. The two sisters called on the gods for help who turned them into birds. The wife became a swallow and the raped sister was turned into a nightingale. The man was changed into a hawk; who to this day continues his vain chase." Timothy pauses. "This brutalized woman used her artistic ability to overcome her forced silence - which was a sort of death. Obviously, the essence of the story is the transformation of this woman's maimed body into a beautiful 'night singer'. Night is Death and her singing overcomes the night." Timothy lights another cigarette. "We too could use our voice or our hands to stop death from silencing us-"

"It feels…almost…as if you've been raping me…"

Tears well up. A beer is pushed away. Then is pulled back. It is not drunk.

A numb heart: this vacuum, this emptiness, this nothingness is unwanted.

John Singer[1]

'That other Greek mute; who killed himself when the man he loved died.

The three lost souls who wheeled towards him to overcome their loneliness. Death did away with their illusory hub.

A sunny day but the sun will set.

Yes, the heart is a lonely hunter.

This lonely heart, what is to be the centre of this life's orbit?

The will must remain to go on.

Eternity in an Hour

In this still boat, in this tranquil bay, the tears flow.

Dropping the weight that serves as an anchor.

Looking down to see the name of the rowing boat: The Little Argo.

Is a sullen water god looking up at the dark curves of the hull? A curious leviathan aroused to blast this supposingly swift small vessel out of the water.

To be sitting in an open coffin.

Yet, while life remains this boat is a lifesaver.

The rope speedily winds itself into the bay; eyes try to penetrate into the deep space below, to see through watery depths reminiscent of the mind's darkening tones. Striving to anchor the emotions, to not drift towards some unchartered irrationality. Seeking out a liberating passage or a wheeling light that warns of a dangerous shore.

Looking up, but not towards the young god's fatal contours but to the dark outline of a headland whose details are slowly becoming clearer as the sun hovers higher in the clouded sky.

Numbly considering the inlets, the waterways, in an effort to perceive some leafy paradise that could shade the soul, to avoid heading helplessly to some unmanageable current.

Entanglements, eerie undergrowth: treacherous evidence of these once fatal shores drives on the madness. A scream pierces the deafening silence of the

bay.

Stripping off, to leap into the water.

The word Delight floats beside the vessel: the crumpled maroon and gold wrapper has fallen out of the small skirt pocket. Delight is scooped out of the water and tossed into the coffin. A silent sentinel watches the wary actions of an angered goddess.

Splashing water into those male eyes.

The goddess does not know what she is doing. There are subterranean forces at work that will take a lifetime to figure out. Continuing to tread, imagining a white swan in the undergrowth, to steal a kiss. Is this thought madness? Must there be such madness?

Back in the boat.

Still this knotted feeling, so the end of the rope - which is tied in a little iron loop on the tip of the bow - is grabbed; frayed, it is played with, while a tangled web of emotions are identified with the tangled branches which line the shore. The frayed end is disentangled – thread-by-thread – while the same must be done with these fraught emotions.

A knot is untied; the rope let go.

Heart of Darkness

"Lisa…the anchor…" Timothy softly exclaims.

Looking up at Timothy through a veil of tears to announce: ***"Lisa - she dead."***

To the Lighthouse

"The Rebel Angel calls on Chaos!" yells the female stilt-walker. The four male stilt walkers surround, - and as they keep moving in - squeeze her. "The Rebel Man calls on Order!" They shout. Neighing sounds. The four men have become the Four Riders of the Apocalypse. "Spinning Anti-Christs in the Sky! The Lord of Flies controls the Sweeping Air! Paradise Lost in Seas of Falling Fire!" The crushed woman now speaks. "Where is the true morality? Only cogs! Cogs! COGS! GOG! MAGOG! Oh Eternal Suffocation!" She stays very still. "Human Compass! Sometimes to be patient is an act. Sometimes to move is a diversion." The woman is freed. "I can breathe: amidst the watery chaos and the iron human-made strangulations must come freedom from which must come the true creation!"

Lisa's hand trembles. Her chest tightens *'...this heart, these nerves fray...at the edge...'*

Beams of light wheel around, and around, and around then stop.

Several stilt walkers are shining electric torches.

"The lighthouse shimmers its revolving light over the dark seas of this doubtful world!"

The five performers disappear behind the blazing fire; after a brief moment the crowd sights someone walking in the black sky. A blindfolded performer walks along a tightrope above the fire.

The blind tightrope walker moves towards the flames; he instinctively pauses, retreats, stumbles across the night air.

Lisa is looking up. *'Do I have to exist on such blind sight?'*

Celestial Fire

Michael is pensive.

"So you're not going to come away?"
"No..."

"The Celestial Flames can transform us! No longer in front of these divine flames can there be our disguises!" announces the blind angel. "Naked...we must stand naked!"

I could have left these shores.
"The sky walker is closest to the sun!" observes a stilt-walker.
...to have flown...
"He feels the full warmth of the sun!"
...been winged...
"However, we must be careful! We must not get too close!"
...explored new worlds...
"We could burn!"
...expanded my horizons...
"Fall apart!"
...these sad echoes...
"Into the Sea!" The blind sky walker falls but lands on a trampoline hidden behind the fire. Everyone claps.

"Some people are like the sun: from afar they give us life but up close they can burn us!"

Stilt walkers surround the sky-walker when he stands with bowed head in front of the flames; they move away from him then proceed towards him again; like the closing and opening petals of a breathing flower.

"In the New Jerusalem a song of love will transform us and will resolve the broken heart! Whatever happened to the poet's vision of a ghost of a flea?[1] To the howl of a balding, longhaired, bearded New York Jew?[2] Human inspiration must arise above human ignorance to uphold human integrity!"

It sprinkles. As the fire succumbs to the rain bright glowing embers die.

A long rectangular mirror is smashed into pieces with mallets. Many bits are used to wheel torch light beams to the sky and onto people's faces in the crowd.

"There are fragments of truth...only fragments...we follow only little pieces believing it is the whole!" announces the chorus.

The mirror lights continue to flicker. An unearthly silence: time seems suspended.

The noises of the traffic are irrelevant.

The lights join together.

Michael flicks his cigarette end into a few surviving flames. Coughs.

“It is said fire refines us yet what often remains is cold human ash. How can it be purged?” Ash is thrown into the air. “Underneath the edginess of our conscious wishes lies our hidden visions submerged in forgotten memories. We seek to find lost arcs for broken circles: our thwarted desires navigate us to unimagined courses that may wheel us towards open possibilities, towards resonant resolutions. We yearn in our casual desperation for a requited life...completion...form…to walk on this earth.”

...the torch is shone right this way!...the light of day…the mind...slows...down -

Master

“Yeah *poor* Ned Kelly you were better off dead, it’s true,” the lyrics being sung on the album now playing continue to be paraphrased, “at least then you did get some peace of mind.” A yawn. “Better to die on your feet than live on your knees. Anyhow we’re all going to be mulch one day.” Master lowers the volume on his stereo. “My old records - like this Redgum on now - are still a lot better than all the condom music that’s on the radio these days. Fancy a cuppa?”

“Yeah, but not a camomile.” replies Michael. “I feel like a real tea.”

Master manoeuvres his lithe body through a small dining area to reach the kitchen. He boils the jug.

Michael picks up a newspaper from the floor. “An Aboriginal guy is trying to get over eighty million dollars compensation for the descendants of the two Aboriginal trackers who found Kelly. They didn’t get their reward. Apparently Ned Kelly feared them. *Today’s Remembrance Day officially commemorates the ceasing of official hostilities on the Western Front*.” The paper is put down. “Yet the Allies soon sent troops to fight with the Whites against the Reds in 1919. There’s always a war goin-”

“Do you think my grandfather would care about all *that*?

“Who wrote: ‘Jack died today’ in his war diary? Not much to say about your best mate.”

“Writing that might have been painful enough. In the trenches they were like brothers. Do you have two sugars?”

“Yeah. Ta.” Michael goes to the kitchen. “Its pretty quiet here tonight. Usually you’ve got a few people coming through.”

“It comes and goes. It’ surprising the number of ‘epseloms’ who are put out for a place to stay. I’ve got three bedrooms plus that other living area which you can fit a mattress in. I only need the ‘master bedroom’ so why waste resources? As long as the peasants help with the food kitty and bills I don’t mind them staying until they sort themselves out.” Master checks his mail; throws a R.T.A pamphlet onto the floor. “Their ‘proposed’ freeway! The creek’s staying!” Master forcefully passes to his ‘audience’ a bush regeneration leaflet. “It’s from the Community Resource Centre in Bardwell Park. Let’s go outside. I need some nature.”

The two friends amble onto the back patio. It is a summery night.

"The cicadas are really loud-"

"Here Jes." A large cattle dog rushes up to Master who kneels down to hug the panting animal. "You're worth more than a dozen people I've had through here. That includes you Mick! She's as smart as Inspector Rex." Jessie is stroked. "After Derrick I'll put on an old video of your boyfriend for you." Master looks up at Michael. "How long you minding her this time?"

"Just two days. Jessie's 'master' is on a work trip. Her health department job often means getting out of an air-conditioned office…"

"*I* stare at a screen. Press buttons. I still think of switching to horticulture. You working regularly?"

"Yeah, enough to keep my old man off my back; especially with this new three-day-a-week bus job. I'm still thankful how you put me up through that last rough patch." Michael eyes the garden shed. "You've still got that big pile of stubbies beside 'Nauru.'"

Master had once quipped such sheds could be used to alleviate the so called 'refo plague.'

"Yeah, yeah I know those bottles have been sitting around since the time you and 'Lucille Ball' made that roundabout. You think she could have cleaned up that mess during her stay."

"We'll dump them now."

The bottles are placed into a recycling bin.

"It was funny driving home from the Hopetoun." grins Michael. "There were so many roundabouts. Forced to slow down. Both tipsy. Circle after circle. Blaming those Greek bastards Plato and Aristotle for all the hassle. Aristotle and his whirring spherical universe! Plato's Theory of Absolute Forms at every intersection! All these stubbies still lying around! Lucy yelling: 'ROUNDABOUTS! It's Karl Marx's birthday! Let's build at Master's House the Eternal Roundabout! Peasant! Give way!"

"Well slave when we're finished we can open up two more stubbies."

"Maybe you could get the guitar out-"

"Maybe...but I wouldn't mind having a look at that diary as well. Today's the day for it."

"Yeah," agrees Michael. "You're right. There was no justice in any of it was there?"

"No," surmises Master matter-of-factly. "None at all."

"The gods play with us." broods Michael.

"One thing's for sure - they play. Which reminds me there's a European Soccer Championship game on SBS at eleven."

November 12, 1990

Walking along Bourke Street in Surry Hills to see 'Hermes' with his winged baseball cap riding an old makeshift silver bike.

"Hey matie. What's up?" You look like you've been crying."

"I've just been up to the Courthouse to hear the verdict."

"What verdict?"

"Where you been, man! Tim Anderson - he's been given guilty by the jury! There were heaps of us up there to celebrate him being let off but he's been put back in jail!"

"I hadn't a clue..." Yet it was not to be unexpected. On the one visit to the lengthy court proceedings the jury had seen very bored, irritable and tired; misinterpreting Tim Anderson's well conceived reasoning to the prosecutor's malicious queries as a sort of defiant arrogance.

"They've framed him real bad." Hermes sighs. "I'm heading home."

The Supreme Court. Two large television trucks parked outside the iron railing fence. A police van. A small crowd of people either crying or just standing around looking dazed. It seems a larger number had now gone. A big woman shouts down a female reporter who announces that Tim Anderson is the Hilton Bomber.

"He didn't do it!" yells the fat woman. "If we let them get away with doing over Tim we'll be letting them come to do over us!" The woman screams. The reporter pauses during her live-cross-over-to-the-studio summary.

"An attack on one individual's rights debases everyone else's right of a bloody fair go!" shouts out a bearded man. His voice along, with the woman's sounds desolate and awry.

There is no point in staying around in this vision of hell. Yet a closer look at one of the television trucks - where several guys stand by an open doorway - reveals a monitor: a man with red curly hair and a large floppy reggae cap handing out bottles of champagne from the back of a van. Grief. Noisy protest. Three members of a Tim Anderson support group vow to fight on until Tim Anderson is free.

A man in the van. "See this angle...there needs to be some cropping here to keep the viewer focused on these three in the foreground."

Trainee cameramen.

A woman comforts another female friend.

"Now this is a much better angle and he's done well switching to a half body shot. It's important to keep other incidentals out of the way and just concentrate on the main object."

Cupping hands to mouth. Wishing to have a slingshot. "Mate! Someone should show you the Eternal Incidental!"

The instructor frowns yet as he peers into the darkness a fluorescent light blinds him from seeing his tormentor who slowly walks away.

Wonderland

For Lisa the orange flames are a bright illusion that hinders the view of the blackness beyond. The fire extinguishes, revealing a cold dark world. Hell. "Lets get out of here. It's sprinkling anyhow..."

Lisa and Michael easily squeeze through the crowd.

"Back to the pub?" queries Michael.

Lisa shrugs her shoulders.

"We'll go there and then make up our minds." reasons Michael.

Lisa and Michael quickly cross Oxford Street despite the onrush of many cars and head back up to the Judgement Bar.

People wearing colourful African facemasks occupy several tables. One other table has a group of court jesters with clown faces sculling beer after beer. The whole of the drinking area seems jagged and cut-up by these out of place features.

"Where are we?" asks Lisa.

"In Wonderland," quips Michael. "The Taylor Street Festival must have been on today."

Suddenly the rhythmic beating of dozens of wooden sticks drowns out the already noisy din of the bar. Lisa is put into a daze. "I'm not in the mood for this Mick. I want to go somewhere quiet."

Yeah. I know the feeling." Michael senses as if devil spirits are driving them away from what was their rest spot. "Okay my car's down the road a bit. We can go for a drive."

Lisa hurriedly descends the wide stairwell firmly holding onto the thick round wooden rail; swinging, twisting, turning her body around each corner until she is in a trot.

"Slow down Lisa! There's no hurry!" Michael watches 'his charge' rush out onto the footpath.

"I can't *stand* any of *this*!" screams Lisa. Her hands are clenched into tight fists making quick bowing motions with her body. Yelling out at Michael.

"What are you staring at!" Michael is shouting at the people standing outside Kinselas; he grips his hair with both hands as Lisa starts to scream hysterically. Howling like a wild animal. People are spilling out onto the pavement from the nightclub to watch.

A bouncer starts to walk towards Lisa but Michael intervenes. "I know her! I know her! We'll move on!" Michael goes to grab Lisa's arm but she fends him away. "What's wrong with you!" Michael is not sure if he is addressing Lisa or the people who have encircled both of them.

The outburst stops. After a moment's silence there is sobbing.

Michael holds Lisa's hand and takes her around the corner to Campbell Street.

"My car's down here Lisa. There's not far to walk." The desperate edge to the guide's voice reveals his exhaustion.

"You don't have to hold my hand. I'm not a child."

Michael holds his tongue as he lets go of Lisa's hand.

"Thanks Mick. Thanks..."

The Sanctuary Cafe is just across the road..." comes the tentative suggestion.

"Na, we'll just go to your car."

Michael and Lisa turn left into Crown Street.

Lisa cries.

"What the hell is the problem!" demands Michael as he unlocks his door. Michael's car is old and the door creaks like an old ship when it opens.

Lisa doesn't speak as she enters the car.

The engine is running. "I'll take you home."

Lisa shakes her head.

"Where to!" Michael is exasperated.

Lisa doesn't reply.

"I'm just going to start driving then..." The car is taken around the block and heads through the backstreets of Surry Hills to the vicinity of Devonshire Street. It is not too far from Central Station.

Lisa senses Michael is trying to go some unrecognisable way back to her place.

"Stop the car. Stop it!"

"You promise not to run off?"

"Promise!"

Michael will bide his time. "I'll see if there's a parking spot in this side street."

"I don't have a home!" Lisa starts to bash the top of the dashboard.

"Lisa, I'm trying to reverse park!"

"Lisa! Lisa! Lisa! I can't do nothing - right!"

"Stop banging, please! I've still got to get it in."

"That's all you men think of! Fucking!"

"Don't start with the femmo bit." The car is finally positioned into the available spot. The vehicle is edged a little forward; the engine then turned off.

Silence.

Michael desires this tranquillity to endure; that there be no words of death.

"I just told him I'm pregnant!" Lisa bows her head. "It's been two and a half months." Lisa lifts her head to stare straight ahead. "I was trying to explain to him its why I've been acting funny lately but he just cuts in - says he wants an abortion!" Lisa looks up at the roof of the car. "Your light bulb's missing." Lisa grins. "He thinks I'm paranoid, that *everything* has changed! Says he doesn't really mind about the child but thinks I couldn't handle..." Lisa bursts into tears... "*raising* her - I *know* my child is going to be a girl. He just wishes she wasn't going to be around. Probably hopes now I will have her adopted out. The bastard just can't make the commitment. I've just become a bloody millstone around his neck. Its finished between us." Lisa starts to furiously tap her feet on the floor of the car then starts to violently nod and shake her head. Lisa suddenly keeps her feet still and lurches her eyes to the rear-view mirror. "I just started shouting and screaming at him tonight. I *do* get paranoid. It's been a disaster ever since I moved in. He's got so many female friends and I just want him for myself. It's just all different now I'm pregnant. He's forced now to make a commitment. He can't get out of it with me now. He won't give me up even if he wanted to." Lisa rummages through her handbag looking for the Havelock. "He resents

himself as much...as...he...would...want to get out." Lisa throws her handbag at the windscreen. "You look! You look!" Lisa weeps. "Today. He comes home late. Worked *all* weekend so he says. Had drinks with the boys. Him and the boys." Lisa takes the lit cigarette from Michael. "Ta, he's everyone's favourite *boy*. Everyone thinks he's such a nice guy. Strong healthy carpenter always the first to help any of his mates but ignores *me*, doesn't speak to *me*, when he comes home!" Lisa violently taps the top of her ribcage. "He wants to stay a boy, he can't cope with the idea of starting a family and settling down even though that house of his is nearly payed off. He's worked so hard for it but..." Lisa is a little calmer..."I don't know...I just accused him of sleeping around, all those female friends. I'm so lucky to have him but I get jealous, I'm like a wife." Lisa screeches. "I'm pregnant!" Lisa gasps. "He couldn't understand why I didn't want to do it at first. Last guy I had hurt my emotions so bad when we split up. Lisa punches her heart, she is weeping. "When we broke up my body went through all this physical pain, it went on for weeks, I couldn't sleep, I'd try different positions to ease the agony. When I was first with *him* I was scared, I was shy, he even thought for a time I might have been religious," Lisa resumes banging the dashboard, "I'm having his child!"

"Stop it. Stop hitting the dashboard!" Michael was wrestling with Lisa's arms.

"Don't touch me!" Lisa shoves Michael's hands away.

"Leave the door alone! You promised!"

"Okay, okay but just don't touch me. Tonight it all went too far. He just snapped. He screamed back at me. I wish he'd had hit me but he just screamed. His fists went all tight. Then a friend rings him up and he acts friendly on the phone. There's a party on tonight. I grabbed the phone and told whoever it was on the other end to just fuck off. He just went quiet and stood there. He just says to me I could have the house to myself and just slams the door. He'll go to the party and smooth things over to keep his image intact. Then he'll come back and try to talk reason with me after he's been smiling to this other bitch."

Michael once more savours the silence.

"I went out."

"You knew where the party was...?"

"No!" Lisa screeches. "I think he's had enough." Lisa rocks to and fro. "He doesn't really love me. He'll kick me out. I'll have nowhere to go!"

"Listen! There's my place!"

"Aren't you house-sitting? I can't live forever-"

"I'm sure its okay for you to go home...You're just thinking wild."

"No, no!" Lisa keeps rocking her body. "There's no one who cares."

"What am I doing?!"

"I'm sleeping here."

"That's fine by me if you think there's nowhere for you to stay. There's a blanket and pillow on the backseat that I always keep for when the car breaks down. Crash out and I'll see you when I get back. I've had enough."

Lisa slides her body over the front seat and immediately enters into a deep sleep.

Underworld

In the iron shell of the car and with the seed of Melissa in her Lisa fears her child is being formed in a human hell and will only wake up in a sort of psychological stillbirth. The surrounding city is a 'steel womb' which represents death rather than life. The transforming power of life is subconsciously sought. Hopefully Melissa will survive the barren underworld land of Hades to be released like some new Persephone to enjoy the Springs of this world and a mother's love.

Dan

Michael checks that he has his tobacco and matches in the top pocket of his denim jacket. Puts on the steering wheel lock. Pulls over it the vinyl Marvin the Martian steering wheel cover. Peers into the back of the car.

Lisa is asleep.

Steps out onto the footpath. A cigarette is rolled and lit. It is decided that to collect one's thoughts on this awry night; to gain a sense of order to it's events - a long walk is needed.

'Good. It's stopped drizzling. I know Lisa can find her way home if shedecides to go. There's a chance that Lisa could leave the car unlocked but I've put on the Krooklock. No one would steal that Fall of Berlin book in the back. I had to go before Lisa totally suffocated me. I'm helping her out. I'll be back to see how she is in an hour. I've just got to be on my own. To stretch my legs.'

Crown Street. Outside the Apostrophe's Café.

"Hey...Michelangelo!"

"Dan..."

"I thought it was you. Don't you wear anything else these days than that black denim jacket? What are you up to?"

"Just going for a wander..."

Dan rubs his forehead then lifts his shoulders to fit them more squarely into the top of his own jacket.

"You seem a bit edgy..."

"I'm just a bit restless, Mick. I've just been to a barbeque and heard Weddings Parties Anything were playing at the Hopetoun as part of those Farewell to the Hopetoun concerts. I'm off to buy some hot chips at Johnnys Café next door and then thought I'd catch the end."

Abandon Every Hope, All You Who Enter

Many people are milling outside the Hopetoun or walking away.

"We must have just missed them!" exclaims Michael.

"Lets have a beer anyway I'm in no hurry to go home."

"Lets listen to this for a sec."

A local television crew is conducting interviews.

"What we see here with the closure of the Hopetoun is the continuing gentrification of this area." states one punter. "Surry Hills is losing another community focal point. Sydney is being sanitised for money interests, the Olympics..."

"Come on Mick, let's get inside and have a beer." Dan heads to the middle of the still crowded pub. Michael feels very claustrophobic. He sourly thinks of the tall eucalyptus in Girrawheen Park that would wildly shake about him on the way home from Bardwell Park train station on one of many bleak, windy, wintry nights. "LETS MOVE TOWARDS THE DOORWAY!" he screams.

Dan shrugs his shoulders. "WHATEVER!"

They are shoved against a wall.

"THIS'LL HAVE TO DO FOR NOW!" screams Dan. Michael nods his head. "WHAT DA YA WANT?" yells Dan as he cups his hands to Michael's ear. "VB!" shouts Michael who looks thoughtfully back at Dan.

"WHAT'S UP?" yells Dan accusingly.

"NOTHING - JUST THINKING!"

"THINKING! IN ALL THIS NOISE!?" Dan shakes his head. "You're the vaguest guy I know-"

"SPEAK UP!" shouts Michael.

"YOU LOOK LIKE YOU'RE STARING RIGHT THROUGH TO MY PLACE!" replies Dan.

Michael smiles nervously. Glances to the bar.

Dan shrugs his shoulders swivels his body to plough through the crowd.

Michael looks around at the sea of faces to see if he can recognise anyone. A hazy amber hue coming through the doorway from a streetlight draws his attention. A familiar figure walking towards the entrance.

Master turns to look into the belly of the pub; his eyes scanning a back wall. A surprised look. "MICK!" Comes the loud call at the entrance. "DID YOU LIKE WEDDOS!?"

" I ONLY JUST GOT HERE!"

"PITY YOU MISSED THEM! THEY WERE MAGNIFICENT! SO WAS PERRY KEYES AND THE STOLEN HOLDENS!"

Michael is fuming, "WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME THIS WAS ON?!"

Master shrugs his shoulders, "THOUGHT YOU BE HERE ANYWAY!"

"NA I FORGOT!" announces Michael. "I HAVEN'T BEEN HERE SINCE DAVE STEELE!"

Master looks surprised. “THAT’S AGES AGO! MY LIFT’S GOING SO SEE YA!”

“SEE YA!”

“GIVE ME A RING - I WANNA DO SOME MORE TREE-PLANTING DOWN AT THE CREEK! SEE YA!”

Michael sadly wishes that he was going with him.

“WHOSE YA MATE?” shouts Dan as he hands Michael his schooner

“...just an old friend...” comes the murmur.

“WHAT!”

“JUST AN OLD FRIEND! LIVES OUT KINGSGROVE WAY!”

“THE ONE YOU HAVE CAMOMILE TEAS WITH?” queries Dan.

“YEAH THAT ONE!” replies Michael. “SAYS ITS GREAT FOR SOOTHING THE SOUL!

“I COULD DO WITH A CAMOMILE TEA…” admits Dan. “I LOST MY TEMPER WITH LISA TONIGHT!”

“YOU DID...?” Michael casually sips his beer.

“YEAH *I* DID!” Dan slams down his near empty beer glass onto the nearest table.

“LISA CAN REALLY BRING OUT THAT LITTLE BIT OF SICILIAN TEMPER IN ME! I REALLY WONDER IF WE’RE SUITED FOR EACH OTHER! SHE GETS SO JEALOUS!”

“ANY OTHER REASON?” taunts Michael.

“LOOK! HERE”S OUR CHANCE! THERE’S A SPARE SPACE OVER THERE! IT’LL BE MORE QUIET!”

They quickly shift to a spot closer to the door. Dan then rubs his chin as he looks at his friend. “Well Micky Boy there is a couple of other reasons but in the months ahead the main one will become pretty obvious…”

Virgil

“Daniel how are you?”

“Virgil! Where did you come from?”

“I noticed you through the hotel window! The philosophical look on your face was rather becoming!”

“Virgil this is Michelangelo. Michelangelo this is Virgil.”

“What’s with the Renaissance?” asks Michael.

“Well Micky I really don’t know but in case you haven’t noticed my friend here looks a lot like Virgil out of the Thunderbirds.”

“I’d pass him up as Andy Warhol...”

Virgil smiles. “With the Velvet Underground they are playing right now its quite natural for you to make the sublimal association. However, my preferred *non-de plum* remains Virgil! Definitely a quirky cultural taste of mine.” Virgil bends his elbows to mime a Thunderbirds puppet.

“Yeah and you get up at 6 a.m. every Saturday morning to watch it!” states Dan.

"Sometimes I'm just coming home! Virgil and the Underworld is the subtext of my favourite show!" Virgil laughs. "So I suppose your friend must be some sort of artist." Virgil muses. He peers over at Michael. "Have you been involved with any Last Judgements lately?"

Michael slumps a little against a wall. "Dan just calls me Michelangelo because I like to draw but its nothing serious. He's surprised I like art." Michael looks at Dan and Virgil with a little annoyance.

"Have a beer." states Dan to Virgil.

"I'm a spirits man." declares Virgil who then cups his hands to his face as if to whisper a secret. "I could just do with a *rouge vin* good for the heart you know!"

"Listen. Its my turn to buy the drinks." reasons Michael. He jostles his way through the pub crowd to reach the thick ranks at the bar. A long wait ensues.

"TWO SCHOONERS OF VB! ONE HOUSE RED WINE!" It is a relief to be finally served. The return journey is made easier when people sight Michael's full hands and make way. This pilgrim's faith in the good nature of his fellow human beings is restored.

"Where have you been tonight?" Dan asks Virgil.

"By Ganish! I've been dining at the Elephants Foot!"

"You were sitting out on the front porch." realises Michael. "I just passed by there - thought I'd seen you before!"

"I'm not surprised! This 'island' of ours is *petit*!" exclaims Virgil.

"I've told Virgil your idea that Surry Hills is like an island." explains Dan.

"So that's *your* observation." smiles Virgil. "I absolutely agree with you - Oxford, Chalmers, Cleveland and South Dowling - all these streets definitely encase a certain *psyche*! Which reminds me: there was a particular psyche going on outside Kinselas: a drunken acquaintance informed me that a mad woman was screaming just outside the front entrance! She had quite an audience until her male partner whisked her away!"

"A pity Mick wasn't there," remarks Dan. "He's got a reputation with helping women on the streets."

"Do go on young man!" Virgil is intrigued.

"Its no big deal mate." Michael says abruptly.

"The same all round?" offers Virgil. "Toodledoo!" His tall lanky body allows him to effortlessly manoeuvre his way to the bar. Virgil is immediately noticed by the bartenders and is served straight away.

"How do you know *him*?" comes the adroit inquiry.

"I met Virgil through Legal Aid. Lives on Oxford Street so I keep seeing him around. I know he's a full on North Shore type but he's a good lawyer. Give him a break!"

"Well…I am…its just turning out to be a strange night for me that's all.Also-"

Virgil hands Dan and Michael their beers.

"Tell Virgil about that time you were down at the Third World Cafe when that pregnant woman started mouthing off at you."

"I didn't think you'd want to hear that story again."

"Why not?" Dan sculls his beer. "Right now it kind of fascinates me Michel-Angel-O! Hey it's the Sex Pistols! I am the *Anti-Christ!* God Save the Queen! From a Fascist Regime! I'm getting another round!"

"Now you can entertain me." coyly suggests Virgil.

"I'd driven into Central to pick up a mate who was coming home from the south coast. It was a Sunday afternoon, around Christmas time. As we left the station it started to pour pretty heavily. It was one of those monsoon type showers that last for half an hour. I didn't think it would be safe to drive around in all that rain so we decided to have a coffee and sit it out. After re-parking the car - in the same spot we had just left - we walked underneath one of those large stone arch bridges which passes over Eddy Avenue and noticed this Aboriginal family clinging together to keep warm from all the wet. Don't know why but they caught our eye because there was a sort of…*pathos* - that's the word - about their plight with all that rain-"

"I just got served by Johnnie Leopard!" Dan is back.

"He's been here for years." Michael is unimpressed.

"Yeah I know but I've *never* been served by him," explains Dan.

"Is Johnnie a local *celebre*?" inquires Virgil.

"He plays with Dave Warner," replies Michael, "you know: sings songs like Just A Suburban Boy and Half Time at the Football."

"Like the half times in this life." quips Dan.

Michael grins. "Anyway this 'suburban soldier' is going off for his own half time." He heads to the Gents.

It is observed by Virgil that the steady movement of men and women going to the toilets provides a sense of rhythm that contrasts with the surrounding human chaos.

"Michael rave on?"

"Not much really. Simply picking up a friend from the country and getting out of the rain; plus noticing an Aboriginal family huddled together under one of those bridges which span Eddy Avenue."

"That's typical...Mick's helped out a few Kooris. One night he was driving up Cleveland Street heading towards the city when he saw this Aboriginal guy waving a twenty-dollar note at the cars passing by. Mick stopped and picked him up and three of his mates! Their station wagon had broken down and no one had been willing to stop and help. This guy had started waving the twenty dollars to get some more attention. Mick drove them to the Cross and he said how they kept calling him 'brother'. Mick didn't take their money. Another time he was driving back from Darlinghurst around midnight and an old Aboriginal man knocked on his car window when Mick had stopped at the lights. Mick's got this thirty something year old Holden so I suppose this elderly guy took a punt that Mick would help him. This old guy asked Mick to drive him to Newtown. As it turned out this old bloke wasn't from Sydney and he had got himself lost. Mick was telling me that it

was a cold night and all this guy's winter clothes were at the place he was staying. The only thing keeping him warm was his Hawthorn beanie."

Michael walks out from the Gents and heads over to have a look at the pinball machine in the furthest corner of the small snooker room in the back of the pub. There is a line of men and women standing by the glass doors that lead out to a small courtyard. They are patiently waiting their turn for a snooker game on the two tables. However, Michael is only concerned as to how many twenty-cent pieces are stacked on the pinball machine. After eyeing the pile of coins Michael heads over to the others by which time Dan has just finished his story about Michael driving the elderly Aboriginal man to Newtown.

"I assume this old fellow also called Michael 'brother'."

"Yeah I think he did."

"Were you planning to have a game?" inquires Virgil.

"Yeah I'm bit of a pinball junkie - been playing them since I was high enough to see the flippers. I still remember how in the old days you could pop up all five balls at the same time."

"You've always been a nostalgia freak Mick." claims Dan. "He's still got his old Globite school case filled with his primary school exercise books, 2SM concert handouts, a tattered 2JJJ exploding head t-shirt, a hoola hoop, the old Scanlen Footy cards, MAD comics and even TV Week magazines from when he was a nipper! He's even kept old Tracks magazines with Captain Goodvibes and heaps of photos of big waves off Bells Beach. Get Mick going and he'll bore you by letting you know how back in the sixties Paddle Pops used to have a little groove that curved all the way around just in from the edge."

"I've always been a Cornetto man myself!" announces Virgil. "However, what I can recall is the Coco Pops monkey with the straw hat. Coca Losa! Really crunchy! Just like a Choco-Late Milk-Shake!"

"A mate was the Paddle Pop Lion during the Festival of Sydney." comments Michael. "He would chase and growl at children all around Hyde Park!"

"*Touche*!" laughs Virgil. "How far friendlier than the loins who mauled those innocents in the first century! Talking of ancient history you were speaking, Michael, of The Flood occurring at Central Railway!"

"Yeah...yeah...I should finish...let me light up this cigarette first."

"Anyone for another..."

"Don't concern yourself Daniel. I believe it will soon be closing time. We're better going off for a coffee."

"Yeah Virgil's right." agrees Michael. "Are you lonely tonight?"

An Elvis Presley song is playing.

Michael eyes Dan.

"From Eddy Avenue we crossed Elizabeth Street and went inside this rundown Milk Bar. The shop was grotty and hot and so we dubbed it the Third World Cafe; all this faded cream paint was flaking and peeling down

these filthy walls. The place was filled with homeless guys. The Third World Cafe was set out like an American Diner from the thirties and we found a spare table near the front doorway and then had these insipid coffees served to us by this old gangly waitress. The two of us were staring at the rain when this short bulky woman dressed in this raggedy black frock walked in and sat down beside us as if to say she was there first," Michael stubs out his cigarette," she asked me to buy her a coffee. I did but after doing my good deed she just starts telling me off for no reason other than I'm sitting beside her." Michael shakes his head." This woman then goes on to tell me she's nine months pregnant and she's expecting her baby any minute! Then she says she's been living the last few days on the streets because her boyfriend had shot through to Brisbane. I told her she should go to a woman's refuge but she didn't have a clue of how to find one. We got a phone book so we could ring up people like Missionbeat. I'd be standing by the red phone making a few phone calls while some of the guys in this place were wondering what was going on. 'Mary' told them all to fuck off. Finally, we got onto this woman who gave me the address of this refuge in Bondi. Thankfully it was only drizzling by now but time was moving on my mate had to be somewhere. He ended up catching a train and I promised him I'd drop off his big travel bag later on. I drove this woman out to Bondi and found the refuge. The thing is it's out of bounds for men and I had to take the car two blocks further up from where it was. The really ridiculous thing was that Mary wouldn't get out of the car. Mary just sat beside me saying how nice I was and wanted to go home with me..." Michael laughs and shakes his head. "Finally, Mary left the car. I watched her through my rear view mirror walk really slowly to this house and go inside. So that's it."

"You never saw her again?" queries Virgil.

"Never, nor do I want to."

"ITS TIME!" yells a barman.

Michael finishes off his beer and places his tobacco in his jacket pocket. "Lets go get that coffee."

The trio wait impatiently at the traffic lights just outside the Hopetoun.

"Tell Virgil about that woman you helped out in Newtown." Dan suggests.

"Give *me* a break!" winces Michael who nevertheless remembers when he had gone to the Sandringham Hotel to do a favour for an old friend.

Caterina

Roaring Jack is supposed to be doing its regular Thursday night gig but as Michael walks towards the Sandringham he sees the usually large crowd standing around on the footpath.

From the shadows in the street before the pub several skinheads look sullenly at Michael. He notices more skinheads standing by a few shopfronts. Michael chooses to look straight ahead.

At the Sandringham police vans are parked outside; policemen have been directing the bustling crowd to leave the pub and go home.

Many pub stools lie overturned or stacked beside the large square serving bar in the middle of the hotel.

Michael smiles.

During one drunken session Michael had stood up on the wide berth of the bar and danced a little Zorba. It had taken several friends to haul him to the floor and the performance had left a few small scratch marks. "Not to worry!" cheerfully yelled out a bartender that night. "Just gives the place a bit more history!"

Blood is on the floor. Tonight there is some more history.

An ambulance is parked in front of the police vans. Two young men are having their bloodied faces attended too while someone is yelling from one of the police vans. A police motorcycle with a large blue flashing light speeds past the Sandringham. People watch the motorcycle and anxiously eye the skinheads who are further down King Street walking away.

"FASCISMOS!"

Michael turns his head to look at the tall olive skinned woman whose long jet-black hair is in a ponytail. "Caterina!"

The woman turns to face Michael. *"Companero!* Where have you been!"

"Where have I been?! You only rang me an hour ago!"

Caterina who is standing amongst a crowd of onlookers, which includes a few waterside workers, dashes over to Michael and gives him a quick peck on the cheek. "You've missed all the fun!"

"Looks like there's been a riot."

"There has!" laughs Caterina. "There were all these skinheads here tonight. They started pushing and barging after Roaring Jack started their second set and all the *companeros* you see here started pushing and barging back until one of them," Caterina points her arm down the road, "threw the first punch. You should have seen it! Michael - *everyone* was fighting! They don't like the people to enjoy their Irish music! Those sons of bitches-" Caterina cups her hands around her mouth and yells out down the street, "FASCISMOS!" Caterina looks back at Michael. "Some had knives but luckily no one was stabbed."

"Caterina the police are coming over to you."

"Move on lady." directs a sergeant.

"No problems officer. We go! We go!" Caterina turns back to Michael. "I'm going home soon but tomorrow can you turn up at my place at seven o'clock?"

"Should be okay."

"*Buen*. Another man will be coming with you. He's Chilean and the three of you will be seeing a Labor senator who is sympathetic to her situation. You will drive me to where our Guatemalan friend is staying and from there I will go to work. The other man will meet us there."

"Is this woman who we're taking to Canberra trying to migrate out here?"

"No!" laughs Caterina. "You are so naive sometimes my friend! She is an important leader!"

"How the hell am I suppose to know!" grumbles Michael.
"I'm afraid it's a very early start for you tomorrow my friend."
"Yeah Yeah. Like I said its okay."
"It is for the human rights of her people." Caterina looks down the road after quickly glancing as to the whereabouts of the police. *"Fascismos!* I have to go. I saw a friend of yours walk into the Thai restaurant. The one who is always up here. He wears glasses."
"Was he with anyone?"
"He was with three other people. They went straight into the restaurant after the fight."
"Thanks for letting me know. See ya tomorrow."
"Ola." Caterina kisses Michael then walks over to her car parked across the road.

Rigoberta

"I've never seen such strength in a person." Michael passes to Caterina the sugar as they sit against the outside wall of Beth's Cafe enjoying the crisp warmth of the morning sun. "We drove around that lake just before Canberra and through Nicolas who interpreted for us I found out it reminded her of a similar lake in Guatemala. I've never been overseas but I felt I was in Guatemala for half an hour."
"Rigoberta said the senator was very friendly."
"He wasn't a bad bloke. He gave her plenty of time to speak."
"He is not a fraud." surmises Caterina.
"This Chilean guy who was head of security reckons the new Parliament House is circular so there is no focal point for protesters."
"It is shaped like a baptistery font my Orthodox friend." Caterina taps her temple with a teaspoon. "The clear crisp water inside such a thing which promises life can also drown its joys."
Michael smiles and shakes his head. "You communists are so bloody-minded!"
The communist smirks and scoops the froth on top of her cappuccino. "At least I am not like those extremists who hijack other people's protests. The ones who say that the hundred thousand people who march for nuclear disarmament on Palm Sundays are part of a 'bourgeois demonstration.' "
"Yeah. They're like these so called lefties who started shouting their own slogans and raised their fists during this Aboriginal demo I went too." agrees Michael. "They were asked to be quiet but kept showing no respect. Trying to take it over. As for demos when this Chilean guy is off-duty he joins in on any protests against Pinochet." Michael has a sip of coffee. "You should have seen Rigoberta enjoy the milkshake she had at this Greek milk bar in Goulburn! It was late at night, the place was crowded and here's this Mayan heroine wearing her national costume sipping up with her straw the last bit of milk at the bottom."

Eddy Murray & John Pat

Michael passes the Sydney Morning Herald over to Caterina after reading an article about segregation. "These skinheads are much the same everywhere; yet the first time I ever heard of a hanged black man he was an Aboriginal. I was sleeping in one morning listening to the news on the radio when there was this report about a black man found hung in his cell. I just assumed this death happened in South Africa. When a police spokesman stated there were no suspicious circumstances surrounding this latest suicide I realised he had an Australian accent. It really shocked me."

Caterina places the paper on the table. "Reminds me of the time I heard you on one of those community radio stations."

"As if..." grins Michael.

"It really shocked me!" laughs Caterina.

"I was bloody nervous when that journo guy came up to me on the Town Hall steps."

"What did you think about tonight's meeting sir?" Caterina has turned her teaspoon into a microphone." Last week in this very same town hall thousands of Sydneysiders flocked to hear Oliver Tambo speak about the injustices in apartheid ridden South Africa and of Nelson Mandela but tonight there were only two hundred people to listen about the ever growing need for a Royal Commission into Black Deaths In Custody; when in percentage terms its outstripping the killing of blacks in South Africa. Its reaching epidemic proportions! I think its right that people point out the killings and executions which are going on in countries like South Africa and the States but what about a little more interest in all those so called suicides in our own backyard? Its not just in piddley little country towns...what about Geraldton, Moree…you know *mate* what about the death of Eddie Murray and the bashing by those off-duty cops who killed John Pat - were they suicides? Come on White Australia tell me that!"

"Yeah I sure raved on."

"Thank you for your comments sir."

"That's okay." Michael softly taps Caterina on the head with one section of the morning paper. He suddenly looks pensive. "Yet black fellas realise to follow white fella's ways to get their grub can mean losing too much of themselves." Michael rubs his throat.

"I understand, *companero*..." Caterina massages her scarred elbows. Cheekily grabs the paper still in Michael's hand to point out a Northern Territory travel ad. "Look here Sydney! You Will Never Never Know If You Never Never Go!"

Michael snatches the paper back from Caterina. "Do you remember seeing my super 8 film of my trip to Central Australia?"

"That's right! Over at that lovely old rustic stone house in Drummoyne! I've still kept that A5 laminated red invite with the fez: *The Night of the Black Fez!*" Caterina laughs. Looks inquisitive. "What did you call it?"

"Desert Batik."

Ephialtes the Giant

The bus drops the lone figure off at a petrol station outside Port Augusta at four a.m. The service station attendant assures him it is only two kilometres to the town centre. He can catch a bus at dawn to the suburb where his friends live.

"How have you found it over here?" the lonely, overweight attendant smiles.

"Fine. People are friendly." The visitor wonders if he is in Paris, Texas.

The morning night air is like ice and so he is rugged up in his thick army disposals NATO jacket. However, the hood restricts the field of vision; this is bothersome for the trucks that rumble past cannot be sighted straight away. Occasionally these huge vehicles blast their horns when through the fog they suddenly spot the wraith with their large headlights. Nevertheless, the hood, scarf and backpack keep the apparition warm.

Walking across a causeway that crosses a long black stretch of water he senses on this mystical moonless night a deep mist is covering the ground. The causeway he is on is built with broken rock whose jagged pieces jut out from its two high banks. On the far left is a wide black tower with small rows of square lights and two chimneys. This giant looks as if it is emerging from a deep trench. It is the Port Augusta power station and for the wraith it is a point of reference that is much needed in the pitch black.

A light drizzle starts to fall and far away is lightning and thunder.

Leaving the causeway the stooping figure soon comes across a few houses and with the first streetlights he starts to feel secure. However, there are no road signs to give him clear directions on how to reach the town centre. He chooses to walk along a low road that runs parallel to the highway. Hopefully, this approach will lead him to a suburban thoroughfare going into the middle of Port Augusta.

Len

A figure turns into the same street from a sidetrack.
The two ghosts meet at the top of the next rise.

"G'day."

"G'day brother."

"Do you know the way to the main shopping centre?"

"This road is a good start. I can take you about three quarters of the way. Where you come from?"

"Alice Springs, sort of. I'm heading to Sydney but I've stopped here to see some friends. You're up early."

"I had a fight with my missus," the black angel shakes his head and smiles, "and now she's locked me out! I been drinkin' and come home to find all the doors and windows locked! I spent an hour trying to get in and now I'm heading to my sister's place."

Laughter. "Do you want some tobacco?"

"Thanks brother."

"Your sister won't mind you coming so late?"

"She'll have a door unlocked. Lightning can't strike twice."

"Lets stop for a sec. I wanna light this." The wraith lights his cigarette and then passes his matches over to his guide. The two then urinate side by side into some bushes.

"What were you doing in Alice Springs?"

"That's what I asked myself when I first arrived; especially after one backpacker place wouldn't put me up overnight because I was an Australian. I just woke up one morning back in Sydney where I threw in this measly cleaning job and caught a bus. When I got to Alice Springs I flew from there in a Cessna to visit friends who work on a community just in on the South Australian side of the border - if the border means anything out there. Although, I did have to obtain a pass to visit the reserve."

"There's quite a few brothers from up that way in Port Augusta who I know."

"Yeah? I wouldn't know them. My friends are white fellas. Doctor and nurse. I was only there for a week so I didn't get to know too many other people."

"Lets keep going."

"What's your name?"

"Len."

"My name's Mick. You lived here all your life?"

"I was born in a community. I've been roving for awhile since my teens but I've been in Port Augusta three years. I've got steady work." Len suddenly stops to point out a tree. "There brother see that tree?"

Michael looks at the scrawly black wood whose many ordinary branches criss-cross the bleak night sky.

"A cousin of mine tried to hang himself from these branches."

With this news Michael has another glance.

"Too much frustration in him brother. Now he's in Port Augusta gaol for stealin'. Its a big prison here like that big power station." Len rubs his throat. "Lots of brothers inside."

Pine Gap

The film projector is turned on. Fortunately the breeze coming up from the river has died down as the calico screen which is tied up on a side of the back porch does not flutter and wrinkle. Thankfully, the film will remain in focus as the many people, crouched along the back porch, start to absorb the quickly moving desert images before them. The opening shot captures the glint of a tiny shiny dome lost in the vastness of a desert plain.

"That's Pine Gap."

Michael still musingly pictures in his mind the sight of himself flying in the Cessna pointing his little super 8 camera at this secretive totem of

imperial power. He had been sharing the flight with three other Arunda women who were returning to their respective communities.

It had been so different to be sitting quietly with these women in the van that was taking all of them to the aerodrome, after briefly spending the cold early morning in the small foyer of the hostel, with a group of noisy tourists preparing to go on a tour of the Kings Valley.

Hovering close to the ground the slow moving plane felt as if it was hanging from a thread while the earth below slowly revolved. It was striking how the meandering terrain with its spinifex grass and curving hills resembled the now familiar dot paintings.

Mad Dog Victim

When the plane landed at the community Michael's friends quickly greeted him as they urgently placed onto the plane a young woman whose leg had been badly bitten by a mad dog.

The Old Hand

"Well matey you been friends of the others for a long time?"

"A couple of years. I know them from Sydney. They asked me to come out here in case they decided to leave in the next few months."

"I wouldn't blame them if they left. As doctor and nurse they would get a good salary but they've got those two kids. It be really hard for a family to live out here for a few years. They get on really well with the locals though." The old hand stands up from his chair and moves over to his kitchen. "I better make meself a quick cuppa. I should be checking on that dog."

"The one that bit the woman?"

"Na, I shot that one yesterday morning; the woman who owned it has another one but she wants to keep it! She's got it tied up down the back of her place. The thing is this other dog is just as vicious. I've got to get an elder to get her to hand this beast over; she won't co-operate with me. The thing is she's a wild one that woman. I'm not sure if she'll listen to anyone."

"I couldn't believe it when I flew in yesterday morning and you were all there by the plane getting that woman onto it."

"It was real lucky that plane turned up when it did. She needed to be flown to Alice straight away."

"Yeah. It looked like an emergency. It was a pretty dramatic first impression for me."

"There's always some sort of emergency going on around here. Hard to believe for a place so quiet. Its a good thing the others keep such an open house. The locals feel they can drop by anytime if they've got a problem."

"Last night we had a whole mob of black women wearing their football beanies watching the Tooheys Cup!"

"Aussie Rules is the preferred sport though. A couple of days ago a truck came through picking up plenty of the young ones for a big game on another community. This afternoon you can watch them play kickbacks. Its a pity not

all of them get into sport. There's so many health problems on these communities, some of these young blokes are addicted to petrol-sniffing, there's little kiddies here who stay malnourished and its reckoned the HIV virus is going to devastate the communities in a way white fellas in the past could have only dreamed about. At least the alcohol ban has stopped some of the domestic violence - but it still goes on."

The kettle boils. "You want a cuppa?"

"You making coffee?"

"I can make you one."

Wildflowers

"I'm surprised I'm wearing a flannelette shirt. I thought it would have been real hot out here."

"Yeah, well it is winter matey," the old hand looks out the window of his small community house. "There's usually a lot more wildflowers around but there hasn't been any rain for a long time."

"Sounds like you've already got quite a wildflower to worry about."

The old hand turns from the window. "After lunch I should take you down to the women artists co-op. You can see what some other 'wildflowers' are doing for themselves and for this community. Its very promising."

Poor Fellow My Country

Flopping onto the mattress in the spare room. Munching on a honey sandwich while opening up the old hand's copy of Xavier Herbet's 'Poor Fellow My Country'. The opening paragraph with its regal description of a young Aboriginal boy fills the reader with wonder.

The 'Spirit-Taker'

After a few pages he stops to wipe off the sand that has gathered on his movie camera.

A smirk.

Two Aboriginal guys in an old beat up car had pretended to get angry with the white fella visitor for filming the community.

"Put that camera down! You want to steal our spirits!"

The two men had laughed as they watched the guilty looking white fella immediately drop his little movie camera to his side.

"You should go up to one of the surrounding hills to get a really good view of the whole community."

The other guy smiles and stretches out his hands. "Film the whole damn lot!"

Both men laugh.

"What's with all the abandoned cars just outside the grounds?" comes the curious inquiry.

Another laugh.

“Yeah broth’ when our cars konk out we jus’ leave ‘em - ain’t much else to do with ‘em.”
“You wan’ one of ‘em bombs? You jus’ take ‘im!” ”The desert can swallow up everything - like a python! You be careful matey: it don’t swallow up YOU!”
The two men then drove off leaving a cloud of dust a part of which is now being wiped off the ‘spirit-taker’.

The *Dowie*

There is a soft rattle on the flyscreen door. “Let yourself in!” Michael soon gets up and enters the main living area of the house.
The old man is standing just inside the door as he ventures over to the kitchen area to put on the kettle.
“Take a seat on the lounge. You want something to eat? I’ve just been down to the canteen.”
“Na matey I’ve just had lunch.” replies the old hand. ”You’re getting to know the place pretty well if you’ve been down to the shop.”
“The others came back for lunch and took me down there before going back to the clinic. It wouldn’t have been hard to spot anyway; its pretty big, almost like a hangar, compared to all these small fibro places.”
“It’s a regular supermarket matey and everyone’s more or less dependent on it. The whites still have a firm hold over this place. I’ll speak my mind, I don’t get much chance these days. I know the elders have a lot of say around here but the white fellas still have a monopoly on the sort of knowledge black fellas need to have. Take the teachers and medics: they’re all white fellas.” The old man who has taken out his pipe is stacking it with tobacco. “The desert used to be the supermarket here. The desert used to be the black fellas’ house. The desert even used to be the school; it even used to be the bloody television! The old ones still have their bush skills but I worry there’s not much incentive anymore for the young ones to maintain the traditional ways. I mean I can’t see the harm in becoming a doctor in the white fella way but still learn bush medicine.” The old man stands up to go over to the front door to light his pipe. “These black fellas got stuck in the one place and their minds got stuck.” The old hand puffs profusely until he is satisfied the tobacco is burning well. Michael leaves the old hand’s cup of tea on a small table that is in front of the lounge and then joins him by the front door to have a rollie.
“Like dying reeds in stagnant water. Matey the way I see it’s a real pity there’s tribal languages dying out along with a lot of very unique tribal know-how. I’ve been around when a huge corroboree has been on. You’ll see a lot of the old black fellas coming through after putting white clay on their faces; it feels as if you are surrounded by spirits. They have circumcision and initiation rites which would bring fear to many men: wandering in the desert on your own covered in the red sand of this ancient earth.”

"Anyhow what surprises me is how there is a lot of whites living on this community but you wouldn't know it from walking around this place. I mean what do we see now," Michael and the old hand sight several Arunda boys walking pass the house, "from what I understand there's *white* children on this community but except for the two living here I haven't seen any."

The old hand grins. "In a community I worked in the Kimberleys the principal of the school told me off for 'fraternising' with the blacks! As for this place if you want to see white children you need to go to the Friday crèche," states the old hand. "Its exclusive to white children. In my eyes that's a bit unfortunate but the whites have their reasons. For most of the whites out here the desert is a foreign world for them; that makes the Arunda people *foreigners* in their eyes. A fair few of the teachers are straight from college and doing their 'hard time' out here so they can get a good placement in Adelaide." A frown. "They should be getting the elders to help instruct the young ones." Another pause. "Each to their own matey. I've been to the big cities and I much prefer the life out here. I love it at night when I can see all those stars."

"Me too," agrees Michael. "Yet everyone feels comfortable with the world they're familiar with," he reasons, "that's human nature. I was thinking last night how I felt I was back in Sydney watching the tele in this lounge room. I mean if you close this front door you might as well pretend you are in the suburbs."

"That's the idea. You should see inside some of the white fella houses. Not like here and my place - though I must admit I sometimes lock my door to get a bit of privacy. The Arunda though have no idea about doors; there's no doors in the desert and we should always keep that in mind." says the old man gruffly.

"Well I think Australians have a special knack of turning anywhere where they live into a suburb. Alice Springs looks like Hurstville in the desert and Kiama down the south coast in New South Wales reminds me of Hurstville by the sea." smirks Michael. "As for this place - you're right," He flashes a glance at the living room, "*this* bloody door is hardly even ever closed let alone locked!"

Laughter.

Two Arunda women approach the house. One of them is holding a white toddler and Michael realises the child is the son of his hosts; they always have a few willing 'aunties' happy to mind their children while they work in the clinic. The two women reach the front door and eye the old hand before one of them speaks to Michael. "Hello...missus say we can use phone if you here; we use phone that okay?"

"Yeah...that's okay." replies Michael. "You know where it is?"

"Sure," smiles the woman. "We use phone before many times!"

The two women casually go to the phone and the one who had spoken to Michael starts dialling a number.

"I give the young one some milk that okay mister?" asks the other woman.

"Yeah yeah take whatever you like from the fridge for the little kiddie. I've just boiled some water if either of you want a tea or coffee. I guess you know where everything is."

"Na na we're right we not stay long." replies the woman. The other woman speaks quickly and excitedly on the phone in her language as if stating something urgent then her voice calms down as if she is now just passing on some general gossip. The woman hangs up, thanks Michael, and then with the other woman leaves.

"Quite a few of them use this phone," explains the old hand who has sat down to have his tea. "There's not many phones in this place and I think from this one there's no need to worry about paying for the call."

"You going to be shooting that dog?" asks Michael who is still by the door and is watching the two women walking back to the clinic.

The old hand shakes his head. "I found out I still have to wait for an elder to speak to that woman. However, to give the elders their due today they seem more preoccupied with the weather. There's been no rain for a while now and I think they want to do something about it. In the Kimberleys the tribes have the *Wandjina* who left imprints of themselves in rock caves after helping to form the world. The Kimberley people retouch these images and call on these spirits from the world of the *Dowie* to bring rain. The elders here want to organise a special corroboree to contact similar rain beings."

"I noticed a sprinkling of rain last night when I went out to have a look at the full moon."

"I noticed that too; someone's already been doing some special singing around here." The old hand sighs. "In the past I've heard elders sing in a really sad way. Sometimes I get the feeling that some Aboriginal people give up on really living. Like the young lads who kill themselves in our prisons. They get noticed in death with the traditional big funeral because they don't feel noticed in life. 'Nobodies' defiantly proving to the police and everyone else they are somebodies with the lethal control they display over their own bodies. It really shows us all up. They *know* we can't stop them." A pause. "Us whites – all we see is these corrugated shacks, the filfth…we don't realize that these people are the survivors of an apocalypse – we forget that!" The old hand suddenly raises his hat. Scratches his head. Calms himself down before continuing his monologue. "This community desires rain for the coming of rain would not only break the drought but more importantly mean the cycle of life is continuing. The *Wirinun* who are the tribal elders with supernatural powers will make contact with the rain spirits who, along with the souls of the dead, reside in the *Dowie.* It's an unseen world of vibrating thoughts that is said to exist beyond the speed of light. Anyhow the *Wirinun* can make contact with these spirits by tuning their thoughts to the same velocity as the *Dowie.* A passageway into eternity is opened up; a transfer of energy occurs which allows the *Wandjini* to revisit this world. When that happens the rains will come…"

AWAYE!

The old hand listens to an Aboriginal radio program.

'…the Arunda believe the creation beings slept beneath the crust of the earth in an underworld. The moment these eternal living creatures awoke and broke through to a featureless earth to shape it into what we see today it was the beginning point of time.

Some of these supernatural beings took on the physical shape of animals and plants to become spiritual totem ancestors. It is to these totem beings the Arunda associate their very twin soul nature as a major part of their essential identification with the eternal: there is the human soul or 'life' which is mortal and the other soul which is a reincarnation from a creation being, thus eternity is reborn with the birth of every new person.

The land is the mother of all life and thus the different supernatural totems are the spiritual parents of the Arunda people. The 'birth points' from where these Dreaming spirits emerged from the soil are considered as sacred sites with special creative eternal powers. Eternity came from the underworld to transform this physical reality and continues onwards to the limitless sky above us in the ongoing shapes of the moon, sun and stars; these celestial forms also initiated their journeys from the underworld. Eternity defines Time and the Arundu recognise eternity through their respect and observation of the creation period which brought this beautiful world into full being.

It's also been said Australia was sung into existence during the Dreamtime. However, with that said Aboriginal people want to move away from using the term Dreamtime to a more valid one which is The Creation-'

A young Arunda boy climbs a tree. "That could be your grandpa matey!"

Sydney

"Don't touch black rock mister white fellas get sick if touch this special rock." Michael looks over at the long black boulder that is jutting up from the surrounding rock outcrop. Michael has joined a school excursion from the community school into the desert. A small group of Arunda boys have been taking Michael walkabout to some large rocky mounds.

"You from Alice mister? We been once to Alice - it a big place."

"No...I'm from Sydney..."replies Michael.

"Sydney...you walk here from Sydney mister...Sydney a big place?"

"No. I caught the bus to Alice then flew here. It took me three days...Sydney is by the sea..." Michael didn't really know how he could possibly make these boys comprehend such a large metropolis as Sydney and realises these boys would also have never seen the sea. The boys show Michael some dark berries that they have picked off some bushes. Michael pops a few of these

into his mouth as he watches these boys build *wiris* out of branches from the bushes and from sticks on the ground, get inside them to protect them from the midday sun and have a nap. Michael walks over to the female teachers aides who are all Arunda and watches them dig down to the roots of a large clump of bushes. "This good spot mister," says one of the women to Michael. Another woman who has exposed a root smiles at Michael after she has cracked it open longwise with a blade to expose two witchetty grubs.

"Taste like pumpkin." comments Michael after eating his first witchetty grub cooked at the barbeque that the school staff had organised for the children. The Arunda women laugh at Michael and urge him to have another witchetty grub. Michael happily eats another of these desert delicacies as he looks at the scores of Arunda children who are eating and playing around the smoky cooking area and the Land Rovers and other four wheel drives being used to drive the students across the desert. These children are genuinely enjoying the chance to run about in the wide-open spaces of the desert that contrast so sharply to the confines of the community. On the back porch everyone watches on the makeshift calico screen the Arunda boys eating the berries they had found; set up and crawl into their humpies and seeing the Arunda women crack open the desert roots which reveal the witchetty-grubs. The desert had been revealed to Michael as a storehouse of life; while for him and for the others viewing the movie, the desert, despite its beauty, would, due to their ignorance, remain a place of certain death. The children continue to laugh and run around the desert bushes.

"They were happiest when they were always running around."

Michael's friends playing with their children on the front doorstep of the house. There is a close up of the two children hugging their mother then the camera scans over to their father. "His old man was also a doctor at this community."

Michael wearing a fez walking beside a camel; having gone with his medical friend and the old hand on an overnight trek to hunt for rabbits.

"They've ruined the land destroying the vegetation and wiping out the local marsupials."

"What about the fez?"

Michael looks to the back of the balcony and sees that the man who has asked the question is a tall elderly guitarist with his own black fez.

"The old timer who I had been talking about earlier lent it to me. It's from a town called Kuching in Sarawak. He was there during the war. Reminded me of a lot of my elderly plumber who was in the navy during the Korean War. Very honest. I know he's never going to rip me off."

A spectacular view of a large circular valley takes over the whole screen and leaves a brilliant red glow hang over the back porch as the orange flaming light of the setting sun highlights the deep red soil; especially along the sharply defined rim of this grand crater.

A few abandoned cars along the road outside the bounds of the community.

A disco scene with nearly a hundred Arunda children cheerfully dancing under a large mirror ball letting off a swarm of circling large coloured dots.

The Olgas at sunrise and of Uluru taken at spinning crazy angles: the red heart of Central Australia somersaulting through the sky.

"The locals reckon Uluru is the bend of a big boomerang sticking out. It was bloody cold that morning but didn't realise it until I had crawled out of the borrowed swag I had been sleeping in."

Michael had slept overnight in a local camping ground after gaining a lift to Uluru from the community to catch his morning bus to Port Augusta. It had been surreal to find himself amongst the noisy hotel complexes after the relative tranquillity and roughshod conditions of the community.

"Sydney in the desert..." he mutters remembering walking around the tourist shops and restaurants where lots of people were socialising and shopping.

Ambling over to a car park to have a quiet smoke while viewing the desert. An Arunda man standing on his own and looking out of place in this mainstream commercial environment. He smiles as the friendly white fella offers him a cigarette.

A security man spying on both men from a stairway.

Michael glances up at the stony faced guard after saying goodbye to the lone black man. He walks over to a bus stop where a minivan soon comes by to take him to the campsite.

Desert Batik

The old hand takes the visitor to the woman's co-operative where he is shown some of the beautiful batik work that is being done by the elderly women of the community.

An elderly Arunda woman sitting on a chair outlining with hot wax an intricate pattern onto the calico which she is holding.

"She's preparing the material before dyeing it." explains the old hand. "Batik was first introduced to some of the coastal communities before making its way down here. Usually the designs tell something of their life story."

A large finished batik.

"Were you saying earlier on that these batiks were for sale?"

The old hand nods his head. "The one you're looking at costs seventy dollars."

"I like it."

"They are beautiful colours." The old hand grins and shakes his head. "Its amazing isn't it? At first glance you wouldn't think in such a hard place it would be possible to produce such beauty. The desert is their inspiration; the thing is matey if you knew the desert like these people you'd understand it's like the Garden of Eden. The Arunda's knowledge of their surroundings is so important. This woman here actually did the batik. The little cross in the bottom half of the cloth means she's become a Christian. There's a lot of that

out here but the missionaries don't realise their religion eventually gets swallowed up by the Dreaming. Why don't you film her holding it."

"You sure its okay?" Michael asks pensively. "She won't think I'm stealing her soul or anything?"

The old hand smiles. "Matey boy its okay! Especially seeing it looks as if you're going to buy it!"

The Odyssey

Everyone on the back porch watches the old woman hold the long batik cloth with its wavy intricate overlapping patterns of browns and orange-yellow hues. The sun is shining into the room from the doorway behind the woman and the strong light is brilliantly highlighting the bright colours. Michael senses he is looking at something whose inner meaning will always remain beyond the comprehension of the audience; to be a mystery like life itself.

Someone whistles Thus Spoke Zarathusa and everyone realises the coloured cloth on the screen is as alien to them as the extra-terrestrial object in Kubrik's 2001.

The batik with its flowing wavy rhythms lingers for another second on the screen.

Mary Magdalene

The light turns green.

"So what happened?" inquires Virgil who dankly peers inside the dark interior of the Greek corner shop which has just closed.

"I walked back to the North Indian restaurant and passed this cafe filled with all these grunge types." Michael takes note of the gold-coloured antique phone on top of the RED PHONE stand just inside the closed shop. "A woman who only came up to my shoulders walked out asking for two dollars. She pissed me off. I said to her what'd she expect to get for a lousy couple of bucks?"

Michael, Dan and Virgil walk by the leafy trees and terraces of Bourke Street. Across the road at the intersection with Albion Street a woman who looks all doped up is trying to hitch a ride. The woman's long hair is shaped like a beehive, her top is torn and she is swaying on the road.

A sports car stops.

"How opp-or-tune!" Virgil points at the woman as she gets into the car that quickly drives away.

Michael continues. "This woman said to me she had no money and needed to buy some nappies for her children; she also told me her father had just died then she burst into tears. We sat down to have a coffee. She was very grateful that I would pay for the drinks. This was better than handing out two dollars."

Michael, Dan and Virgil walk by the derelict men and women who are sitting in a line along a railing outside the Central Wesley Mission stone lodge. An old man has his hand on the exposed bosom of a drunken aged woman. Another man wearing a cap is standing with his arms outstretched

with a bottle in his hand. The silent figures are indifferent to the three men who glance at them. Their craggy faces remind Michael and Virgil of the caricatures by Leonardo da Vinci.

Bourke Street is very quiet compared to the noise being made by the comings and goings of the patrons of the Taxi Club on Flinders Street and to the busy thoroughfare of Taylor Square. There are other men sitting on milk crates in the traffic island including an elderly Aboriginal couple. One man stands up and takes off his shirt waving it above his head.

"Gilligan's Island." quips Michael.

"The Raft of the Medusa." retorts Virgil.

The three men go and sit down by a large iron sculpture that has several struts with metal circles at the end pointing skywards. These hard edge shapes coming out of the flat stretch of sand are a sharp contrast to the clump of palm trees that shelter the drunks.

"I said to her that I would do what I could." Michael flicks his dying cigarette onto the sand. The smoke from it drifts up along a rail. "She said she had two young children at a friend's place in Mary Street. We also had to buy powdered baby milk because the stress of her father's death had caused her body to stop producing any milk. Her bottom lip would quiver. Sometimes the whole chin would shake. When the whole chin shook I kept expecting this woman to weep. She had this long straggly black hair and this weather beaten face-"

"Reminds me of the wooden piece of Mary Magdalene by Donatello." remarks Virgil. "I saw it in *Firenze*." He taps his empty shirt pocket. "I really did need to buy some more cigarettes. Do either of you bother with tailor mades?"

"She'd been hitchhiking with her two little kids. It turns out this guy had picked her up. He had helped her out during the day but he didn't have much money. The thing is he's still with her."

"I suppose it is a little bizarre..." murmurs Virgil who gratefully takes a rollie from Dan.

Michael shrugs his shoulders. "I half-seriously thought they should both go to the old Greek priest across the road who ran a soup kitchen from his church grounds. I walked out of the cafe with her and came up to this station wagon parked in a no standing zone. I wondered if some sort of scam was going on but I couldn't figure one out. This guy kept nervously staring back at the police vans. She explained to him what we were doing. He gave us a quick lift up the road. I think he was really glad to get away from the police. The woman and I went to this all night chemist by the railway station. After a while – as she turned out to be really finicky – we ended up buying two lots of nappies and a large container of powdered milk. The whole thing cost forty dollars! She wanted me to buy her some cigarettes as well but I thought the guy could do that. The woman also kept saying how she was hoping to put her kids into this refuge called Phoebe House. She was having an interview early in the following week.

She hugged me and was crying out of appreciation of me helping her. She wanted my phone number but I didn't give it to her. She thought I was a saint so I told her to go and see a priest!"

"Virgil!"

"Sharon!"

Charon

A tall woman with long blonde hair and wearing a sailors outfit steps out of a taxi. She runs over to Virgil. Another woman - dressed in a silver outfit - is with her.

"Where have you been?" asks Virgil.

"To a fancy dress in Woolloomooloo! Keeping some American sailors happy from the U.S.S. *Cronus*!"

"This is Daniel and his friend is Michel-*angelo!"*

"I think you should introduce yourself honey!" Sharon proclaims to her friend.

"Why I'm Penny from the Jupiter 2!" Penny swivels her hips and waves her two palms in front of her.

"We're heading down to the Senate." states Sharon. "Why don't you three come."

"Are you interested in politics?" quips Michael.

"Well as for me my friend," replies Virgil. "Only with the gender *politik!"*

"The Senate is a nightclub." Sharon frowns at Michael then faces everybody. A smile. "I'm the sailor so I'll lead the rowing team!"

The five crewmembers

the road to head down Oxford Street swaying their arms in unison as if they are rowing in a boat across a river. When they reach the outside of the Senate Michael sees there is a crowded restaurant. "These people look like gluttons compared to those poor bastards we just saw on Gilligans Island."

"Quit with the social work!" reprimands Dan.

"Yeah...yeah...I know but I can't help noticing the differences around here..."

The Senate

Virgil glances down at Michael. "Why look back at that squalor? Why not walk up these brilliant steps which will lead us into a chamber of joy?"

"You're paraphrasing the *Inferno*." observes Michael.

"Michelangelo *reads!"* Virgil is smiling as he grabs Michael's hand to take him from the harsh night lights of Oxford Street to the dark stairway of the Senate. Noise. Michael is overcome by blaring sounds. There is a thump, thump, thump of relentless music as the speakers surround him.

"The beat stays the same! The standard never changes!" screams Virgil.

The club scene seems like a vast hallucination.

Dan, Sharon and Penny are laughing. Yet they cannot be heard as human speech dies underneath the metal crescendo. Their faces are disappearing every second second as the strobe lights send this world into total darkness,

total light. This world is in slow motion. While the dancing crowd gesticulates as one beast.

The Empress

A middle-aged woman dressed in a low cut white skirt wearing a low cut white blouse who with her long peroxide hair; who with her long fingers; who with her large bosom is caressing the men near her. The Empress kisses a fat man. The Empress smiles in her drunken state looking for one more man - while other men laugh.

Virgil whispers into Michael's ear. "Is she a friend of yours?"

Major Kong

Feeling feint Michael takes off his jacket and shirt then stands on top of a long wide marble bar leaning his lean torso against a long wide marble pillar. The white t-shirt is reflecting the staccato light that reveals the black insignia of a cowboy riding a horse downwards above the words Gods Cowboys. The cowboy has a halo above his hat and in his hands he waves a lasso.

A dancer points at the shirt. "MAJOR KONG!"

Paolo & Fransesca

A beer is drunk quietly; the human mass that is below is watched quietly. The writhing monster with many heads surges to the left, to the right, to the beat; while two dancers to the side turn their bodies, swivel their hips, glide their feet.

"Paolo…"

"Fransesca…"

A bouncer politely asks all three to step down. The two dancers embrace as lovers; jumping to the floor, as if leaping off a cliff.

Cerberus

Going down the stairs to reach the stale breeze of the city street. It rains. The gutters fill-up with water. Although, sweating profusely, shirt and jacket are put back on. Three dogs yelp at the entrance. A diner throws a large piece of cake into the gutter. One of the dogs leaps; he has the cake between his jaws.

Neon

Ears wildly throb. Looking at people as if invisible. A veil of silence. Like being in a cave beneath a waterfall. Dazed. Passers-by scurry for cover from the downpour. The neon glistens. The world blurs. Heavy rain running down both cheeks. Falling rivers.

Anti-Christs

Two gluttons at a café table joke, laugh, pretend to offer food to a wet beggar.

"Anti-Christs!" yells the drunken old man.

As he stomps away the old beggar accidentally swings his torso into Michael's shoulder.

A Thousand Worlds

While the strong North Coast sun continues to shine into Lisa's place, Michael's mind is now further jolted.

'A room crowded with strangers. Wanting to escape. Going out onto a roof balcony. Alone. The light patter of rain wetting clothes and hair. The bright lights of Kings Cross. Drunken bloated men blowing long plastic horns as midnight approaches. A rub of the shoulder. The memory of almost coming to blows when elbowed on a crowded street walking to here. Below child prostitutes. Peering at men in suits. Stalking close to the main strip. At the endpoint of a grotesque funnel of human vulnerability beginning at the outer suburbs. A chill. The grinding of teeth. The backdoor of the terrace suddenly opens. Hey Jude is clearly heard.

"I don't like this world."

"Listen Mick-"

Fireworks start to burst over the William Street skyline; it includes the small squat buildings lit up by the signs of the Las Vegas Lounge and O'Malley Hotel. A large fireball reduces the world below to matchbox size.

"-there are a thousand worlds."

A thousand spheres within the fiery universe above; with each white circle a thousand vignettes are recalled. The glow of this vast sun fades on a human face. The party is left. At the Sydney Aussies Rules Club the barman's offer for a lift up the coast is accepted.

After leaving this New Year Eve party in Darlinghurst Michael had been elbowed in the street by a drunk reveller. A tense stand-off was defused when the angered man's girlfriend dragged him away. This minor incident was another experience to be plotted on one of Michael's many memory planes laid out like the inner-city streets around him that evening; so as to not only cross physical space on any given footpath but often differing, overlapping emotional territories where personal memories are juxtaposed and fixed in a city maze of the past. Recollections that can be brought to the fore at any moment to initiate innumerable psychological harmonies and tensions; to affect the present and so consequently: the future. Streets as tributaries for the mind; suburbs as large floating mental shapes, on which Michael's memories work like abstract colours to pull or repel each other to help him to focus much like a picture his moods, feelings; to determine his course in the physical world.

Yet right now a much lower layered memory – this moment outside the nightclub - was reminding Michael of this New Year's Eve that had just passed. However, images from that 'other night' re-emerge.

Life is but a Dream

"Row row row your boat gently down the stream," sings Sharon. "How's the rest go? Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily as if..." Sharon bends over holding her knees and dry wretches at the dirty rainwater flowing over the pavement.

"Lets go to the Bentley Bar for a nightcap." remarks Penny whose wet silver suit glistens under the streetlights.

Michael swishes a hand through his wet hair. "I don't care where we go as long as it's away from this neon."

"I'll collect Daniel." states Virgil. "He's yet to leave the den!"

"See you there!" commands Sharon.

Cowboys

As Sharon, Penny and Michael walk pass the Courthouse Hotel they see two tall lanky men wearing red singlets, white Stetsons and denims; their faces are gaunt and both have long black moustaches. One cowboy sits on the knee of the other who has knelt down.

The Minotaur

The trio are about to walk down Campbell Street when Sharon suddenly grips her stomach. "I'm not feeling too well. Lets stop at my place for a minute."

"You live close?" asks Michael.

"We're standing outside it." Rummaging through a small handbag. "Found it!" A key is dangled.

The hallway is lit up with dull yellow bulbs. "The Subway." A stairwell. After several flights another corridor.

The flat key is jangled.

The unit is tiny. A large glass window streaked by rain. Below is the busy night sprawl of Taylor Square with its pulsating lights.

"It's like looking inside a cave." whispers Sharon who is standing directly behind Michael.

On the wall above the open kitchen is a James Griffin and the Subterraneans band poster.

"You like them?"

"You caveman?" replies Sharon. "The polysyllable must have died a quick death in the suburbs."

"I saw them years ago; they were really good."

Sharon has placed her two index fingers on either side of her forehead and uses them to nudge Michael's chin. "I'm the Minotaur!"

"Ole!" shouts Penny.

Michael stands in matador pose with a tea towel in his hands. Sharon bends her back and in quick succession attempts to ram her horns into Michael's torso.

"Ole!" yells Penny.

"Ole!" yells Michael.

"Ole!" sighs Sharon who pants as she busily twists and turns her body in the confined space.

The matador thrusts into the heart of the beast with a chopstick.

The wounded creature falls back onto a sofa.

Penny places her head beside Sharon's bosom. "Now I'm dead too."

"Death and sex." yawns Sharon as she spreadeagles her arms. "The Spanish never think the two are far apart."

"M*en* are always lifting up their horns." announces Penny.

"Life is fucking primal."

"Life *is* fucking!" laughs Penny.

Sharon gives Penny a small peck on the lips then sneers at the victor. "Have you noticed my thinness?"

The scrawny body underneath the floppy sailors outfit is easily imagined. "HIV?"

"Yes caveman. Pen is taking care of me…this place is payed off so when I pop it..." Sharon drops her hand down to massage Penny's stomach. "…it'll be her's."

"A real start."

"Madonna and child." Michael grins.

"We're going to change out of this gear so maybe us two should meet you and the others later on?" suggests Sharon. "You know your way down?"

"I'll find it." A last glance at the two reclining lovers. "Goodnight."

"I *am* night!" laughs Sharon.

The Riddler

Shutting the door. Still hearing laughter. Going down the dim corridor to the stairwell. There is no light. In the darkness groping at the wall to find the light switch.

A single flame spirals up the stairwell.

The flame ascends very slowly. The shape of a man. The flame goes out.

The light switch is flicked.

Nothing happens.

"DAMN!"

"WHOSE UP THERE?"

"WHAT'S IT TO YOU!"

"HAVE YOU GOT A LIGHT?"

"MATCHES!"

"THAT'S GOOD ENOUGH! MY LIGHTER FLUID'S GONE OUT!"

"HOW COME THERE'S NO LIGHT?" comes the inquiry from the top.

"THE FUSE HAS BLOWN, THAT'S ALL. ITS WHY NO ONE TRUSTS TO USE THE ELEVATOR ANYMORE! SOMEONE CAN FIX IT IN THE MORNING!"

"WHY DON'T YOU COME UP?"

"BECAUSE I'M HALF BLIND - LITERALLY!"

"I'M COMING DOWN!" Michael wants to find out what the demon below actually means. His boots on the metal steps make the same clanging sounds as before but in the blackness the heavy metal noise seems much louder.

"GET OUT YOUR MATCHES YOU STUPID BASTARD!"

The stench of alcohol.

"Why-have-you-stopped?" Wheezes the demon.

Lighting a match. In front of Michael is an old man wearing a beret and an eye patch over his right eye. The flame catches the glint of a small gold sphinx on his suit lapel. The match goes out.

"What riddle is this? Where are you?"

"Don't worry old man. I'm right here. Sorry to sneak up on you but you can't be too careful these days."

"WELL BLOODY WELL LIGHT ANOTHER MATCH!"

"I've got to save these matches so best to leave them alone until we really need them."

"WELL I FUCKING NEED THEM NOW TO GET OUT OF HERE!"

"Now now a man of your age shouldn't be swearing."

"YOU LITTLE PUNK!"

Air swooshes by Michael's face. "PUT THE CANE DOWN!"

"I NEED SOME LIGHT!" The old man strikes his cane against the railing.

"DON'T WORRY!"

"LIGHT!" The old man keeps rattling his cane.

A match is lit to calm the old man.

"THERE YOU ARE!" The man tries to hit Michael with his cane.

The match is snuffed out.

"LET THERE BE SOME LIGHT!"

"YOU HAVE TO KEEP THAT CANE DOWN. BETTER STILL HAND IT OVER!"

"NEVER! GREASY PUNK! TRYING TO SCARE AN OLD MAN!"

"ITS MORE *YOU* SCARING ME!"

"ARE WE GOING TO STAND HERE ALL NIGHT?"

"MAYBE."

"WHAT DO YOU WANT?"

"JUST TO GET PASS!"

"ME TOO, BUT I WANT A LIGHT."

Michael decides to tone down his voice. It also maybe for the best to keep the conversation going. "I saw a sphinx badge on your lapel. Looked nice."

"A lovely lady friend who lives at Byron Bay bought it for me. A VERY LOVELY LADY!"

"Byron aye...?" Michael hears the old man unscrew a bottle top and take a swig. "This woman friend of yours - I guess she's as pretty as a sphinx," jokes Michael, "…hey mate?"

The cane is violently rattled. "FUCKING PUNK!"

"TOUCHED A SORE POINT HAVE WE!"

"MY *SPHINX*!" howls the old man. "MY EGYPTIAN LOVE! MY CLEO-" The cane drops.

Michael swoops and grabs the cane to discover the old man tugging the other end.

"PUNK! ITS MINE!"

"LET GO!" Michael is surprised by the strength of the old man. There is not much space between both men and Michael decides to drop his end and attempt to push the old man out the way. As soon as Michael lets go the old man falls back.

"FUCK!" Michael is also lying down on the steps after also losing his balance and his ankle is feeling sore from impacting with the stairwell.

The old man is weeping.

"LET ME THROUGH! WHO ARE YOU?!" Michael has no sympathy.

The ripping of paper. "Take this."

Michael is hit by a cardboard object. He picks it up to discover it is a scrunched up Marlboro packet without the top - this is inside the empty packet.

"I took out the cigarettes." states the old man. "Will you light me one of them if I throw over two?"

"Keep it old man. Just throw me the one."

"Very generous of you."

"What's with the Marlboro packet?"

"Read what's inside."

Michael lights another match and sees how pathetic the old man looks as he lies on the stairwell a little below him. The old man's hand is firmly gripping the cane but his hand is shaking; a tear from his good eye has trickled down his face which is all puffed up from wheezing. After lighting the old man's cigarette Michael doesn't think to hand it over but spears it towards him. The filter end hits the old man's chin which causes the lit end to flick up towards his eye.

"DO YOU WANT TO BLIND ME!" The old man picks up the cigarette after it falls onto his crumpled suit. The old man then slams the cane just the one time against the stairwell to express his frustration.

"Sorry mate."

"READ!"

Michael angles the match upwards to keep it alight. "What animal is that which in the morning goes on four feet, at noon on two and in the evening upon three?"

"Do you know the answer?"

"It rings a bell..."

"Answer it and I'll let you through - and you won't have to give me a match!"

"This riddle is from a Greek legend...Oedipus...THE ANSWER IS MAN!"

"WHY?!" the old man again hits the rail with his cane.

"Because a child walks on fours, a man in his prime walks with his two legs and an old man uses a..."

"HE USES A CANE!"

Michael blows out the match before the flame burns his fingers.

"SHE SENT ME THAT RIDDLE WITH THE BADGE!"

Michael hears the old man crumple up another piece of paper.

"SHE SAYS I'M PAST IT! MY SPHINX HAS KILLED ME WITH METAPHOR!"

"I'LL GIVE YOU THE WHOLE MATCHBOX IF YOU LET ME THROUGH!"

"JUST MAKE YOUR WAY OVER ME BUT MIND THE JOHNNIE WALKER! I DON'T GIVE A FUCK ANYMORE!"

Michael's ankle is less sore. He stands up. Cautiously walks over to the old man who is still lying on the steps. "Here's the matches." The matchbox is carefully placed on the old man's heaving chest.

"I'm-pissing-in-my-pants." confesses the old man.

"Listen matie, I'll take you up to your room." offers Michael.

"Piss *OFF!*" eerily laughs the old man.

"Let me help you up."

"FUCK OFF!" The old man once more bangs his cane.

The Scorpion

"Ahoy Michelangelo!" Like a shipwreck survivor Virgil holds up a slumbering Dan as he staggers around the corner of Kinselas. "We thought we'd be running late!"

"What's up with him?"

"He's not survived the den! Where are the girls?"

"They're at home. They live in this building. With the art deco. They might come down later..."

Virgil looks upwards. "We will not wait for any 'second coming.' Those 'angels' will create their own paradise!"

Michael grabs Dan's free arm to help haul him to the Bentley Bar where he is flopped onto a seat.

The bar is dark, crowded and filled with blaring music. Virgil's face is covered with moving coloured circles. He smiles at a young guy who looks remarkably fresh-faced. "Hello Gerry…"

"Whose he?" inquires Michael.

"A former associate. Many of his present customers know him as The Scorpion as he is one of Sydney's biggest dealers."

Dan's head jolts up.

"I'll get two beers." Michael walks over to the bar where he sees William Blake's Nebuchadnezzar painted on the top. He is staggering on all fours in the wilderness descending into madness.

Sailing Away

Nick Cave's Shipping Song is playing.
"Here's your beer."
"Well my friends I have to go off. It's been an interesting evening. *Adu*!"
"Danny lets drink up and get out of here."

Marlon Brando

After walking all the way down to Devonshire Street Dan suggests that they stop and rest in the park that is adjacent to a large block of housing commission flats.
"This bench will do." proclaims Dan. "I'm stuffed."
"That's okay. Just don't fall asleep on me."
"No worries. How far to the car now?"
"Car?" replies Michael hesitantly. "Its not too far. You want a lift home?"
"That's okay, isn't it?"
"Sure...its just that you can practically walk from here."
"Yeah I know but I'm really fucked up."
"You must be...let's have a smoke."
"That Lisa..."mutters Dan.
"You still thinking about - tonight..."
"She makes my blood boil Mick!" exclaims Dan. He yawns. "When's the last time I've walked back home with you at the end of a pub night?"
"It's been a while." replies Michael.
"I think it was the time we went down Liverpool Street and you yelled out 'Free Cyprus!' outside the Cyprus - Hellene Club. 'Berlin wall!' You shouted. 'What about the corrugated wall dividing Nicosia!'"
Michael smiles. "That's right we'd been to see a movie first at the Mandolin."
"What the hell was it?" asks Dan.
"I think it was a double."
"A Streetcar Named Desire and On the Waterfront."
"Yeah that's right. Two Marlon Brando black & whites."
"I liked how that priest stood up for the rights of those dockworkers."
"Yeah I know. He's the sort of priest I was thinking that street woman in Newtown should have seen." Michael flicks away his butt.
"Is that so? Where's your car parked?"
"Its not far. Maybe two or three blocks. Tired?"
"My oath. Work tomorrow."

Ilias

"I'm wasted." Dan says tiredly.

Michael nervously peers through the back window then carefully opens his door. He doesn't want to make any noise. Slowly flicking up the window lock on the passenger door Michael only opens it halfway so there will be no sound.

"Your door's bung?" asks Dan as he slumps into the front passenger seat.

"Hinges." states Michael curtly.

"Why don't you *ever* clean up the backseat!"

"I know. I know..."

"Are you waiting for the next council cleanup…how's that time there were mushrooms growing beside the accelerator pedal…" Daniel slumps into his seat. "What the…" He picks up a book from under his feet. Peruses the back cover: "*No 'cappuccino' multiculturalism*." Dan throws the book onto the back seat.

Michael watches where the book lands. "Be careful mate!" he remonstrates. "Illias is a good book! I got angry for my parents when I read that! When they first came here they had to put up with a lot of crap from you lot! Haven't you seen They're a Weird Mob?"

"I suppose I'll have to face a lot of crap when I get home."

The steering wheel lock is taken off. The engine key is turned.

"Its konking out." Michael sweats.

"Its cold."

The engine finally ticks over.

"It's purring alright now Micky Boy!" exclaims Dan.

"Nice car mate!" Two teenagers outside Fatima's Take Away.

Michael glares at his admirers. "I get that all the time with this car."

"Why you so edgy?" inquires Dan.

"It's been a long night."

"Not as long as mine will be…" suggests Dan. "Drive to Newtown. A Korean guy in this trailer by the railway makes the best shawamas-"

"Thought you were keen to hit the sack…"

"Not if I can avoid going home for another twenty minutes…" A chuckle. "A busker is always playing rap outside the station. Last Saturday night I went to the Bank Hotel with some work mates after being on a site all day. Lisa thinks I visited my mum. Anyhow, this guy now has a band playing with him. We touched up these three gorgeous spunks dancing away…" Dan laughs. "Those spunk rats were really horny. I nearly got into the pants of one of them. Lisa would flip if she ever found out!"

Michael grins.

Kimba

Dan yawns. A drawn out period of silence then he speaks. "She's a bit of a lioness that Lisa. She can really lash you with that tongue of hers." He smirks. "Kimba, Kimba the wh-i-t-e...lion..." Dan's humming tapers off as he goes to sleep.

Michael feels a nudge in the back of his seat. As the car turns off Cleveland Street he whispers: "He's asleep."

Lisa pops her face up. "I slunk down off the backseat onto the floor of the car when I heard my 'dearest' ask about the passenger door. Don't worry Mick I don't want to cause you anymore trouble."

The car is pulling up outside Dan's place.

"I ought to steal his car and drive through every red light camera along Parramatta Road-"

"Get into your house straight away then I'll wake him up!" Michael orders under his quickening breath.

"He's starting to snore..."

"Just go!"

Lisa doesn't budge.

"Do it!"

Lisa glares at Michael through the rear view mirror. "Okay..."

Michael watches the front door close. A light goes on in the hallway and then it goes off. Michael then notices a figure sitting near the front door of the house.

Robert

"Dan! Dan!" Michael is shaking Dan's shoulder.

"We're here Mick?" Dan inquires sleepily. "In Korea?"

"No!"

"At my place…"

"Yeah! See ya later!"

"Robert's out the front..."

"You mean that guy? What's he doing there?"

"See the white grating underneath the door? Robert hides his wine flask in the space behind it. He's a homeless guy from Scotland. I caught him one night getting his wine out. Not that I mind. The rule is he can sit on a milk crate near the door as long as he minds his own business. Sometimes I offer him a beer and a few ciggies."

"That's good of ya..."

"Its nothing...I often wonder...he must see a lot that happens around here..."

"I'm sure he's got a few tales to tell...I'll see ya Dan."

"Maybe we can get together up at the Shakespeare during the week... "

"Yeah. Maybe...bye..."

The Kindness of Strangers

Red traffic lights. The Cricketers Arms on the right corner diagonally opposite. This Redfern pub is usually patronised by Kooris. The lights turn green. Across from the intersection a lone figure is tentatively sticking his finger out.

"Where you heading too?"

"St. Peters..."
"That's a little bit out of my way but then again I'm in no hurry. Get in."
"Thanks man. I've been waiting here for nearly an hour."
"Well no one's going to pick up a big guy like you this time of night."

The passenger is not fat but of a very solid build. He is wearing khaki shorts and a loose white T-shirt that is covered over by his long black dreadlocks. There is a heavy odour of beer about him and a slight slurring in his speech. Suddenly the hitchhiker sighs and relaxes his otherwise tense body, it signals a belief that he's in safe hands. "Why are you doing this?"

"Doing what?" Michael is perplexed.

"Giving me a lift..."

"Its no big deal, is it?"

The passenger's eyes are squinting. "I dunno...I've never experienced such kindness..."

"Its okay mate, you looked like you were never going to get a lift. Couldn't imagine a taxi picking you up either."

After driving through Alexandria another set of red lights are faced at a turn-off to the Princes Highway. "Which way do you want to go?"

"That's the bottom of King Street to our right, huh?"

"That's right."

"Is there any chance you're heading down the May Street turn-off?"

"So its more Sydenham you want to go to?"

"Na brother, just drop me off after we get off the highway."

"I can take you all the way home if you like."

"I can walk from there."

The car goes around the corner. "Looks like we're here."

Michael's passenger rests his hand on Michael's shoulder to express his gratitude.

"Mate, if it makes you feel any better I saw a movie a little while ago that talked about the 'kindness of strangers.'"

"Thanks…" A tap on the shoulder. The stranger leaves the car. He doesn't look at the vehicle drive off, being more intent to take some tobacco out of a leather satchel. Through the rear view mirror the hiker is then seen going down a side street.

Ocean of Regret

"Nice pictures." remarks Michael.

"Looks like the coffee's ready." Lisa strokes Melissa's hair as she sleeps in her lap. "Ta, I think you've seen most of them before. The mountain you drew this morning is a women's sacred site."

"Now our next song is Ocean of Regret by Neil Murray."

"That brings back a few memories." Michael quietly pours the coffee into two cups.

Northern Exposure

"On Tuesdays I always go up and remind Blue I'll be up later to watch Northern Exposure. You can come up with me before we go for a walk."

"Yeah that's fine. Here's your coffee."

"Just leave it by my knee. Might as well let it cool down for a bit while I finish with Melissa's hair. Doesn't she look precious when she's asleep?"

"Yeah I can well understand what you were saying before. Melissa's a beautiful kid. You're lucky Lisa."

Lisa smiles." Yeah I'm lucky..."

Melissa murmurs.

"Could you get the pram from the backyard?" asks Lisa. "That'd be a great help."

Melissa wakes up.

The backdoor slams as Michael walks in with the pram.

"Thanks Mick."

"Its hot out there!"

"Lets go upstairs."

Blue

Lisa knocks on a screen door. "Hello! Blue. HELLO!"

"I hear you! I'm washing my hands!"

"Okay! I've got a friend with me today!"

"Goodo!"

The cricket is on the radio. The sea and snippets of beach in between the houses and trees can be seen. "Good view."

Blue opens the wire door. "Come in. I see the little one's asleep."

"She keeps dropping off." remarks Lisa.

"Are you staying long enough for a cuppa?"

"We just had some coffee."

"So that's a no is it?..."

"Well...a weak tea for me please…" concedes Lisa.

"You wouldn't have a spare stubbie?"

Blue smiles. "Your mate's not shy is he?"

"Oh sorry I haven't introduced you! Michael. Mick meet Malone…"

The strong firm grip of a large hand.

"I've got two Reschs longnecks in the fridge."

"That's nice of you Blue but I'm sure Mick will settle for a tea as well."

"Malone doesn't mind sharing a beer. Its good weather for having one."

"Your mate's right."

"You see?" challenges Michael.

"Well then - a beer it is!" Lisa is bemused by this dance of manners.

Michael sits down on a cane chair while Lisa and Malone share an antique thirties sofa.

A crisp light wafts through a large glass door that allows everyone to see the sea. It is a bright clear day.

Blue on blue: an azul heaven.

A few deep shadows compete with the strong sunlight for ascendency of the house interior.

"Your place has got a bit of an old world feel." comments the first-time-visitor.

"Yes…I have lots of antiques. Some would call it clutter."

"Mick's Greek." states Lisa.

"Greek Cypriot, Lisa - not Greek -"

"Don't meet too many Greeks up here."

Michael slouches. "Lisa tells me you were in Greece and Crete during the war-"

Lisa holds her breath.

A suspicious look. "I spent most of the Balkan campaign retreating from village to village." Everything seems very still. A face turning to stone. An old, gnarled hand clawing the armrest. "I somehow…*lived*. I was a labourer. In Germany, Poland. France." The bottom lip quivers. "Lets open the other longneck."

"I'll get it."

"Michael also does art – like me." states Lisa who is keen to change the topic. "He did this wonderful drawing of the mountain by Mullumbimby this morning."

"I haven't mentioned to you Lisa but I've been learning to do some etching. Gregor, is teaching me." Looking towards Blue. "He's a social worker and sometime- community artist." The beer is opened. "I did this window scene based on a friend's old farmhouse. He lives near Dorrigo. He and his girlfriend just decided one day to leave Sydney for good and that's where they ended up. When I get back I'll send you a print and I'll also do one of the mountain."

Gregor

"Line and feeling…"

Michael picks up an etching needle and scribes into the brown syrupy wax that has dried on a large zinc plate.

"Remember: you are scratching into eternity."

The afternoon passes on the back porch of the Drummoyne house. When the work on the plate is finished it is placed in an acid bath.

"I've mixed a weak solution for you. It's twelve parts water and one part nitric acid. The lines will appear softer. See those bubbles forming over the exposed lines? You use this feather to remove them so the acid can continue its work. The longer the plate is in the acid the deeper the bite will be. The lines can then take more ink."

Gregor presents a small etching he has just printed: two Balinese women carry baskets of food on their heads while on the left is a temple which within its dark womb interior are four forming figures.

"They look like women…"

"That's right. They're waiting to be fully shaped. They'll then join the others who are in the light. Those two villagers are taking food offerings to

visiting gods to thank them for their creation. Anyhow you can see how dark the lines are. I left the plate in the acid for an hour and a half. It's copper so that meant mixing up a much stronger solution. Three to one."

"The acid never penetrates the wax?"

"Never."

Holy Tree Holy Mountain

"The Tree of Life. In Indonesian batiks it serves as a symbolic link between earth and heaven. Ancestor-gods climb up and down such a vine that is usually on a cosmic mountain. When people see a volcano they think of destruction. However, volcanoes produce a very rich warm soil that allows for good crops. Life. I climbed at night a holy Javanese volcano named Mt. Merapi. It was like an underworld. At sunrise from the summit you can see the clouds blanket the world. I suddenly thought I was in nirvana. I can easily understand why this mountain inspired the building of Borobudur which is nearby."

Nicaraguan Boy

"I'll show you how I actually make a print. Don't worry about your plate in the acid. You can leave it alone. Go grab a couple of stubbies from the kitchen."

Gregor covers a plate with black ink applying it with a square rubber piece.

"This gauze is called talin and it's used for wiping. I then use newspaper to lightly rub off the excess. The only ink that should be left is that in the grooves. I've soaked some white printmaking paper in water. It's in between a towel to get rid of the excess." Gregor places the paper against his cheek to check it is still a little wet. "The water helps the ink to lift onto the paper when the plate is squeezed." The paper is put over the plate that is lying on the bed of the press. A thin white blanket covers everything, pressure is applied and a wheel is turned to take the plate through the steel rolls. Afterwards, screws are loosened to release the pressure. Lifting up the felt blanket Gregor carefully takes the paper off the plate.

Michael is shown the melancholy face of a boy wearing a peaked cap and an old suit. He is holding a thin wooden box that contains rows of chewing gum packets.

"He's selling those to make a living."

"This guy looks sad but he also seems to have some sort of integrity about him as well."

"Yeah, I'm really glad you said that." A smile. "It took me a long time to get the right look on his face: to make him sad but without appearing pathetic. I wanted him to keep a sense of personal integrity. It's got something to do with the shadow covering half of his face. Helps him to look mysterious. I did quite a number of proofs before I got the face just right."

"I thought once you've marked the plate that's it. I didn't think you could change anything."

Michael is shown a rod with a pointy flattened end. “This is a burnisher. I can use it to rub down the grooves on the plate to make them shallower. The plate can be put back in the acid if I want some of the grooves to return to their original depth. I can cover some areas with the wax and leave other areas on the plate unexposed to create different patches of light and dark. I can make a metal plate continually change its shape so its no longer a hard stable object but becomes organic. Almost throbbing. On paper I can capture the transformation. *Everything* can change Mick. Time for a beer.”

Fairweather

“Hey Blue I want to show Michael the pourer.”

“Its still in the backroom. I’ll bring it out.”

Malone returns.

“Nice glass. Looks like it’s meant to hold vinegar.” observes Michael.

“I bought it at a church fete. I’m painting it up.”

“I like the flowing lines. Any special reason why you’re painting it up here?”

“Lisa’s working from a book about an artist called Ian Fairweather. It is precious to me so it always stays in this flat.”

“Blue is it okay I show it to Michael?”

A frown. “Yes. That’s okay. Just have to get up again. It’s in the locked bookcase.”

Michael ambles around the living room and views two prints that are side by side by a doorway. One is of a boatman with his head hidden by a coolie hat rowing through some water scrub. “I like this.”

“That old man used to row around Sydney Harbour. There is a story he was sometimes used by the local underworld to move contraband. No one knew much about him. He was pretty much a solitary figure. Here’s the book.”

“Ta.” Lisa holds it.

“The other print is of two Indonesian boys flying a kite. They’re both done by a local artist. Has a gallery café at Brunswick Heads. He introduced me to Fairweather.” A pause. “See that on the sofa?”

Michael looks at a purple pillowcase that has on it floating rough edged orange and mauve overlapping triangles.

“Has a placid watery feel…he observes rock pools, trees, rivers etcetera then dyes a lot of fabric.”

A look at the large broad strokes of deep browns and muted blues, yellows and greys in the book allows Michael to see the connection to the grassy rhythmic design on the pourer.

Mother & Child

“I also want to paint a mother and child onto it like this one.”

A simple curved line calligraphy drawing of a babe hunched up on the lap of a sleeping mother, kissing her lips.

Monsoon

"'Monsoon' I've used this picture a lot. Fairweather tied up the idea of the monsoon with the sky releasing all its pent up anxiety. It's like letting the tears flow…" Lisa suddenly looks sullen. "Its time to go I think."

Stalingrad

"Goodbye..." Malone opens the screen door. His visitors go down the rickety wooden staircase. They give their host one last wave as he watches them head down the street.

"He's a bit caught up with himself. A bit negative, isn't he?"

"I don't know Mick. At least he mentioned something about what he went through in the war."

"Yeah well he's a little haughty-"

"Blue's harmless enough."

"All those bottles in the kitchen..." persists Michael.

"I went up once because the tele was on too loud. It was irritating listening to all this street-fighting from a war doco. He was sitting on the floor crying like a baby. Bottles all around him. What did he call his spirits? That's right - rivers of hell. I helped him up and got him to take a bath. That was two months ago. I think he was really embarrassed -" Lisa yawns. "I get pretty tired these days...We should turn right. There's a couple of back lanes behind these houses that will take us straight to the beach. It's a shortcut."

"Sounds good. It's been great coming up here. Lisa you should try coming down to Sydney-"

"Why is Stalingrad significant?" Lisa asks abruptly.

Cat

"Its a metaphor for hell." states Cat who sits with Mick at a table at the edge of Kings Cross. Cat holds up the Indonesian dragon teapot he has in his hand. "That was a good idea to get out of the flat. This is a good buy."

"Do you still feel like going up to the New York Cafe for a meal?"

"Yeah, we'll have a couple of beers after this then head up."

Michael is pleasantly stoned. They had a cone at Cat's place and had decided to have a coffee after walking up the main street of Kings Cross both licking their McDonalds thirty-cent ice cream cones. On the way they had passed a street seller on the corner of Roslyn Street and Cat had bought the dragon.

"Dragons mean the underworld, you know that Mick?"

"Yeah, well the way you're staring down the snout of the dragon you can say we're at the mouth of the underworld sitting here."

"*Jonah...was in the belly of the whale*." hums Cat.

"Sounds a bit bluesy..."

"Our father, who is in heaven,
White man owe me eleven and pay me seven,
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
And if I hadn't took that, I wouldn't had none.[1]

This is the kingdom." Cat waves his hand. "This is the Holy Sanctuary of our society."

"The beast..." Michael looks up from where the dragon teapot had been placed on the table. He sees the crisped edge profile of his holy friend, as if it is chiselled out of hard rock. Yet his black curly hair provides his stony features with a soft contrast. Cat is the gatekeeper to the twilight shadows of blurred images and lights that can be seen beyond. "Maybe we're in the mouth?"

"Maybe we are the saved?"

"I thought everyone round here was *damned*."

"We are, it's just that we *know* we are." Cat laughs. "The middle classes play it safe, build their walls to keep life O.U.T. - Out!" Yet in the end death comes and takes them too. That son-of-a-bitch takes us all. So says the Preacher Man!" Cat has stood up out of his seat, placed his black cowboy hat on and begun to pace the ground in front of his seat. He makes quick twists and turns every few feet walking back and forth. "Some people think they are going to live forever. They are in their own self-imposed purgatory just believing, deluding, hoping life's insecurities will never come their way. They just like to read about the risks other people take or go watch it at the movies."

"Sounds like the goddam middle classes are more insecure than I thought. But you know something Cat - I think you were in the States far too long."

"Cat waves his arms up to the sky. "I was in that mother of all beasts way far too long!" Cat suddenly stands still. "Sydney just seems like a small country town after L.A., New York and Chicago. I heard some of the best blues in the ghettoes of Chicago. I walked through Harlem and this black guy in his fifties all dressed up like a pimp with his hat and gold chains asks me are you scared boy? Are you scared boy? I saw the black street preachers," Cat thumps his chest with his finger then points to the sky," and all that false hope." Cat then waves his arms again to the sky. "Hal-El-U-Jah! I saw that the Great Society was based on the ruthless quest for power! I saw a bit of Mexico. Ole!" Cat then stretches out his legs and places his hands over his groin. "The Great Whore of Babylon is what I saw!"

"So you've come home to a pack of little whores."

"The U.S.A is the biggest beast this world has ever seen." Cat places his fingers on either side of his temple and continues pacing. "It is a giant eating millions of his children every day." He stands still.

"But Death, Eternal Death, remains in the Valley of Poer.
The English are scatter'd over the face of the Nations: are these

Jerusalem's children? Hark! hear the Giants of Albion cry at night:
We smell the blood of the English! We delight in their blood on our Altars.
The living & the dead shall ground in our rumbling Mills [2]

Within L.A. there are poor communities of Hispanics in between the mega-freeways! I travelled the byways and the highways of the U.S. In Memphis, Tennessee I saw in my mind the one and only Elvis!" Cat once more stretches out his hands. "I saw in a vision Willie Nelson and Johnnie Cash singing Jimmy Driftwood. I was in seventh heaven!"

"I hate country music." Michael states dryly as Cat sits back down. A small crowd who had been watching him throw some coins and clap their appreciation before dispersing.

"You have to understand the American South - its civilised manners, graces and evils. Its white folk have got the gospel of Sweet Jesus in one hand and the noose for the nigger in the other. There's what I call the Human Contradiction."

"You're The Ancient of Days..." muses Michael.

A tall, lean moustached man in his fifties with shoulder–length grey hair and dressed in black jeans; black corduroy shirt; black vest as well as a black cowboy hat, walks pass. His hair subtly changes into different colours as it reflects the coloured lights of the signs hanging from the awnings. A group comes by blowing long plastic horns and chanting football slogans. "Chelsea! Chelsea! Arsenal! Hey mates! Which way to the Darlo Bar!"

"You're at the wrong end." states Cat. "You need to go further along. To the other side. When you see the fire station ask for more instructions."

"Fucking hell!" This geezer speaks good English."

"The Queen's English!"

"You're not a fucking queen are ya mate?"

"Come on, he told us which way to go," the other man holds his friend by the arm while the other drunken tourists look on. "We'll fucking get there mate. Thanks."

"A few lads out for a bit of new years eve fun." remarks Cat calmly.

Last Judgement

"The Last Judgement." says Michael coldly. He shifts slightly in his seat.

A cold memory.

"…all these shooting stars. A Melbourne backpacker had her speakers in two Moroccan glasses…eight long cigar shaped lights pulsating over the Sinai…they were green…vertical…there were nine of us…we all couldn't have been hallucinating…listening to the Four Seasons…at dawn…these voices…four more Australians…one guy and I had mutual friends. We promised to catch up…see the Celibate Rifles at the Strawberry Hills…I saw him once...Black Deaths in Custody march…in those days…used to start in Cope Street and end up in Redfern Park…while helping to set up a banner…I looked up…he was a policeman…saw each other…didn't say a word...it's why I bought this painting."

An Australian desert with a church; outside it a noose on a telegraph pole.

"I was probably at that rally." I whisper to Belle as I didn't want this guy to hear me. I needn't have worried for the American film lecturer standing right beside me is speaking very loudly: "Yes, 'Rosebud' is the last word said by Kane."

"I should have told these 'lads' about the Charing Cross Hotel on Bronte Road." Another shift. "It's where I've seen a lot of their English mates watch the Premier League live."

Bloated bodies, their faces, neck and shoulders drenched in sweat. The airless room of the pub is heavy, brutal, cramp.

To walk on to a video shop; a transfiguration in a circle of denial: a video of a young peaceful corpse resting in the trenches; he had quietly entered inside Death while watching a butterfly.

Heavy breath on the neck:

"Footfalls echo in the memory
Down the passage which we did not take
Towards the door we never opened
Into the rose-garden. My words echo
Thus in your mind.
But to what purpose
Disturbing the dust on a bowl of rose-leaves
I do not know.
Other echoes
Inhabit the garden. Shall we follow?"[1]

The old woman had spoken with an exquisite English accent; she purses her lips. "Eliot." The oracle walks out of the shop with her luggage trolley of clothes tied together with an ochy strap. Although the reference is to the poet what comes to mind is Eliot Ness from the Untouchables.

Hopping onto a crowded bus. Two well-dressed elderly women criticize a Spanish tourist. Her tired child is taking up a whole seat.

"One of us could be sitting down!"

"Why doesn't she speak English?"

The two witches disembark.

"At your ages you two should know better!" An apologetic look towards the flustered Spaniard.

The last stop right by the water.

On the hot sand.

Opening the overseas letter to read about a dead Untouchable floating down the Ganges.

Michael feels the goose bumps on his arms.

"Lets go Mick," suggests Belle who feels stifled by the many people at this exhibition opening. "For a drive."

They head up past the lighthouse and park the car behind the naval reserve.

Time Returns

Tonight is uncanny. Michael and Lisa have driven to the same spot.

A Midsummer's Night

Sunset. The darkening wood by the harbour foreshore. The Botanical Gardens entrance near the Opera House.

"The steps are based on the Mayan temples." states a passer-by to a companion.

Coloured lights dancing in the trees. A huge surprise when fairies are sighted.

"Lets sit down and see if anyone hassles us." whispers Lisa.

Wheels of Fate

After the performance the audience follows a pathway lit up by attendants waving torches. It is like being guided out of a dream. Passing through an iron gate Michael and Lisa step onto the road leading to Lady Macquarie's Chair. They walk down it until coming to Michael's car. This had been their destination all along.

Stopping at Harry's Wheels Café for some take-away.

"Will we have this food back at the flat?" queries Michael.

"Where I'm staying on top of the Rustic Café can get really noisy. How about down at Bear Park? It's a nice little spot by the water. Anyway, it's too balmy a night to eat indoors."

"What about Rushcutters Bay? We don't have to do too much walking then. Especially for you."

Lisa shrugs her shoulders. "Sounds okay..."

Michael miscues his approach into Edgecliff Road. "Lets see where the gods take us." He muses. The road goes to Dover Heights and by the lighthouse.

"What about Watsons Bay?" queries Lisa.

Michael parks the car down behind the naval reserve. "You lead the way."

Lisa follows a little path that goes through to thick scrub covering a rocky foreshore. They sit down on a large rock and look across the ocean harbour at the night-lights of the skyline.

Lightning.

"Maybe a storm tonight."

"Maybe..."replies Michael a little pensively.

They open the carton lids and start to eat.

"Should've bought some tinnies." remarks Michael.

"This Coke ain't too bad." Lisa's voice is sultry. Arm stretched out as if trying to touch the air. "Its so warm...what else did you take out of the car?"

"A parcel."

“From overseas?”
“India.”
“You haven’t opened it?”
“Na...guess I’m a bit scared. It’s been so long...”
Michael unwraps the paper that reveals a little gold treasure box. A letter is inside. “The box is from a place called Varanasi. Its on the Ganges.”
“That’s where they burn the bodies.”
“She’s...”
Lisa gently takes the letter from Michael’s shaking hand. “I’m sorry Michael, really sorry but you had to expect it. She’s been gone for months and you haven’t heard from her. You had to expect Belle would meet someone else.”
“I know.” whimpers Michael. “I know...”
Eagle Rock plays on the car radio.
A pebble is picked up; rolled up a little incline; then rolled down; the action is repeated.
The lightning is striking more frequently.
The water glistens.
The air is still warm.
White wheels: the stars still slowly arc.
“Lets go.”
“You right to drive?”
“Yeah, yeah. Have we picked up everything?”
“You can get on with things now Michael. Maybe it’s a blessing in disguise.”
“For fuck’s sake Lisa shut up!”
“Michael!”
“Sorry, sorry I said that! I know you mean well.”
“Its okay. It was a stupid thing to say.”
“Who knows? You could be right. Right now I just want to leave this place.

Violence

A brief stop to look at large waves smashing against the cliffs.

Lethe

The silhouette of a lone tanker on the far horizon.
“Must be a rough passage for that ship.” states Michael. “Although I guess in that oblivion they can forget about things.”
“When you forget,” muses Lisa, “life can be less painful.”

The Hand of God

Michael wishes he could forget now. After dropping Lisa off he drives aimlessly. The Rose Hotel. Chippendale. On a large board above the awning is the hand of God nearly touching the hand of Adam. Belle is in Rome. Michael knows the first thing she will want to see will be the Sistine Ceiling. Stars. Gold stars. Michelangelo had painted the Fall of Humanity over God's Universe. The desecration of the world is now complete.

On the Side

Stupidly, Michael had bought a packet of Garams. These strong clove Indonesian cigarettes make his breathing only worse. "Must pull over."

Sitting on a bench. Breathing deeply.

An elderly couple, well dressed as if walking home from an official dinner party, notice the ruffled man gasping for air and quicken their pace.

Marlboro Man

"Look at those la-de-das across the road!" exclaims Cat.

Michael sees the young movie set couple Cat is referring too hop into a Lamborghini and drive off, conveniently ignoring the old drunken man sitting down urinating in the gutter beside their sports car.

"You look a little pale there Mick."

"I've just been thinking a lot of different things all at once. Its as if my thoughts are breaking up inside my head."

Cat shrugs his shoulders. "Lets go up to the Rex Hotel."

"What about the New York Cafe?"

"Stop there on the way back." Cat points his forefinger at his temple. "First your mind needs to relax! You think too much!"

"Lets get that guy out of the gutter."

Cat again shrugs his shoulders.

The old man stares up at his two helpers and steadys his glassy gaze on the man wearing the black cowboy hat. "Do you have a Marlboro?"

"We have cigarettes but not that particular brand my friend." states Cat as they heave him onto the footpath.

"I want a Marlboro."

"Roll him a cigarette Mick."

Michael hands over the roll-your-own to the old man.

"Thanks anyway!" shouts the putrid unshaven figure as Cat and Michael begin walking to the Rex Hotel. The pub is filling up with revellers for New Years Eve and in the antiquated setting of the main drinking room Michael and Cat are able to find a couple of old chairs and what is probably the last free table. It is towards the back corner unsighted by the many patrons who hover on the tables closer to the main street doorway.

White Ox

Cat goes to the bar and Michael sits still thinking of that night at Watsons Bay with Lisa. A man comes and sits on Cat's chair. He is stocky, overweight around the face and neck with a puffed black right eye that at the moment is no more than a slit and a long downward cut on his flat nose.

"Ya min' if sit?"

"Just for a minute, me mates' gone to the bar."

"Yeah I'll just finish me schooner and go."

"Michael takes out his tobacco pouch and rolls himself a cigarette. "Do you want one?"

"Ta but I've got my own." The man pulls out his White Ox tobacco and efficiently rolls a cigarette with his left hand. Michael is amazed at the quickness of the operation. The cigarette itself is a perfect cylinder. "But I borra ya matches."

"Sure."

"You impressed? I've had plenty of practice. I got out of Long Bay a week ago. The day before Christmas."

"Did you get to spend Christmas Day with family?"

"Me mum lives out past Lithgow near a place called Oberon. Do you know it?"

"I went camping there once. All those dark pines. I found the place a little eerie. The way the wind would swish over the tree tops."

"Wild pigs there too. They'll gnaw into ya and kill."

Michael wonders about his guest. "So you saw your mum then?"

"Na, I just rang her. Too much trouble for me to get out there on my first day out. She's used to not seeing me anyway. I was inside for a few years."

"So did you do anything on Christmas Day?"

"I thought I'd just be spending it on me own but I spent me first night sleeping out on a bench down in this little park on Bourke Street in Surry Hills. D*o* ya know it?"

"Yeah yeah go on."

"In the morning these fellas were all around a couple of cases of beer and they asked me to join them. All of them live on the street. One of tha best bloody Christmas Days I had."

"Sounds good."

"Hey Mick whose your friend here?"

"What's ya name mate?"

The man grins. "Just call me Cyclops. That's what the blokes on Christmas Day nicknamed me."

Yeah well One Eye as you can see me mate's back."

"There's a spare seat over there I can grab. Might as well let this poor bastard finish his beer with us."

"If you fuckin reckon Cat."

Cat goes off to the other side of the pub to get the chair.

"A mate of mine I met in prison has got a small attic room down on the bottom of the hill of Bourke Street."

"Sounds like Bourke Street is a happening place." quips Michael.
"I lost his address it took me two days to get a hold of him on the blower. I've screwed a couple of women up the road here but he used to provide me with a lot of comfort when I was inside..."
"Well that's interesting."
"I'm back boys. When I scull this I'd say its time for another round."
"I guess I'll shout." states Michael.
"How come you're all beat up Cyclops?" asks Cat.
"It was a farewell present from the screws."
"You gave them a lot of trouble, huh?" suggests Michael.
"I use to keep to meself."
"Well you must have done something to upset them." continues Michael.
"Its for what I went to prison for."
"Why did you do time?" asks Cat.
"I killed a policeman." Cyclops takes a big gulp of his beer.
"That's pretty heavy! It's a fucking surprise ya still alive!" exclaims Cat.
"It was self defence. Me and me mate was robbing a bank when this cop car turned up outta nowhere. This big coppa just blew away me mate and I just shot him thinkin' he was goin' to do the same to me."
"The poor bastard was probably nervous. I mean you were carrying guns." states Cat.
"Fuck if I know what was happening it all happened so quick."
"I think I'll get those beers."
"Your mate don't seem too happy."
"He's got things on his mind." explains Cat.
"I thought he was on his own. Me mate I'm staying with has left town for a week for his holidays. So I'm left on my own minding the fort."
"You ought to talk to Mick about that he does a lot of house minding."
"Yeah well I saw him on his own and like its good to have some company. Especially seeing its New Years."
"Here's my round. Even got you one."
"Happy New Year." announces Cat. All three clink their glasses in unison.

Alcmeon

"Did you believe what that guy was saying?" asks Michael who is perusing through Cat's record collection in his flat.
"It sounded a bit far-fetched to me but he just wanted a beer with a couple of people on New Year's Eve."
"You've got some Uriah Heep. Haven't heard them since I was at school. In sixth form we used to play them all the time."
"Which one you looking at?"
"Houses of the Holy."
"Put it on while I have a shower."
The New York Cafe was closed by the time Michael and Cat had reached it. The last of the old men who frequented this restaurant with its simple decor

and cheap meals were leaving it as they arrived. There wasn't even a chance to have a soup so Michael is finishing off a kebab. He sights Cat's diary on the floor next to the sofa. This exercise book isn't a diary as such but is filled with Cat's observations of the city as well as comments made by people Cat has heard or from authors he had read:

"The overpowering centrifugal force of Sydney's harsh psyche finds it centre in Oxford Street and Kings Cross."

- the philosophical house removalist when I was moving in.

'The western suburbs of Sydney - with its many diverse cultures - represents the culmination of four thousand years of Western, Mesopotamian and Asian civilization…

"Cat you mad bastard." mutters Michael as he reads on.

'Consider the Nineveh Club whose front entrance is a replica of Babylon's Gate and the largesse of the Buddhist temple at Bonnyrig. As well as the Cao church at Wiley Park where Victor Hugo is worshipped.'

The page is turned.

Nihilist, n. A Russian who denies the existence of anything but Tolstoi. The leader of the school is Tolstoi.
Nirvana, n. In the Buddhist religion, a state of pleasurable annihilation awarded to the wise, particularly to those wise enough to understand it.'

- from Ambrose Bierce's The Devil's Dictionary.

"If a shadow is a two dimensional projection of the three-dimensional world, then the three-dimensional world as we know it is the projection of the four dimensional universe."

- Marcel Duchamp.

"…Dada is a state of mind…"

- Tristan Tzara

"The Martians in the Mars Hall."

- graffiti Marshall St. Surry Hills.

'The Vegetative Universe opens like a flower from the Earth's centre / In which is Eternity. It expands in Stars to the Mundane Shell/ And there meets Eternity again, both within and without, / And the abstract Voids between the Stars are the Satanic Wheels.

- from William Blake's Jerusalem.

"What you should do is get a box for a month, and drop everything in it at the end of the month lock it up. Then date it and send it over to Jersey."

- Andy Warhol

"Men perish because they cannot join the beginning to the end."

- Alcmeon of Crotona. Pythagorean. 480 B.C.

Michael decides not to read anymore and shuts his eyes.

No Reverse Gear

"Mick, Mick wake up."

"Is New Years over?" yawns Michael.

"No, not yet but it will be if you keep sleeping. You still interested in this Darlinghurst party?"

"Yeah well I haven't got anything else on."

"I have to go to Redfern to pick up a gal. This one's hot! I've even got her a rose! I'll give you the address and we'll meet you there."

"You definitely turning up?"

"One of my best friends is having it. Have I ever let a friend down? Come on!"

"Well *I* could've handled a proper meal at the New Yorker...you going right now?"

"First we have to play some backgammon to see the old year out."

"That sounds like a good idea."

Cat walks over to his record player and places a Hank Williams record on the turnstile. "Micky boy I love playing this game with you. Choice and fate rolled up in the dice. Its something you Greeks understand."

Michael sets the board.

CAT: "Double Six."

Cat smiles.

MICHAEL: "Three and four."

CAT: "Five and six."

MICHAEL: "Four and six."

CAT: "Two and four."

Cat takes Michael's piece off the board.

MICHAEL: "Four and six."

Michael is not bemused that he has thrown the same numbers twice especially when he cannot place his piece back on the board.

CAT: "Five and six."

MICHAEL: "Six and two."

Michael is at last able to return his piece to the board.

CAT: "Five and Six."

Cat again takes one of Michael's pieces off the board.

MICHAEL: "Three and four."

CAT: "Four and one."

MICHAEL: "Five and two."

CAT: "Three and six."

MICHAEL: "Double five."

CAT: "Two and three."

MICHAEL: "Six and five."

CAT: "Five and three."

Cat has his six home rows covered with his pieces.
MICHAEL: “Two and one.”
Michael feels resigned. This is the lowest possible throw.
CAT: “Double three.”
Cat feels the gods are with him.
MICHAEL: “Four and one.”
Michael wonders what is the point of playing if the gods are against him.
CAT: “Two and four.”
MICHAEL: “Six and one.”
CAT: “Double five.”
MICHAEL: “Five and one.”
CAT: “Three and four.”
Cat takes his first two pieces off the board.
MICHAEL: “Four and five.”
CAT: “Six and three.”
Cat takes off one more piece that gives Michael the opportunity to return to the board.
MICHAEL: “Five and one.”
Michael returns his piece to the board at the cost of Cat’s exposed piece.
CAT: “Double five.”
Cat returns his piece to the board at the cost of Michael’s exposed piece..
MICHAEL: “Five and six.”
Michael returns his piece to the board at the cost of Cat’s exposed piece.
CAT: “Double two.”
MICHAEL: “Three and one.”
CAT: “Two and six.”
MICHAEL: “Five and three.”
CAT: “Double four.”
Cat is able to return his piece to the board.
MICHAEL: “Two and five.”
CAT: “Four and one.”
MICHAEL: “Double two.”
CAT: “Five and one.”
Both Cat and Michael have cleared each other’s pieces around from each other. Both players are now involved in a race involving only the dice to win the game.
MICHAEL: “Double six.”
CAT: “Three and four.”
Cat is pleased he has all his pieces back in home territory.
MICHAEL: “Six and four.”
CAT: “Double two.”
Cat is back to taking pieces off the board.
MICHAEL: “Double five.”
Fortunately for Michael he is now also doing likewise.
CAT: “One and three.”

MICHAEL: “Double six.”
CAT: “One and two.”
MICHAEL: “Double four.”
CAT: “Three and one.”
MICHAEL: “Two and four.”
Michael sees he has been able to catch up to Cat in the number of pieces taken off the board. Michael has five pieces left to Cat’s four.
CAT: “Six and one.”
MICHAEL: “One and two.”
CAT: “Two and one.”
Cat feels the gods are toying with them. However, he has only two pieces left to Michael’s three.
MICHAEL: “Double three.”
Michael wins the game. Cat takes note that with three pieces left Michael has thrown a double three. Cat considers how three is God’s number. Though the game is over Cat is curious to see what would have been his numbers on his last throw.
CAT: “Double six.” A burst of laughter. “SIX! The devil’s number!”

“Hitler had no reverse gear.”

- David Delves says this to me at his Mid-Winter’s Dream gig at the Zanzibar Cafe.”

“Neither did Bukowski’s car.” yawns Michael as he closes once and for all the quotes book.

No Illusions

“One of the reasons the Germans lost the Battle of Stalingrad is because Hitler wouldn’t let the Sixth Army make a strategic withdrawal. In the end two hundred and fifty thousand men were caught in a pincer movement with no way out.”
“You reckon we need to make a few withdrawals in life every now and again, hey Mick?” muses Lisa.
“The thing is we need to have the wisdom to recognise our strengths and weaknesses and work with them to survive. As Clint Eastwood says in Dirty Harry: *‘A man needs to know his limitations.’* We need to follow our survival instincts or just know when not to push ourselves beyond our limits. Maybe Blue-”
“You got to take risks sometimes.”
“Yeah but not when you know two Soviet armies are about to trap you in a ring of steel. You can no longer rely on your own propaganda as you are tested to the brink by an uncompromising force that wants to un-mercilessly defeat you; you have to rely on what are your true inner resources to overcome such a life and death challenge. We can be brutally tested and the perceptions or illusions we have about ourselves can be either confirmed or

blown away." Michael pauses. "Apparently, as a reminder, the Russians have kept in place in the city the surviving German tanks which mark out the furthest points of the original *Wehrmacht* advance; like dyed cells showing the extremities of a growing tumour."

Angourie

Lisa and Michael are now walking along a sandy track that slices through a plain of grass scrub. They soon come to the beach and sit down in the shade of one of the large trees that line a small grass embankment at the edge of the beach.

Michael lies down while Lisa takes Melissa to the water's edge. Lisa holds Melissa by both arms and dips her feet into the sea. Melissa is giggling and laughing as her mother makes whooshing sounds every time she lifts her daughter's legs out of the water. He looks lazily at the two playing figures who are dwarfed by the vastness of the ocean behind them. The sea near the shore is unusually turquoise and gazing to his right Michael can see a rocky point and further back a few palm trees that give the long cove they are in a tropical feel. The wide white beach stretches right along the coast. Like those long beautiful stretches of sand on the south coast. Gerroa, Werri Beach, Seven Miles Beach, Greenpatch, Manyana, and Burrell Pines are places with which Michael feels he has more of an affinity with rather than this present beach. The south coast in winter with its swirling trees gives him something of the sense of the rugged spirituality of Australia. Aware that he is a foreigner in the land of his birth it is on those wintry mornings, leaning out of a tent, hunting for twigs and small branches, gazing out at the rolling surf the haunting loneliness of this vast land could be felt. Only in the scrub desert of the Northern Territory had Michael felt something similar and which was in line with his own solitary feelings that were not so much *melancholia* but more a simple realisation of his own transient mortality on this ancient continent.

Michael feels a lesser sense of familiarity with the north coast. He had not travelled up this way since a schoolboy surfing trip. The only place he feels akin too is Angourie where his one memory of walking amongst the large abandoned coal pits in the drizzle helped to give the place for him an eerie quality. The heat up north is the difference thinks Michael as he takes off his sunglasses. The strong sunrays that immerse this beach shine deeply into his skin and face.

This dry light blinds out Michael's concerns of the past and future; feeling only for the immediacy of the present; forgetting about everything else as he keeps his mind solely on such immediate tasks as escaping from the heat, having a swim, lying under a tree and enjoying the sea breeze that tingles his arms and legs, giving his body further relief. The protection of his body is becoming the main focus; though the heat could also be as strong down south, it never seemed as all consuming, there was always the sense there

would be some change, especially with the coming of the night while each night here only brings on a humid darkness.

The rain in Angourie is cherished.

The Return of Martin Guerre

Lisa and Melissa are slowly strolling back, picking up seashells along the way, and enjoying the natural delight of this paradise. Melissa is holding a cone shell and Lisa is encouraging her to listen to the sound of the ocean as they both sit down beside Michael.

"The water's really nice." comments Lisa.

"Youse both looked like youse were enjoying yourselves."

"You! Michael. You!" laughs Lisa. "What's with the 'youse' bit? Sometimes you still speak like a caveman."

"Sorry Lisa I didn't realise you'd become so cultured since moving up here."

"Its been the best thing for me...I can read heaps...I can still enjoy life." whispers Lisa as she wiggles her fingers with those of Melissa's.

"It's been good for me to make the trip. I needed to get out of Sydney."

"Things okay?" inquires Lisa.

"Everything's fine. Just feel a little unsettled occasionally. Sydney can make your mind feel stale."

"Do you ever hear from Belle?" Lisa continues to explore how Michael feels.

"Occasionally. She usually writes when she's having hassles with that guy..."

"So it's an on and off sort of thing?" taunts Lisa.

"Yeah I guess so..." Michael lies quietly on the grass.

"You're a nice guy." states Lisa. "Stop with this waiting around..." She waits stealthily for Michael to say something but he doesn't speak. Lisa decides to make some conversation. "You've never told me if you had a good trip up."

"Gotta lift as far as Crescent Head off that bartender guy. We stopped in on this property where this old guy lived. He took us to his large barn and we were both impressed to see these old vintage cars from the twenties. I stayed with a Kiwi friend in Lismore. She's doing an M.A on Samuel Beckett. Pretty good for someone whose only ambition in life is to work as a café waitress. Overall, after Crescent Head, it only took me a few quick lifts to get here. The most interesting thing that happened was when I stayed overnight with these two women in Bellingen. The bartender met them on a Greek island called Naxos. Told me to tell them I also met them there; he gave me all the details. They believed me." Michael smiles. "When this guy finally drops in on them next week he'll let them know-"

"So you had a good trip then...you don't mind hitching…fooling people…"

"There was no harm in it." Michael shrugs his shoulders. Dismally wonders why Lisa has to go into one of her mood swings. Conversation may avoid an

awkward silence. “Sometimes hitching is the best way to travel. At least it is around here - you’d be waiting until doomsday for a bus to turn up to take you anywhere. Most of the people who’ve picked me up since I’ve been here have been locals and they seem to know that. Travelling from Mullumbimby to here has taken me next to no time. I’ve almost been tempted to go to that big festival in Melany. ”

“You ought to.” Lisa is very conciliatory. “I remember when you came back from that Tanelorn festival near Stroud. Telling everyone how Peter Garrett climbed up a scaffolding tower during the Oils performance.”

“Yeah. That was good. Anyhow as to going to Queensland I have to head back to my job. I’ve only got so much time-off.”

Limbo

“Like I told you earlier that mountain is a meeting place.”

“You mean just for the women?” inquires Michael.

“Seems that way.” replies Lisa. “I could be wrong but the place is their spiritual connection with the land round here. This is really important for them, especially now, when their land is being hindered by us - that’s what Blue reckons. He explained to me that when we hinder their land we may as well be hindering their bodies. Aboriginal people feel that inseparable from their land. Losing control of where you live would be like being left to exist in a no man’s land…”

“You’re right Lisa. Its purgatory-”

“You know about that Mick.”

“*Listen* Lisa after all this time I *have* moved on. Yet this thing with this guy is always on and off...”

“Yeah and you’ve also told me she only writes to you when things aren’t working out-” Lisa speaks louder. “It’s like there’s some rotting meat still hooked up in your head. Stop dangling those carcasses. Cut em down! You need to do it.” A grin. “If she ever does come back it’ll be like the Second Coming.” A glance at Melissa who is falling asleep.

In the prevailing human silence all that is heard is a twittering bird.

Tree of Knowledge

“I like it when its quiet.” murmurs Michael. Relief. This peace seems genuinely tranquil.

“I like it too...” Lisa is pulling clumps of grass out with her hand.

Michael pulls out from the back pocket of his shorts a newspaper clipping. “There’s something I want to show you.”

“Yeah what’s that?” Lisa replies sourly.

“Remember that tanker we saw the night we stopped at the lighthouse?”

“How could I forget.” states Lisa quietly as Michael hands her the paper. “Says here the sailors of the Italian ship the *Lethe* were the forgotten men.”

"Well no one knew the ship was missing for days. It's been a long time since it sank and only now-"

"Death didn't forget them." announces Lisa suddenly.

Michael looks at the deep sorrowful furrows suddenly etched into Lisa's face.

Melissa and I are off to Sydney." Lisa strokes her sleeping child.

"When...?"Michael senses something is wrong.

"Soon. Real soon. Glad you could make it up here but..." Lisa's face withers, becomes leaner. "We're checking in to a hospital. Doctor's recommended it."

"Lisa...but why?"

"We're *both* pos...HIV *positive*."

Staring up at the dark branches; the broken light is trying to filter its way through the foliage. The crossover of branches that extinguish the sun snares the light. Death would also extinguish Lisa and Melissa and the memory of them. The tree has been a source of comfort but now the world is in reverse. The shade has become a shadow; wanting to strip the foliage from the tree to allow the sunlight to uncover the veil of darkness, to have this heat soak them. Either way there seemed no escape from death.

The translucent green of the outer leaves of the tree; their hopeful appearance adds insult to injury to the sense of futility that can be felt in the air. Everything is very still, including it seems, the wheels of time.

A leaf falls onto Lisa's hair and it is as if the universe is falling apart. There is no sense of cycle. No sense of life then death and life arising again; just a numbing blankness. To not feel by the beach anymore, but inside the large crevasse at Caves beach near Jervis Bay.

Lisa and Melissa's precious bodies are incurably diseased due to an act of love; this is an anathema, an abomination of nature. A world in fear left without the opportunity to express love or carry out compassion was only left with such wrath. Standing up to pick off the leaves.

"What are you doing Michael? Stop it! Stop!" screams Lisa. "Its not the tree's fault!"

Michael grabs his hair with both hands and kneels on the grass.

"I got it off that guy that I went out with before Dan. I heard a few months ago he's died from...and I decided to get checked up. It explains why I'm getting tired easily these days and why poor Melissa's always sleeping."

"What about Dan?"

"He's okay...he's always been lucky..."

Macksville

"I've got a guy here who wants a lift to Sydney. Is anybody going south?" The young driver flicks his ponytail as he presses the button on his intercom. The radio crackles. A garbled voice. The driver is heading north. "I don't think we're going to get anyone."

"That's okay mate. Thanks for trying."

"I have to go down the next turn off but where I drop you off won't be too far out of Macksville. When you get there go to the Caltex station. It's where all the big trucks stop. You might get a lift straight through."

"I didn't think truckies stopped for hitchhikers these days?"

"Not many do mate, all that insurance bullshit." The driver negotiates a big downward curve. Michael watches him skilfully go through a multiplicity of gears as the rig comes to a near halt then picks up speed. "Some truckies will still give you a lift. Fuck mate, I did!" laughs the truckie.

"Figured you were just the exception to the rule." explains Michael.

The driver pulls back his black leather cowboy hat and glances up at the sky. "Looks like it's going to piss down. Here's where I turn off..."

"Hope no more kangaroos run into ya."

"Na mate, don't want that happening, still gotta get the bloody dent fixed from last week's caper. See ya!"

"Bye. Thanks for the lift!"

Michael steps down from the large truck to discover it is sprinkling. He puts on his olive green plastic navy submarine rain jacket and waits by a road sign. Macksville is only a few kilometres down the highway.

On the opposite side of the road behind some scrub is a large shopping centre with a built in cinema. There is the obvious possibility of a lift from the large car park.

A four-wheel drive is turning out and it is sensed it is going to slow down. However, it is still a surprise when it stops. The backseats are filled with teenage girls. The mother is trusting. She has shiny shoulder length black hair and is well dressed. Judging by the inflection in the tone of her voice it is assumed she is from a well-to-do Sydney suburb.

"We'll place your backpack behind the girls. Have you been waiting long?"

"Only a few minutes." Michael sits up front beside her after the girl occupying it is told to scrunch up with the others in the backseat.

"We're going as far as Scotts Head. If that would suit you."

"Macksville will be fine. My last lift told me I may be able to get a lift from the Caltex station."

"You're welcome to go as far as Scotts Head. We've just spent the afternoon at the cinema."

"What did you see?"

"Free Willy."

"That's a great family movie. I saw that at Lismore with my friends I was staying with and their children."

"Are they from Lismore?"

"No," replies Michael. "They're from up that way and we were on a day trip."

"I suppose you left their place today?"

"Yes. In the morning."

"You've done well to get this far."

"I'm in no real hurry. From what I remember Scotts Head is a beautiful spot. I may even decide to stay there tonight."

"Why don't you catch the bus?" asks one of the girls in a surly manner.

"They're all booked up. Its hard at the moment to get a seat because of the bushfires."

"We're coming to the bridge." comments the mother.

Up front is a large iron bridge that spans the Mackey River. Along the other bank Michael can see a row of shops. This is Macksville.

"Just drop me off wherever it is convenient for you on the other side. I may stop for a bite in town."

"I know the service station. So I'll drop you off there."

"Thank you."

After crossing the bridge Michael sees in the distance on his right a large round Caltex sign. After halting at a set of red lights the four-wheel drive pulls up beside the service station.

"Here you are. I'll open the back for you."

"Thanks again. I might see you at Scotts Head."

"Fine."

The weather has cleared a little. The service station is a huge twenty-four hour place with several pumps and an enormous awning covering the whole complex. Cars and trucks are refuelling at a frequent rate.

However, at the moment food and the toilet are of more interest than a lift. In the main shopping centre near the river is a large pub. It is after office hours on a Friday afternoon and the place is filled with men. Every seat and table is occupied and many patrons are standing two rows deep along the two main bars. Everyone is speaking loudly. The humidity is rising as the late afternoon sun breaks through the diminishing rain clouds; here are stocky, tanned men, mostly wearing shorts, settling into their drinking which will not stop until closing time.

In every corner of this pub are television monitors that these men would glance at for the latest TAB results or to take in the most recent wicket to fall in the test cricket.

Walking carefully through this noisy, casual crowd with backpack in hand the Gentlemen sign is sighted.

After appreciating a minute's peace in the rest room the pub is left so as to head to the riverbank.

Jimmy's Milk Bar; in itself a living museum piece. The shop is long and wide with fifties style wooden benches, tables and seats that go all the way to the back. The counter on the right also goes the full length of the shop and behind it on the wall is a variety of goods and confectionery that would be expected in an old time milk bar. The layout of the shop is similar to the Billabong in Nowra. Nevertheless, the old world feel of Jimmy's – with its old fashioned advertising posters – is more reminiscent of the dusty fifties milk bar run by a Greek man next to Stanmore Cinema. A young employee confides that in the twenties the shop was a general store.

The River Don

After ordering a veggie burger and chocolate milkshake Michael sits down and pulls out from the top of his backpack 'And Quiet Flows The Don' by Mikhail Sholokhov.

Sipping on a milkshake the last few pages are read which include the Cossacks lining up row after row of their Red Guard prisoners and shooting them with disinterest and without mercy.

Amidst the savagery of massacres, hangings and torture there is the hope...*for love and fertility*...in the final image of a bird nestling her eggs by the grave of a peasant soldier.

Michael closes the paperback and stares out of the shop to see a shock of sunlight vibrate through the green hues of the long grassy riverbank.

Space Travel

The visitor finishes off his chocolate cake and helps the two boys take the plates over to the kitchen.

"Now say night-night to Uncle Mickie and go off to sleep." commands Jason.

When the two sons go off to bed Jason and Michael begin to wash up.

"So did you do much after going to Mullumbimby?" asks Jason.

"I just went back to the coast and visited that female friend who had moved up from Sydney. The one I was speaking on the phone too for ages the other night."

"Like us aye?"

"No, not quite if you mean family wise Jason. She only has a three-year-old daughter and that's it. In fact, she's got no family to speak of that I know."

"What about her parents?" interrupts Margaret.

"The only thing Lisa has ever said about them is that they're divorced...I think she hears from her mum around Christmas time but that's about it. She never really mentions them..."

"She can come up and visit us if she wants too."

"Thanks Marg. I was hoping she could come up here. Maybe in the next day or so before I leave I can get her to meet you lot. All I can say for now is she's going through a bit of a rough trot."

"I imagine she would be! Taking care of a youngster by herself!" exclaims Margaret.

"The thing is Melissa - that's the kid's name - has Downes Syndrome."

"Is that so?" remarks Jason. "Saw a kid like that in the hospital a few weeks ago. Wouldn't be surprised if it was the same child. She was having blood tests. Probably just a routine thing."

"Yeah. I guess so. I know Melissa's been to the doctor a bit more than usual lately."

"Do you know the doctor's name?" asks Jason.

"Wouldn't have a clue."
"Oh well. Just thought if your friend ever needed someone for what's her name?"
"Melissa..."
"For Melissa we could recommend our doctor. She's been pretty good with the kids."
"Thanks for the thought mate. Looks like everything's done."
"I'll do those pans later." remarks Margaret. "Just let them soak in the water for a while. You boys should go and sit in front of the TV. and I'll make us a cuppa."
"What about Madeleine?"
"She likes to rest with the little one. Madeleine might come out later." replies Margaret.
Jason turns on the television. Michael goes out onto the circular back porch that revolves its shape around the large glass door. He rests his shoulders against one of the poles holding up a hammock. "Mind if I have a smoke?" He shouts out to Jason who has sat down on the lounge.
"Not a problem – as a Kurd mechanic I used to go too would always say. Might join you when our coffee's ready."
The rollie is lit while looking at the ever-darkening space in front. The last tinges of purple orange red streaks of the setting sun hover above the crisp black outlines of the surrounding hills. It will be a moonless night. Timeless. A seamless black sheet will cover the earth. The hills he had drawn will be hidden.
A starless, moonless universe. A deep nothingness.
To think of a quote by Vincent Van Gogh who said it takes death to reach a star.
Yet, presently there are no constellations - considered by some to be starry dances by God.
Where then will the soul travel to tonight?

A Place for the Soul

The glass door slides open. The warm interior light is softly highlighting the rows of dry flowers hanging from the ceiling.
Perhaps the soul can find its way to here?

The Gods are Fickle

"Those clouds have suddenly come over." observes Jason.
"Not surprising really considering how humid it's been."
"We desperately need some rain. Do you know the highway is still cut further south? When's the latest you can leave?"
"Friday's the day I'll have to hitch. I go back to work on the Monday. That's how my shifts work out with this part time driving."
"You can't catch a bus?"

"They're all filled up. These bushfires have stuffed up a lot of people's travel plans." Michael steps off the porch and buries the remains of his rollie into a patch of dirt. "I like hitching anyway. I've got used to it while staying here."

Jason grins. "Well as you know I used to hitch to work when Madeleine needed the car more often after Leigh was born. This one guy would head through this way to Ballina every day and I would get a lift with him. A few weeks ago the car wouldn't start but sure enough I stood by the side of the road in time for him to spot me - he pulled over to pick me up straight away."

"Yeah I've noticed how mostly locals pick you up."

"Well they know there isn't much public transport."

"They would all say that. People found it really funny when I would tell them I was a bus driver."

Michael lights a cigarette and places the dead match into the matchbox.

"You still seriously thinking of going back to uni?" inquires Jason.

"Yeah well I need to do something. All I've done for the last ten years is go from one two-bit job to the next. Factory work, dishwashing, teacher's aide, shop assistant, taxi driving, cleaning and labouring. It ain't much. I'm keen to hold onto this community driving job; along with being a teacher's aide its one of the more meaningful jobs I've had. I had pretty good marks when I quit that Arts degree at the end of the first year. I just reckon I should give it another go. Just all this fee stuff has me spooked."

"Looks like you and I are in the same boat. I'm still hoping to get into some sort of counselling course. Everyone says I handle people pretty well at the hospital. There's a lot of grief there."

"Yeah but you're going to find it hard Jason. I told you not to quit school at the end of fourth form."

"All I could think of at the time was making some money."

Jason believes fate will play her hand and he will enter the course of his choice as a mature-age student.

"Well, good luck." remarks Michael.

Michael believes the gods are fickle and have to be outwitted.

"I don't want to stay a wards man for the rest of my life." says Jason.

"Jason you still do a lot of good. It's no fluke that your name means healer."

Michael believes Jason's destiny was determined the day he chose to leave school.

"Maybe that's true but I want a job which recognises everything I do..."

Kandinsky

On the television appears a dragon, with firecrackers exploding around it, serpentining down a street in Sydney's Chinatown. The Chinese New Year scene dissolves to a Komodo dragon walking along a jungle path. As the camera angles on the sun filtering through the rainforest canopy the narrator mentions the volcanic explosion in 1815 on the neighbouring island of Sumbawa which killed 12,000 people and led to the starvation of another

44,000 people who died in the ensuing famine. The white sunlight changes to an orange-yellow hue and there is a whirl of turbulent light that obliterates every point of reference to land and sea. Jason and Michael who have walked back into the living room are left with a void where time and space have dissolved before their eyes; to feel lost and tiny looking at this unchartered chaos of hazy light that eventually darkens to reveal in another scenario the black smudge of a sailing ship called The Ariel. The narrator mentions that Turner had tied himself to the mast to observe the storm. Michael can only think of Odysseus who has tied himself to his mast to escape the deadly beauty of the Sirens. The fiery light of a Turner sunset re-emerges to reveal a square of yellow with the feint outline of creatures lurking in the bottom left corner. Sea Monsters is the title of these slight apparitions. The narrator states that the changed atmospheric conditions of the northern hemisphere caused by the volcanic explosion of July 1815 inspired Turner's formless nirvana worlds. The year 1816 was said to have no summer and the narrator asks the viewer to consider a barren landscape without magic or dreams.

Michael slumps a little further into the sofa as the universe explodes inside of him with the knowledge of Lisa's plight. His chin is shaking but he inwardly holds his ground as the slayers of dragons now appear before him. There is a blue rider fading within the rim of an orange oval. As the sound of a drumbeat can be discerned in the background there emerges a series of swirling triangles, circles and squares. The narrator explains that in this fusion of geometric images is Kandinsky's abstract representation of the knight defeating the serpent. The shaman of Zyrian folklore is here dealing with the artist's disintegrating self - and after the death of Kandinsky's two-year-old son - to create a new and stronger person. There follows a painting with a small red oval within the centre of green and blue jagged shapes from whose arcs have given birth to a discordant land and a rowboat with a long oar taking the yellow soul of the boy to the sanguine sanctuary of heaven. The egg is a symbol of rebirth to the Byzantine remarks the narrator.

Michael thinks of Greek Easter and to the flurry of lit candles on Resurrection Night. "Melissa..." he whispers.

The circles which so dominate Kandinsky's later canvases leads to visualising the never ending possibilities of the eternal...The Alpha and the Omega...there is no beginning and no end...before him is now the Babylon Creation within the ruins of the Hanging Gardens and the Ishtar Gate which were built by Nebuchadnezzar II.

(Michael feels, however, his labour with destiny is aimed at establishing his independence).

Marduk stands, clothed with a tunic of stars standing over the watery chaos which is the god Tiamet and who can only produce monsters from the deep to inhabit a stilted universe and so now a dragon - an uncontrollable child from Tiamet's inert womb - also lies succumbed at Marduk's feet for there now exists a fertile land where water from its wells and springs allows the two

unbroken arcs of the new creation - the sky's circumference and earth's horizon - to move dynamically forward in a way which renews life.

Freedom of Choice

Jason switches the cable channels.

"We suffered much under the Khmer Rouge and now we are trying to rediscover our culture," states the ageing dance instructor in her well-versed French. "Through our dancing we can regain our birth after so much death."

Channel switch.

"Here we have Willie Nelson singing By The Rivers Of Babylon –

Channel switch.

"In Bhutan the king has wisely implemented the Gross National Happiness Index to gauge the holistic well-being of his people."

Channel switch.

"The Administration highlighted the cult of the individual, this encouraged self-consumption in the consumer society. In 1948 New York's advertising of the tenets of Abstract Expressionism was no accident as the works of a 'progressive' art cowboy like Jackson Pollock portrayed what had become possible for a 'free-thinking' society. An unwitting drunk and exploited genius for Pax America: Capitol Hill and the New York art chic ignored each other's weaknesses and supposed excesses to prostitute from one another what was needed to further their respective causes. Washington financed abstract art so it could be manipulated as a symbolic expression of the 'immense individual freedom' that was available in the U.S.A, which in the Cold War context, was the difference between itself and the totalitarian state-

Channel switch.

"An Angel At My Table will screen –

Channel switch.

"Kierkegaard looked at existential-

Channel switch.

"Serge Guilbaut in How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art refers to Arthur Schlesinger in The Vital Centre who states that the eternal awareness of choice can drive the weak to the point where the simplest decision becomes a nightmare. It could be intimated that many people would prefer to flee choice, to flee anxiety, to flee freedom-

Channel switch.

"A statue for Mary Poppins has been unveiled in Ashfield to commemorate the little known fact that the author of this much-loved character once lived in this Sydney suburb-

Channel switch.

"Jack Keroauc as a labourer helped to build the Pentagon; while in another topsy-turvy historical irony it was the ex-supreme military commander Eisenhower, as President, who initiated the construction of the freeways that now criss-cross the U.S.A; which the 'vagrant Kerouac' would immortalize with his 'jazz sound' writing; making popular, in the socially conservative climate of 1950s America the 'radical travels' of an American Orpheus. Eisenhower, who Gregory Corso once observed looked down from a helicopter at Athens as if he was Zeus, would have certainly been confounded by the lasting literary

immortality of such an off-beat new world ‘oracle’ as Kerouac.”

“Can I have a look at the free-to-air T.V guide?” asks Michael.

“Sure”, replies Jason. “Its just by you Marg...”

“Ta.”

9.30. NORTHERN EXPOSURE. Cult show about a small town in Alaska called Cicily. Tonight looks at young Ed (the sweet local Indian film buff who has aspirations to become a shaman) and his interest in the Orson Welles movie Citizen Kane.

Channel switch.

“The youthful female row of legs, arms and angled heads sway upwards and downwards in elegant unison expressing the rhythmic cycle of life moving at the same time from the creation to destruction and then through again to creation. There are within us a thousand souls and a thousand masks to express them and here the dancers merge as one to unite themselves, their world, their happiness and sorrow-

Channel switch.

“The lighthouse on the southernmost point of Victoria will be closed down despite the tremendous community support for it to remain open.”

Channel switch.

“In Western Australia Aboriginal men are still being arrested at an alarming rate. Very few of the recommendations from the recent Black Deaths in Custody Commission have been put in place.”

Channel switch.

“Many bushfires are still raging up and down the coast -”

Jason abruptly turns the television off.

Piggy

Sitting by the footpath, while on the opposite side of the road is the large Caltex station.

The novel ‘Remembering Babylon’ by David Malouf is pulled out from the top of the pack. On the front cover is a mysterious thin green black figure whose arms are outstretched against a green tinged ball of orange flame. While turning over the first two pages to read the quotes of the frontispiece, a finger is half-heartedly stuck out.

A mud splattered yellow Gemini with a black bull bar drives by and the driver is instinctively eyed as he looks into his rear view mirror.

The car screeches to a halt.

Immediately standing up and running to the vehicle.

The passenger door is swung open. “Put your pack in the back.”

The backdoor is opened. A repugnant smell as the backpack is placed on the backseat. A pig-dog stares up, startled from his slumber.

While still coming to terms with the stench it is wondered if taking this lift is a terrible mistake.

George

“Where are you heading too?” asks the driver as he resumes the journey.

"Sydney - you?" inquires Michael pensively.
"I don't know. I'm just heading south."
Michael mentally kicks himself for not saying his destination was Scotts Head.
"Sorry about the smell but Piggy vomited earlier in the day. She gets carsick easy."
Judging from his dark brown skin and thickset black hair this host could be Aboriginal. However, his thick black moustache and bushy black eyebrows give his face more of a Latino quality.
"Sounds like you've got a bit of an accent." suggests Michael.
"I was born a cockney. Four years of age, when I came to Australia, but sometimes its like only yesterday."
"There's a good bit of an Australian twang in your voice though."
"Yeah, but most people don't bother to notice it. They look at me, and are convinced I'm an Italian or something, like that. I'm this dark, because I've worked on the property, all my life. The only thing, they notice, about my voice, is my wheezing, because of my asthma. I shouldn't smoke, but what the hell!" laughs the driver.
"Where have you driven from?" inquires Michael.
"Texas," replies the driver. "Its a small town just north of the border." The driver looks over at Michael.
"What's your name?"
"Mick - yours?"
"George. Like where my mother lives - St.George. That's where I was before Texas. Dropping my son off."
"The kid hasn't got a mum?"
"Not if I can help it!"
Michael pauses then asks his question. "Have you walked out?"
"Escaped! Not walked out! Her friends, had me in jail, the night before last. As soon as I got out, I said that's it. I'm fucking off! And I have!"
Michael warily eyes George. "Did you bash her?"
"No way! Trust me! I just said to her that all those religious friends of hers were fucking us around!"
"She told them what I said, and somehow, the next thing I know I'm in a cell for overnight. Next to me, is this drunken black fella whose going crazy. He got a real beating, about halfway through the night, for keeping the copper awake. Next day, we both got out."
"Do you mind?" Michael shows his tobacco pouch to George.
"Go ahead," states George. "I've got some tailor-mades, if you want one."
"Michael shakes his head. "I prefer rollies."
"Nine months ago, my wife went religious. She started going to this new church, to meet some people, she feeling a bit lonely on the property, and she got right into it. This ain't no normal church, its one of those hallelujah pick-me-ups. Crazy people, crazy place. They screwed her around, said I was no good for her, because I didn't agree with them. A blasphemer. They were

telling her what a bad man I am, because I drink and swear and all that other bullshit. The other day I told her I didn't give a stuff about those people in the church. They got to me. She told them what I said and somehow I get locked up overnight by the coppers. When I got out I said I'd had enough and now I'm heading south. Don't know where I'm heading too. Just looking for work. Think I'll get to Sydney then head off to Western Australia. Can't think of any further! I just want to get as far away from those church people and my wife as I possibly can!" George shifts his head closer to the steering wheel. "Don't really know what I'm going to do Mickee." George goes silent but after several minutes he resumes speaking. "What they do, is their business, but, in the end, my wife, "George raises his hand which is shaped like a claw to his head and wiggles it, "she just lost it. Always sniping at me, of a sudden, - just misery." George sighs. "We were married six years, and overnight, it's all over."

"This all happen in Texas?"

"Na," replies George. "I stopped in Texas, to find out the latest address of an old friend. Texas is where his brother lives. I'm from Tiara. In Queensland. Have you heard of it? Lived there since I got married. Before that I was living in St. George, since I was four years of age."

"Don't know much about Queensland. Only been there the once and that was years ago."

"Well Tiara is near Ipswich. Have you heard of that?"

"Yeah Ipswich is inland from Brisbane."

"That's right. I wouldn't mind going there sometime."

"You've never been to Brisbane?"

"Before today I've never been anywhere...just lived on the land."

Michael looks incredously at George then decides to continue the conversation. "You been driving all day?"

"Since dawn. From Tiara. It's really more towards Toowoomba - that seemed big, so did Ipswich."

"Well you've come a long way today then." Michael is impressed.

"And you?"

"I've been staying with friends. Not too far from the border itself."

"You done well yourself then." George smiles. "Do you know what we call people south of the border?"

Michael slightly shakes his head.

"Mexicans!"

Michael grins. "I like that."

"You're pretty brave, aren't you, to be hitching down the coast, aren't you, afraid, some nut will pick you up?"

Michael eyes his host. "Na, usually you can sus things fairly quickly and get out." Michael grins. "Sometimes you get yourself in awkward situations but usually if you play it by ear you can ride it out so to speak."

"Well, I'd never, do it. There's so, many crazies out there. Its not, a safe world, Mickee. I saw you, by the roadside, and thought I should, give you a

lift. Plus, I figured, I need someone, to talk too. I picked, this other guy up, but he didn't, need to go far."

"We've just passed Trial Bay."

"You know the coast?"

"Not really," replies Michael. "I just read the sign, though it was a bit hard too in this dark. I've only travelled up here once before, many years ago. Just mentioned that place because I think it's where there's a gaol by the sea. Visited it with me mates at the time." explains Michael.

"This is my first time, down here. I bought a map, after I crossed the border. Its down by your feet."

"Do you want me to navigate?"

George nods his head.

"You seem a little nervous."

"Just that its night," replies George. "Makes it harder, for me, to workout where I am."

"You've really got no idea where ya heading?"

"There's a place called Gosford - it's suppose to be near Sydney - do you know it?"

"Yeah, its on the Central Coast. You can't miss it."

"Me mate Leroy lives there, according to his brother, in Texas. He couldn't find the address, when I stopped by, so I have to ring him later, says he's always at the R.S.L playing the pokies. I can catch up with him, and have somewhere to stay, just to have a break, but really, I just want, to keep moving."

"Have you got a torch? I'll show you Gosford on the map."

"I've got a lot of junk in here. I can't find it."

"Look for it, later. Sydney's, still a long way, huh?"

"Yeah," replies Michael brusquely, "a fucking long way."

With the sunset, total blackness had enveloped the passengers of the battered Gemini - they had entered into the womb of the night. Despite the smell of vomit there was a sense of comfort being in the car. Occasionally, the headlights of oncoming traffic lighted up the interior. The staccato of wild trees by the side of the road would also be briefly lit up. When the blackness returned the dense tree lines that flanked the car gave the night a monumental quality. It is understood by the occupants how an all-consuming spirit world could possibly exist. There was the sense that when it was totally dark they were a part of the bush itself. Thus these flashes of light gave respite to the feeling that the darkness, along with the bush, would swallow them.

Inferno

Michael again peers at George who is breathing nervously and firmly holding the steering wheel, keeping a strict eye on the unknown road ahead of him. The window on George's side is wound a little down and the wind

whistles in flapping the pieces of broken vinyl on George's car seats. Michael is struck by the humanness of the situation and the underlying vulnerability of his host.

"I think I'll try and ring Leroy's brother."

The Gemini pulls into a service station and the passenger is grateful for the opportunity to savour some other human contact and to stretch his legs. He walks underneath the bright artificial lights of the servo shop to buy some chocolate.

"No luck," remarks the disconsolate figure as the car continues its journey down the dark highway. "Hear that rattle, on the right side? It's a bearing. I've tried, getting a spare part, but no dice. Where I lived, you repaired everything, yourself. It's a little dangerous for us, when we go around the curves. Especially when we veer round the right."

Michael is surprisingly calm; he puts it down to the notion that he is aware of the risks he is willing to take when hitchhiking. He would peer at George then look down at the map to check the distances between the towns - he has become the navigator for a man who is venturing further and further into unknown territory. Michael has realised here is a 'pilgrim' who needs to strike out into different unknowns to find his feet again; this pensive individual was escaping from a hard unbending attitude to perhaps an even tougher world but nevertheless if he survived it would leave him to be a stronger, firmer person; he was descending into hell as this journey to nowhere took him further and further away from the only world he knew.

Michael knows all about the hell George is heading too as he follows his finger down the highway and stops it at Sydney.

"Looks like another hundred kilometres - to Taree that is."

The trip up north had been a little escape from the psychic burdens of the big city; Michael looks down once more at Sydney and thinks of Lisa and Melissa to visualise other hells within this bullseye. Yes, Hades. Maybe it is for the best to convince George to go back to Tiara.

The bearing is squealing.

"Do you think there'd be a garage there that can kill that sound?"

"Should be," replies Michael. "Its a big enough town."

The world is becoming incrementally more desperate for George the further south he goes and his increasing tension can be sensed in his voice. "Fuck 'em...why couldn't they leave us alone..." he mutters.

"You'll sleep the night at Taree?"

"Yeah," replies George. "I'm hoping there's, a caravan park, somewhere, close by...I can't, sleep, in the car." George turns his head slightly towards Piggy.

"I know there's a few about," states Michael. "Its a bit of a vacation place. The beach is nearby. "

George looks at his watch. "Its not, that, late. Keep thinking, it should be later. Time, seems to always, pass slower, when you don't know, how long, it will take ya, to get, somewhere."

"You okay?"

"Cigarettes aren't no good for me, but, I like, to 'ave 'em."

The Gemini starts to turn around a few bends and the right front wheel squeals louder.

"Sounds, like a pig." remarks George who taps the dashboard. "Maybe there's a *legion* of demons inside of her!" He laughs, wheezes and coughs wildly.

Jerusalem

Michael inserts a cassette to settle their nerves.

"Jerusalem, Jerusalem.."'

"Billy Bragg..."

"Y-e-ah..." George splutters the word from his mouth. "Always, think, of, East London, when, I hear, that."

"I saw him at the Enmore theatre and he played shadow puppets for the first twenty minutes until his PA was fixed."

"I, like, him."

"That sign says only thirty-three kilometres to go..."

"Good thing we're back on the straight and narrow." laughs George. "Sorry about the cough attack."

"That's okay. You'll be able to freshen up soon."

"What are you goin' to do?"

"Just keep heading south. If I'm lucky might get a straight through night lift to Sydney."

"I'll drive you into town before looking for a campsite."

"Yeah, that'll be good. Thanks mate."

"There's a camp sign.."

"We're just out of Taree now."

"There's another one...looks like shops up ahead."

"We're coming into Taree."

"Lots of houses, looks like a big place. Plenty of shops."

"Just follow the main road out to those camp signs and you won't get lost."

"See ya..."

"Thanks for the lift and - good luck!" Michael feels he is abandoning George but he can't see the point in staying overnight in Taree.

The Elite

The Gemini zooms off. It turns left at a large intersection. The car pops out one block further up from where Michael is standing. After it heads back up to the highway he walks down the main street looking for the Elite Cafe.

This large cafeteria has just closed. Several Aboriginal children, along with Michael, stare at the two waitresses who are wiping down a few tables. This small group, leaning against the large glass doors, watch despondently as the shop lights are turned out and the cafe manager walks through a back door.

Michael knows how much children like to be around milk bars; though the Elite Cafe was more a grand version of the cafeterias he had frequented in the shopping malls of the city. He remembers stopping in here on the way up and being taken aback by the patronising serviettes with their ink picture of an old tribal man with spear next to an explanation of the local waterfalls. Nevertheless, Michael had been looking forward to having a good cheap meal at the Elite and now he ventured up the main street of Taree until finding a small milk bar to buy a hamburger.

After scoffing his take away meal Michael decides to have a beer. He feels awkward sitting with his grubby backpack in a well-styled pub; groups of young people are sitting nearby enjoying each other's company, sculling their schooners and enjoying each other's jokes. Michael sips his beer sullenly in the corner, slowly smoking his rollie. It is obvious it is time to continue the journey; so a walk to the end of the main road until it meets the highway. After standing at this spot for ten minutes there is a sense of amazed wonder when a yellow Gemini pulls up.

Macandel

"Get in!" shouts George as he swings open the passenger door.

"The car smells fresher." comments Michael.

"I cleaned out Piggy's business." states George. "I tried a couple of camping spots and they were all filled up! One guy let me have a shower and now that I'm all spruced up with some clean clothes I feel I can drive all night!"

"Are you still thinking of heading to Gosford?"

"I might as well, it's all I know, to go to, at the moment."

"Well its a few hours drive..."

"I can make it Mickee boy!" cheers George.

Michael sits in the Paris Express Cafe on Oxford Street and remembers how George had started to tire; a shower had provided a new lease of energy but after a further two hours of driving the long day had begun to catch up.

"Crash out in Newcastle." Michael had suggested.

As the car went down the busy main roads that led to the C.B.D of Newcastle George's nervousness returned.

"This is a big place, big, big place, Mickee, much bigger, than Taree."

Michael had wondered what George would be thinking as he approached the sprawling urban metropolis which surrounded the Sydney Harbour Bridge. They pulled into a car park beside Nobbys Beach; to the right they could see the silhouette of the lighthouse. After getting out into the pitch black and listening to the surf Michael turned to speak to George's sweating face, whose smooth features stood out against his white wrinkled shirt.

"Listen George there's an outside chance I can catch the last train to Sydney. Tomorrow morning get that wheel fixed and then just follow the signs to get out of here and to Gosford. After you've stayed there pick up another hitchhiker to guide you into Sydney."

"Why, don't, you, stay?"

"I've got to get back - sorry." Michael uttered curtly. "If I miss the train I'll come back." Michael glanced at the backseat and saw that Piggy was on the floor. "You've cleaned the back out, grab a blanket and sleep there."

"Have you, got a, phone number?"

"I'm minding a mate's place in Leichhardt - it's a suburb of Sydney," stated Michael. "I can't give out his number." He lied.

"I've got, another, address, here, it is, Harrow St., Liverpool - do you, know Liverpool?"

"Sorry George, I've got to go. Good luck!" Michael never looked back as he quickly walked to the railway station and hurried onto the train that left within a quarter of an hour. Except for a gang of youths who yahooed along the top deck of the carriage until they got off after several stops the trip down to Sydney was uneventful. However, in the seat opposite the aisle sat a young one-armed black man. On his stump was tattooed a butterfly with the name Macandal underneath it. Occasionally glancing at him Michael couldn't help but think of the conversation he had with Lisa: whether the man opposite was Aboriginal or not the desecration of his body was somehow a desecration of his original land. The young man sleepily looked over - 'Macandel' was drunk.

"Poor bastard." mutters Michael who looks out at the hurly burly of Oxford Street. A Neil Murray poster on a telegraph pole; he had played at the Annandale Hotel this night. After arriving at Central Michael has meandered up to the Paris Express Cafe for a late night coffee.

'I wish Pandora's Pastries was open. I could do with a Mexican sausage roll.'

'To Her Door' by Paul Kelly starts playing over the café speakers and this brings back to mind George. As the traffic bips and the groups of late nightclub people hover up and down Oxford Street and walk underneath its many pulsating lights Michael knows he is once more in the heart of the beast.

DAY

The Sanctuary of the Subconscious

The Day of the Dead

Looking down at Greystanes on the map to find the school there is only a blank area with no name.

'Stuff it. That must be it.'

The female teacher's aides bring the disabled children onto the bus; backs strain lifting these bodies from the wheelchairs. Hearts throbbing against perspiring chests, these children were not yet finished when they left the soft darkness of their mothers' wombs. In the occasional glance or in the sudden warmth of a smooth, delicate hand is a trapped light; there is deep meaning in these feeble attempts to sort of 'speak' at these moments; in such casual, mutual instances Melissa also feels more 'complete.'

Lying on this bed, feeling the cool breeze coming through an open window, this thought comes to mind on this Sunday, which is Melissa's birthday, which is also the day of her christening.

A yawn; the arms are stretched.

The sun as a small sparkling dot is shining through the bamboo curtain of the bedroom. A tiny light forms a white circle on the forehead. Penetrates the eyes. The cosmos moves inside the body, shining from within.

A blink.

Lifting up the blind, the sky is unusually bright. Last night there had been a storm surging just off the coast, afterwards there had been so much rain and flashes of a brilliant white light had lit up the room. Surprise. The canopy to this new day is clear and unblemished, a walk down to the beach. The light on the trees is crisp and golden. The surf is clean with the waves reaching the shore in a series of equally spaced sets; the warmth of the sun's rays soaking into the skin. It's a perfect day for a kite festival. This particular morning is especially peaceful.

The silence is comforting.

The unit is situated on a hill overlooking the park behind the beach. Change out of the board shorts, have a shower, then check the refrigerator. There's no milk in the fridge. Breakfast will have to be in Darlinghurst. Its still early so there won't be much traffic. The drive will only take a few minutes. A smile. Last night's Guatemala benefit was so full of life. It is unbelievable to be so awake. The postcard Beatrice sent from Mexico City; she is on her way to a Guatemalan village where people will celebrate the Day of the Dead by flying kites over the graves of their loved ones; family messages hovering to their ancestors.

'Hey on the same day as the Melbourne Cup.'

A click of the heels; hands raised to the sky.

'That was good timing, your postcard arrived on Friday. You really missed something, last night was quite a fiesta, a sort of Latin wedding.'

In the bathroom, two night photos with mutual friends along the cabinet mirror. A flyer of this other momentous evening:

NICARAGUA'S
Ten Years of
FREEDOM DANCE

Paul Kelly & Stevie Connolly
Septiembre 5 (from Cuba)
Mambologists
Compered by H.G. Nelson from 2JJJ
SATURDAY JULY 15, 8PM
BALMAIN TOWN HALL. $12/$8
All profits go towards aid projects in Nicaragua and El Salvador
Organised by CISCAC (Committee in Solidarity with Central America and the Caribbean)
Refreshments available. For more information, contact CISCAC on 6608391.

The lettering is set against a large red V between two black rectangle blocks at the top and bottom of the leaflet where some of the wording in white is set against. There is a pyramid of cheering people with a woman at top wearing a military cap; she is waving a large red and black FSLN Sandinista flag. "Paul Kelly and the Coloured Girls with the Mambologists and Septiembre 5 from Cuba at Balmain Town Hall celebrating the 10th Anniversary of the Nicaraguan Revolution." Speaking as if evoking an incantation of the past. A thousand people danced in a hall licensed to only hold three hundred. Beatrice's beautiful dark Latin features; she's had that long ponytail pulled since childhood; so smooth-faced on this night, pulling that glorious hair.

The years can weary; shoulders slump.

A frown.

To be worn down, to erode like the coastline…

Brunswick Street

On their first day in Melbourne Gregor and Michael find themselves sitting down in Mario's - one of the many gallery cafes on Brunswick Street in Fitzroy. They are at a table with Gregor's friends; they are young, very outgoing and mostly artists; nearly all of these creators are dressed in black.

"I should show you Mick when we get back home a photo of these two Melbourne women that I took in Athens. One's wearing a furry brown coat the other this black coat and skivvy; you'd think they were twin sisters with the way they both have red hair cropped above their shoulders. Looking very stylish; smiling broadly at the camera. They really look like 'Melbourne girls'!" Gregor says cheerfully. "Met them on the Magic Bus from London. It took three days crossing Europe to get to Athens where we had another great three days…"

A waitress comes up to take the order. One fellow has his coffee reheated when the waitress is made aware that it was incorrectly served before rather than after

his lunch. Michael is impressed and comments to another man sitting opposite to him that the service in Melbourne is always very friendly.

"You're a Sydney friend of Gregor's then?"

"Yeah, we're just here for a few days. We've just come from that big etching supply shop that's close to here."

"Yes, Gregor always makes a beeline to it; from there the nitric acid he always needs can be readily bought." comments a woman beside Michael. "Some of us will also be organised by him to go to the Aussie Rules."

"He would be a joint." states the first man.

"What?" inquires Michael.

"We're having a discussion about the way people meet. I'm a sculptor so plumbing metaphors come to mind. You see, people are basically divided into two groups: joints and pipes. People who are joints bring people together while other people are pieces of pipe who fit in with the joints."

"Gregor's always having parties and poetry readings so that's true." Michael looks up at the small paintings, which are covering a whole wall, and sees they all have red dots underneath them. "Have all these paintings been sold?"

"You wouldn't see that in Sydney." smiles Gregor. "They're works of the Great Ocean Road."

Michael looks at the paintings, which have hills sloping in spectacular fashion to the sea. "Never been on that road."

"We'll go there tonight!"

"What?"

"We can drive down to the Twelve Apostles after we go to 'the Prince' at St. Kilda to watch Paul Kelly. We'll see them at dawn. After some breakfast at Apollo Bay we can cruise along the Great Ocean Road and be back in Melbourne late tomorrow."

The Twelve Apostles

The Twelve Apostles look spectacular against the orange glow of the rising sun.

"This is better than the postcards."

"Yeah I knew you'd like it Mick. Wasn't that much effort to get here."

A plaque states that these tall jutting rocks are the remnants of a former headland, which has been washed away. When these pillars also disappear in a few hundred years it would be assumed that the reshaping of the coastline would begin again.

Gregor and Michael sit in silence – and alone to the world – on a cliff top. They listen to the morning wind whistle through the scrub grass. Michael flicks open a Steinbeck – Tortilla Flat - which he bought in Brunswick Street. He reads out aloud the beginning of the book, which expresses a desire to record the 'adventures' of a circle of hobo friends.

"You think anyone will ever write about us Mick?" suddenly inquires Gregor. "Will we be remembered?"

"Don't think so mate. We'll just join the other billions of precious and unique human beings whose lives on this earth have simply returned to the dust." Michael picks up with his hand a clump of grass and dirt and throws it onto the ground. "Like them, we'll just enter into the oblivion of unrecorded history."

Gregor grins. "I hope God remembers us my Orthodox friend. Let's have a swig of vodka for ourselves." He pours the vodka from a small flask, taken out of an esky, into a small glass; has a shot then passes the flask and shot glass to Michael who also takes a quick gulp. Neither friend is particularly religious but both men automatically cross themselves after Michael screws back the top.

"Life is full of mysteries which would be good to ponder on but we need to head back." Gregor stands up and stretches out his hand to help Michael to also get to his feet. Both men make slight adjustments to their black fisherman's caps. As they saunter back to the car Michael turns around and throws a stone.

Shipwreck Coast

Michael tosses a pebble at the red painted top. "These lighthouses are unmanned these days - aren't they?"

"Yeah, that's right Mick. There were a few protests to stop this from happening but no luck."

"Thought so..."

Central Railway

Michael bumps into her from behind. Looking larger than life, standing so close. Melissa is held in both arms while a large travel bag is down by the feet. All around are the fast swirls of the peak hour crowd.

Looking wide-eyed at each other, both friends are filled with relief.

"Thank God you found us!"

"Sorry! I didn't think there'd be so much heavy traffic. It's why I'm late!"

Return of the Prodigal

When Lisa and Melissa first arrived in Sydney they stayed with Cat as he did not live far from the hospital. Despite this practicality, for the new arrivals living at Kings Cross had proved depressing; more so for Melissa as there was nowhere really safe for her to play.

Although a young couple in the terrace next door did not mind Melissa coming over to spend time with their six-year-old daughter and four-year-old son this only happened now and then as the son was often in playgroup or out with the mother, while the daughter went to school.

Lisa would more often take Melissa down to the park by Rushcutters Bay; yet the walk up the hill, which involved pushing Melissa in a stroller, was always too tiresome.

Cat's small flat was claustrophobic and Lisa, who was often on her own, felt she was living in prison-like conditions. "There's not even enough space to change your mind." She once quipped; however, Melissa's general lethargy was

a far more serious concern; even though the doctors had assured her mother Melissa's present condition was good. Margaret eventually came down to Sydney to help Lisa take care of Melissa; especially with the probability of Lisa going into hospital. That probability had arrived but before then Michael had organised for Lisa and Melissa to live at Master's place.

The surroundings of the large house were green and spacious. With Michael or Master, and occasionally with Jes, Lisa and Melissa would go for walks in Earlwood along the Cooks River bicycle track and then have chocolate and green tea at Adoras Cafe that was situated beside the river at the Homer Street bridge crossing; or otherwise there were the opportunities to take more adventurous bushwalks in Wolli Creek. Sometimes Lisa and Melissa would go for hours by themselves, have a picnic and pretend they were back in the country.

Lisa would collect the bark of one particular *acacia* - which she had been informed by Master - when soaked in water made up a solution that the original indigenous inhabitants used to treat skin diseases.

"I've bought some tube stock of this tree from the community nursery at Addison Road." remarks Master. "Where I get my free mulch. Even though it was closed we went by it that time when we went to Enmore Park to take Melissa to see the Yellow Magic Bus. You got to go for a swim in the heated pool. I'm happy to make that a regular event on my flexi-days. As for me I can read the paper in that café on the corner. It has a great print of a Newtown Jets match at Henson Park hanging on the wall."

"It's called De Caf. That's a good idea. Has a nice selection of Portugese sweets like Glorias café at Petersham. Lots of mums and kiddies hang out at that council bus and the café so Melissa could make a few friends."

Although Lisa also appreciated that Master had planted this particular wattle in his backyard she would still search for it in the bush. As for Melissa she enjoyed planting trees and with her mother mix-up her hands in the dark, rich earth.

In the evening there was the suburban silence and the sheltered tranquillity was savoured.

Human Bonding

While up north Lisa had very much been looking forward to meeting Margaret. Although Lisa had made friends and found work in the cafes she was now very reclusive focusing all her attention on an increasingly lethargic Melissa; yet, a mother's instinct was tugging at her that it may be of some benefit to meet this elder female stranger. Michael had only left Lisa's number with Jason on the day he had left and Margaret had keenly rung that morning to introduce Lisa to Jason and Madeleine's doctor. However, Lisa already knew their general practitioner and in fact had taken Melissa to all the doctors in the district. Nevertheless, these two women still met up - at the lighthouse – that very afternoon; they became instant friends and would regularly go for walks along the beach and spend time at Lisa's place. Margaret even had the 'pleasure' of

once meeting Blue, who had ventured downstairs, out of sheer curiosity, to meet Lisa's new elderly friend.

"She ignores me, now she's met you."

"Michael says you're part Aborigine." remarks Lisa.

Margaret puts her mug down. "When I was a little girl I remember my grandmother saying something about her own grandmother being 'dark'...there was a big argument with her and my granddad. My mum told them both to shut up! I think it had something to do about what my grandmother said to me...I don't know...anyway, I knew I couldn't talk more about it with her."

The Creation of the Sun

Margaret, with the whole family, drive down to Lisa's, and cram her and Melissa into the white Valiant station wagon and drive to Mullumbimby.

While the other children go off to play in a park Margaret tells Melissa about the Dreamtime creation of the sun. "There was no sun in the world..."

"No sun...?" inquires Melissa.

"In the beginning there was only the moon and the stars, Melissa."

"Imagine that!" exclaims Lisa. "We wouldn't need our sun cream," Lisa is rubbing white zinc cream onto Melissa's nose.

"That was before the emu and the brolga started fighting with each other; the brolga went to the nest of the emu and picked up an egg and threw it up to the sky!"

Lisa throws a large mandarin up above her head. "Oops!" Catching the mandarin she looks wide-eyed at her daughter. Melissa laughs and claps her palms while the mandarin is peeled.

"The egg broke on some wood which burst into flame when the yellow yolk spilt all over it."

"Fancy that!" exclaims Lisa. "Too bad Jason can't start the barbeque that easily!"

"Well," a pause as Melissa is given a piece of mandarin, "the flame lit up the whole world below! Everyone was excited!"

"Like wow!" Lisa pulls a face, then stands up and starts running quickly on the spot, stretching out her palms to Margaret and Melissa; mandarin juice is dribbling from the middle of both open hands. "I better zoom off for a sec and wash these hands!" Melissa giggles as she watches her mother do silly walks, zigzag over to a nearby tap, fall flat on her face, struggle to turn the tap, pull an angry face, get up, kick the tap, fall to the ground again and then on her next 'try' open the tap to clean her hands. "Hooray!" shouts the comedian. Lisa hugs Melissa before sitting down.

"Like I said," Margaret wipes away a tear, "- sorry, I'm still laughing - there had been no sun before, just the moon and the stars. A good spirit decided it would be beautiful if there was a fire everyday!"

"Yeah! Great idea!" Lisa thrusts a fist to the sky.

"So with the help of other spirits the good spirit would collect firewood to light up a fire."

Melissa points.

"That's right," states Lisa. "The boys are collecting firewood for their father."

"The morning star would be sent out to warn everyone that the fire would be lit up. Yet a lot of animals still slept through the dawn."

Lisa taps her forehead with the bottom of her palm. "Those animals!" Shakes her head. "They didn't see the sunrise!"

"What did you think happened?"

Melissa frowns, looks tearful. "Don't worry Melissa!" announces Lisa. "Your mum doesn't know what happened either!"

"That's it Melissa, that's a nice smile." Margaret's relieved. "Well it was decided a noise should be made and so the kookaburra is given the task to laugh every morning to wake everybody up; if the kookaburra ever stops to laugh the darkness will return."

"Well, we better keep those kookas laughing!" Lisa starts to tickle Melissa's stomach.

Margaret laughs. "There's one thing I need to warn you about though. Children aren't meant to imitate the laughter of the kookaburra in case he thinks he's being mocked. You grow an extra tooth above your eye tooth if you do!"

Lisa pokes her finger behind her two front teeth. "That's - what - must - have - happened - to - me!" she mumbles.

"Do you like that story Melissa?" Margaret softly asks.

"Kooka...kooka." giggles Melissa.

"Lets look!" Lisa looks around at the surrounding trees with her hand held up to her eyes to protect them from the sun. "No kookaburras around here! So you can sing!"

"Kooka! Kooka!" yell all three. "Laugh kookaburra laugh!"

Green Park

"Oh merry king of the bush is he…"

Sitting on a bench unfurling a drawing of a kookaburra next to a big yellow sun. A glance at the hospital. In the morning shadows it looks as if it is slightly listing. Suddenly sunrays momentarily blind.

The sun hovers above the hospital. Memories rise like soaring sunspots:

"I've got the upside down man in front of me."

"The one Melissa drew! You like it?" Lisa laughs on the phone. "She just decided to draw the head upside down! Its how my head feels…like hell. I'll be coming down soon, real soon." Long silence. "Probably catch the mail train."

A blink.

Flight to Egypt

On a street corner along Devonshire Street at Surry Hills a woman is howling. A baby cries in her arms. A small bald man shouts at her.

"Leave her alone!"

"Mind your own business wog!"

The woman runs down the street. Goes by a young, scruffy male passer-by with a ghetto-blaster. The music is loud. "Just Like an Egyptian!" The male sings.

"Bitch! Fuck'n bitch!" The bald man screams and gets in his rusting bright orange Gemini. "I'll come back and kill you spick!" He speeds away.

Mali

Going inside the Shakespeare Hotel but it does not offer any sense of sanctuary. A rush to the car. Driving aimlessly along the backstreets. Crown Street.

Night.

Orange light. It highlights a wooden mermaid.

Clay starfish. Two canoes.

Pulling the car over.

"Strange…the Mali only opens in the day."

Inside the small intimate sand-coloured interior are a handful of people sitting on the plastic milk cartons which are usually on the footpath. One of two of the French women who work at the café is dancing to the Gypsy Kings. "Happy Birthday!"

A private party.

Polyphemus

A Fiat zooms close to the footpath. It passes a huge truck.

The truckie is furious and bips his horn.

"One-eyed git!" yells the Fiat driver.

"I'd done the same!"

"Who the hell are you? You NOBODY!"

Quickly walking pass the Bentley Bar to go up Campbell Street

Calypso

"Do you have the time?" A Jamaican lilt. Plump. Big bangles. A sparkling gold sphinx on a necklace sits in the displayed cleavage.

"Forget it!"

Oedipus with male Harpies

Six teenagers on skateboards nearly knock over an elderly man who is walking with a cane. One of the boys falls over. The others stop.

"FUCKWITS!" Fuming. Ambling off. Glancing at the string. "Still need to get a ball of this for Caterina."

Isabella

HAPPY BIRTHDAY ISABELLA!

"Manyana I'll put up the balloons! That's when Isabella will be five! You like the sign?"

"Very colourful. Anything I can do while I'm here?"

"No, no! Everything is getting done!"

"Well I'll bring a carton of V-"

"Except maybe buy me some string! That's it! I need extra string for these decorations and for the piñata! Bring it tomorrow afternoon, maybe come a little early."

"I'll tie a bit of string around my finger so I won't forget. It's an old trick. I'm going to see a movie at the Encore. Afterwards, I can get the string."

Nina from Argentina

Opening the front door. "Well, well my own personal guide! Lead away you Greek Virgil! Lead away!"

Caterina's friend is taken through her Annandale house. In the front room the morning sunlight ripples over the polished hues of several pieces of old wooden furniture; an art deco chair beside a wall which is bathed with a single bright beam of light that exaggerates the varying diagonals and curves of this seat. The light creates halos through the stained glass windows as it angles throughout the narrow terrace.

After the two greet each other in the kitchen Caterina is informed that a small Noel Coward ditty will be included in a performance for Isabella's party.

"Nina from Argentina
Knew all the answers
Although her relatives were perfect dancers!" [1]

"You'll have to come tomorrow to hear the rest! Before you leave have things improved between you and your father since the last time I saw you? You prodigal son of the Hellenes who is not afraid to let the gods know what you think of them!"

The Birth of Venus

After going by the art supply shop a walk to the Academy Twin to use the toilets. The features on tonight include Red, Anna Karenina, Pulp Fiction and a documentary about an old man who chalked the word Eternity on Sydney's city streets for many years.

Across the road in a poster shop can be seen a large print of Boticelli's long-haired goddess of love emerging from the sea in an open clam; a wind god produces a gust to spread out her flowing golden curls.

Suddenly, outside the cinema a familiar figure walks by.

Rorke's Drift

Burnt ruins. Amidst them are the Queen's red uniformed soldiers stoically fighting off hordes of brave Zulu warriors.

"It's pretty amazing this one Mick."

"I saw the movie of this with Cat…before…I met you that night."

"Is that right…" Lisa rubs her temple. "I 'lost it' in the car-"

"No worries Lisa. Forget about it."

"Sorry…you've had to put up with too many evenings-"

"We're having a great day…"

Cheap Wine

"A lot of fuck'n pain this night Mick!"

"You pissed Lisa?"

"You judging me?"

"I don't care what you do. I'm not judging you."

"You're beautiful Mick…you're beautiful…I feel comfortable around you like an old jumper…I *have* been drinking …I've had *some* wine…*really* cheap plonk…but its making me *feel* good."

"Has Melissa had anything to eat?"

"Yeah…*yeah*…I'm still a *good* mother Mick…don't worry – she's stuffed with food and milk Mick. Need to build *up* her calcium Mick! I want her to be *strong* – to fight! To fight Mick *like* her mother! I've been in a lot of *pain* all day Mick…a lot of fuck'n pain…I can't stand it! Have a *little* drink *with* me…"

"I've brought a couple of longnecks…thought Cat be here…"

"That's the sport Mick…you're a good *guy* Mick…like the brother I never had. I'm an *only* child Mick. I'm a *little* self-absorbed with myself Mick…do you reckon so *Mick*?"

"You got a right to think about yourself Lisa. A perfect right."

"What rights do *I* have Mick…what rights do *any* of us have? Fuck Mick don't talk about rights *when* Melissa is going to die Mick…what sort of fuck'n world *is* this Mick that has so many little ones die…*aye* Mick…*open* the beers Mick. There's a chance Cat will be back in an hour or so Mick. He's been out *all* day."

"That's okay Lisa. Too bad you haven't got a babysitter. Reckon you ought to get out."

"Wouldn't matter Mick the pain's bad today. My *whole* body is aching. *Where are we* Mick? *Where are we*…? Is Melissa asleep? Maybe I should check on her…"

"Melissa's all right Lisa – leave her."

"I gotta picture to show you Mick. See this! A woodcut. A *tsunami* Mick! It's BIG! Do you like it Mick? What do you think Mick. You like art Mick. You do it. You. Me. Gregor. We ALL love it – hey Mick! Maybe I should go live on the streets Mick! Be the new Marianne fucking Faithful! Go through all that fucking hardship then fucking pull out of it to make fucking great art for the fucking *future*…don't say it in fucking Russian say it in fucking broken English! Faith! Faith! Faith! Fuck! Fuck! Fuck! You want to fuck me Mick? Make fucking great art! Trouble is Mick! There ain't no future! You and I! Aren't going to have any wistful talk in thirty fucking years time. Are we Mick! I watched Marianne Faithful on the television just now. Just before you fuck'n came! To see Cat! To go see some fuck'n band! She was talking about her life! The ups and downs! Her 'aristocracy'! Pulled her through Mick! She pulled through that suicide!

Pulled through being the heroine Ophelia! No fuck'n chance I'll pull through! I'll play Ophelia properly! Right through to the fucking bitter end! *She's* still *alive*!"

"Gregor saw Marianne Faithful in London. Years ago."

"Is that so Michael? Is that so…trying to make conversation Mick. Is that it? You're a beautiful person. You have *faith* Mick. Have faith! In a few years time you can say to Gregor. I saw Lisa talk about Marianne Faithful one mad Saturday night. When Lisa was still alive! What's it like talking to a mad corpse? A fuck'n mad Ophelia corpse!"

"You're a fuck'n bitch Lisa."

"Don't hold back Mick. Don't be shy. Don't say what's really on your mind! No need for any sympathy with me Mick. No need to mix your fucking words Mick! In thirty years Mick. You. Me. Won't. Be. Having a bit of a laugh about tonight! When I *go* into a 'deep sleep'! It's going, to take more, than just to ask, the gods-that-be, to help wake me up! Sorry Mick! Got the giggles! Look! Mick! I'm drooping my head! Lifting my head! Opening my mouth! Don't WORRY! I won't vomit! Shutting my mouth. I've got no Luna Park mouth Mick! No one's! Going to! Come! Into! My! Mouth! For fun! It's hell! Once saw a thirties photo of the Luna Park mouth. Looked like a demon! Plenty of people walking into the Mouth of Hell! I move this mouth from side to side! Snap it shut…open it. Really wide! Pop a ball into the demon clown's mouth! I close it…open it…shut it…Fuck, Mick! What goes through your head when you're at a loose end! Timothy! It only lasted a few weeks! Look at *this* wave Mick. Look at this *wild* sea! I want to make pictures Mick…I want to…I want to feel okay *inside*."

The Human Heart

Michael looks at Lisa with pity. In these bitter moods she is like the state ward boys that had to be attended too at a halfway house where he briefly worked while a university student. They had left their detention at Mt. Penang and needed help in finding work or applying for the dole; to learn to take care of themselves - to live 'a straight life' so as to avoid becoming hard-core criminals. Yet they were always up at the Cross, thieving, selling themselves at The Wall, drugging their bodies, being violent to each other and to anyone they disliked who crossed their path. Yet vulnerable. Here was a viciousness which disguised a desperate human need for affection. For love. For belonging. (There was the short sized 'gang leader' who slept every night with a teddy bear and thumb in mouth). Yet, as he looks at Lisa weeping, it is unfathomable to Michael how such essential human desires in these disturbed beings could be met, of how to break such a pattern of such emotional cruelty.

Crucifixion

It is nearly midnight; the lights are out but the older woman in the next bed has her bed lamp on as she listens to her transistor. The woman softly hums

"…*a total eclipse of the heart*..." she suddenly clasps her palms together and with her hands forms a triangle over her chest.

Another woman can be sighted slowly walking along the hallway. A regular sleepwalker wearing shoulder and chest pads to protect her. She looks like a guard on duty.

"The Fall of the Roman Empire…" observes the new arrival.

"You're awake dearie. I just can't get to sleep. Not that I ever do sleep. I'm such a night owl. You'll find that out - if you're here long enough. They've been passing through here quite quickly lately. Only me and Nerida over here have become the long timers. You ought to meet her – she's more your age. Nerida!"

The woman on the other side of the owl lifts herself up; after curiously seeing the new occupant in the previous empty bed she lies back down. A large curtain separates these three women from the other patients who are all men. There is a critical shortage of beds due to the present epidemic. Only a sudden detioration in health has forced on this admission into hospital. However, it is only tonight there has been a switch to this special ward.

"Home is where the heart is my little rose...that's what my mum used to say to me." The owl laughs. "But where's home if your heart is dying - hey Nerry?"

"Dunno and don't fuck'n care. Go to sleep Pearl."

"My little oyster...she used to say...look at this skin of mine! It keeps flaking off!" Hands scratch arms and legs. "Demented! Demeter! Dermatitis!" The wrinkled face implies a woman in her late fifties. Short auburn hair. The very thin, long body is reminiscent of a preying mantis; eyes large and bulging, extreme weight loss helps to show up the shape of the skull. "Damn skin! Its so fuck'n itchy! Never comes back! Even a snake gets his skin back! What's become of us if we're lower than a snake!" A laugh. "What were you doing luv to end up here? Working on the streets like me? I saw a customer once pass through here. Poor boy...poor mummy's boy..." Fingertips placed on shoulders; hands raised continually to the ceiling. "Heaven is like a sunbeam a sunbeam a sunbeam join in Nerry! New Kid! Join in!" The singing is infantile.

Nerida laughs. "Fuck it! I can't get to sleep anyway!" She sings along.

"Hey new kid! Why don't you join in!"

"Shut up you witch!" yells a male voice.

"That git in the back corner! New kiddie! I'm the resident fairy godmother on this block! Though it's sometimes hard to compete here with all the other-" Violent coughing.

"For Chrissake!" bellows the frustrated male voice.

"Christ?...CHRIST! I'm spitting blood! At least Christ had some water when they did him in!" Suddenly the mantis lies flat on her back with arms and legs stretched out. "I need water!"

"Have mine," comes a drowsy whisper. "I haven't touched my glass..."

"Why thank you...I'm truly touched...you're so kind...you might even make it to..."

Paradise

Asleep. Then sunlight hits the face. Yet, the room is dark. The window blind is down. Light beams have drifted into the room through a narrow gap. An empty bed. It had not been a dream the moment when a shrouded figure on a stretcher had been taken into the elevator.

Relief.

With Pearl's death the bitterness in the room has been removed. However, the darkness is disturbing. It would be comfortable to be out of this shadow. Pearl going down the elevator - to the morgue - had the sense of a sacrificial victim going to Hades. There is something chilling about going to an anonymous cold room, in the underground bowels. Amongst the patients there is a determination to avoid 'the elevator.' The euphemism for Death.

A man went berserk while being taken to another floor. Demanded to use the stairwell; two wards men had to overpower this invalid whose thin frame had discovered some hidden strength. Finally a syringe was used to drowse the hysteria.

The elevator *is* practical. However, inside this little box there is always a feeling of suffocation or bad spirits. It always became a little harder to breathe. Always a sense of jubilation when the elevator doors opened to reveal a hallway filled with people moving. Movement. The sensation of things or beings *not still* is the antithesis of death. Lying for hours in a bed could become depressing beyond explanation or relief; the bedridden becoming converts to Rugby League and Aussie Rules where the fast pace, at least, is a feast for the eyes. For now, this dark room has taken on the same claustrophobic feeling. Despite her irritating behaviour Pearl had at least been full of life. Now she is gone. Death almost seems to be saying there is no point hoping to escape the same fate.

'Pearl's death was unfair so why shouldn't…?'

A strong glimmer of sunlight shines underneath the blind. With good fortune it strikes the glass flask painted for Melissa's communion. It is to be used to pour the water of life. The pourer is on the bed drawer ready to be used today. The rainbows of colours painted onto it are lit up by the sun. The translucent colours of different shapes are united; become one. An overall haze of white light covers the flask. A sense of wonder.

"Paradise..."

The red of the rose on the pourer is particularly lit up - along with the yellows, greens, blues - is mesmerising. (Beside it is the half-full home-made lemonade bottle which has become Melissa's childhood memento). The pourer stays naturally alight for several minutes until the room returns to its deadening darkness. A strong sense of hope entertains the thought that somewhere past the window there is life. Lying in this darkness is unwanted. However, it is a struggle to remove this weak body from the bed. It is still asleep. The legs have a tingly feeling due to the bad circulation of the blood. Thus to reach the window to lift the blind means crawling along the ground. It would be easier to call the sister-on-duty but somehow it is important to perform this task. A life

instinct is saying that the open world beyond the window is far more positive than the sight of the narrow elevator doorway which is constantly glimpsed from the bed. This cold metal slab represents mortality while beyond the window lies the eternal universe. The body slides along the cold lino floor. The legs rigid. Crawling, like a child. Something *outside* the body is hope.

"Keep venturing *slowly*."

A nurse walks by.

"No! No! I want to open the window!" A fist slams the ground. "Please, oh please!" Comes the cry. "Let me be!" The fight leaves as the body is hauled. Blood smears on throat and floor from a cut hand. The blind is opened by another, despite the brightness of the day entering the room there is a sense of defeat. Nevertheless, there is also a sense of unity with the boundless horizon which exists beyond the limits of the city; which leads to the vast interior space of this continent as well as outwards to the sea.

Ultimo

'A cruel trick has befallen Lisa.' A frown. The drawing is folded up. "That day at the Powerhouse Museum…"

Looking at a Tibetan sand mandala. Meditation on finite lines that draw to an infinite centre.

Melissa points to nirvana.

After a final ceremony the mandala is blown away.

The transience of *all* life.

However, it is disconcerting to think: the world may only be a neutral void; no good, evil – just oblivion; this is little consolation in respect to the horrific fate which awaits a little girl. The spinning energies of the cosmos which move the circling stars also influence the revolutions which occur inside the smallest atom. Such forces also motivate the virus spiralling out of control in Melissa's living cells. Her body gradually disintegrates as death multiplies and reincarnates itself a thousandfold like the dust clouds of anti-matter which annihilate the stars. The laws of creation sustain life but are not life itself and so leave the machinery of each living thing to function on its own; so an indifferent world is killing an innocent child while the world itself leans on its celestial axis spinning in a void whirring towards its own endpoint. It has been said that one day the universe and everything contained within it will begin to shrink and collapse upon itself and become the size of a particle unseen to the naked eye then it will expand again to cover once more the unfathomable dimensions of space and aeons of time, which, to God, appears as another throb…

Manna

Walking back through the Ultimo streets to get to the car, man and child go by a high block of flats; surprise: a bouquet of dry flowers floats down to their feet. There are dry flowers in Jason and Madeleine's place. Love. The thought of a

love which can arise and bind you to consider the possibility that the cruelness facing Lisa and Melissa can be overcome.

The bouquet is picked up.

Darkness. It is nightfall.

Stars born.

Melissa's heart beats.

The world falls.

Zorba!

"*Zorba!*" The patriarch drops to his knees; suddenly jumps back up. *"Zorba!*" The man stretches out his arms and legs, bends his knees to once more descend to the floor. All this time holding onto a handkerchief which the next dancer also grasps. "Life! Life!"

The Cypriot boy and the other children look both ways at the long arcs of hundreds of dancers moving furiously around the centre of the hall. Surrounding these living concentric circles are four long rows of white tables from which the wedding guests have finished their feast. A row of women, with their long black hair braided over the shoulders of their flowing gowns, dance methodically as they complete, in unison, a series of complex footsteps, crisscrossing their feet as they move steadily to the right then to the left in time with the fast tempo of the music; appearing confident, within themselves and with life, as they smile, hold hands as the music beat becomes ever faster. While the *bazookia* player strums his strings ever more quickly, a family walks into the vast Glebe Police-Citizens Boys Club hall, to go to a far away table, like exiles returning to their home state.

Ancient Greece

"They would always arrive late." Flicking through a family album. Many of the photos are small, all black & white; all frayed and tattered around their thin white borders. It is like looking at some sort of antique history of a hundred, rather than twenty years ago; old memories suffer a similar decay; the voice sounds wistful. "My uncle would always try to squeeze at least one more hour out of the milk bar before closing up."

"Their hair looks fair."

"My cousins are fair skinned, freckled and have auburn hair; when they went to these big Greek weddings people would think they were Australians." Michael smirks. "The rare red-headed wog we'd nickname the eldest cousin at school."

A faded sepia photo of a milk bar.

"I took that. My uncle would open the shop from nine a.m and never close it before eleven at night. On Saturday nights if the business was really good the doors would stay open up to two a.m." Michael smiles. "A mate use to say Speed's Milk Bar was the Holy of Holies of a suburban Empyrean. My uncle was known as Speedie because he was often slow in serving customers. His wife was known as Mrs Speed while his two sons and daughter were called Little Speeds.

The shop was open every day of the year including Good Friday, Christmas and Anzac Day. That was a big deal back in the sixties because no one ever opened for business on those 'holy days'. On Anzac Day my parents and my uncle and aunt were glued to their sets watching the march. Sir Roden Cutler. I think they marvelled at how they were in a country that commemorated a day that involved fighting the 'old enemy.' As for my cousins they dreaded Christmas Day; it seemed their shop was the only one open in all of Sydney; endless streams of customers would come from miles around wanting soft drinks or boxes of chocolates as last minute Christmas presents. My uncle's bad temper would really flare up; especially when he was ordering someone to bring out more drinks from the garage out the back. I know because I helped out one year to earn a little pocket money. My body would sweat, go numb. Bottles and bottles of Shelley's, Schweppes and Coca-Cola were always sold. Christmas was the toughest work day of the year."

"Your aunt must have had a real hard time of it. You've mentioned before your uncle's temper."

"He's getting older but still lashes out. Like a falling empire-"

"Takes care of his wife okay though – doesn't he?"

"These women from Homecare come three times a day. They get my aunt out of bed, shower her; toilet her; put her in her chair with a hoist, put her back into bed. In the morning and noon they feed her. Every night my uncle patiently feeds her."

"Is Homecare…expensive…?"

"On a disabled pension it costs next to nothing. You won't have to worry paying too much…"

"That's a relief. Your aunt just sits in a chair…?"

"She's in it all the time. Just listens to the radio or watches the television for company. The MS has really crippled her – she's stranded…it's possible a lack of sunlight for her skin by always being in the shop may have helped bring this disease on. Apparently there's more MS in Tasmania than Queensland. My aunt spends a lot of time on her own; she endures like some female Prometheus. Thankfully, there are a few Greek women who regularly visit her; one really nice lady cleans the house once a week, which gives my aunt plenty of peace of mind. Her children often visit. I pop in occasionally. A sharp, wry wit and heroic - almost 'zen' - patience sustains her." Silence. "Last time I was at my aunt's I was helping my cousins paint the place. My sister was there too. I was with her in the front room when this community nurse came by to visit my aunt. I was rolling paint on the ceiling when this nurse really got my attention: she said I looked like Michelangelo. No big deal but then she said what a loser Michelangelo was spending all those years painting *that* ceiling! He should have just used iron-on transfers! Why didn't Michelangelo get a real life!"

Mutual laughter.

"Stop Aussie bashing!"

"I'm telling you THE TRUTH!"

"Okay. I believe you!"

Michael adds: “My uncle would point to the still-to-be-painted walls and ceilings and ask: ‘when will it be finished?’ Just like Pope Julius II did with the maestro.” Turning the pages of the album. “When I can! When I can!” Michael laughs. “That got ‘the almighty’ angry. My cousins found it very strange at first living in a house as they were always used to meeting people. The shop was an open tent compared to the house that was like a box.” A pause. “Did I ever tell you that Cat and I saw the Pope going down Oxford Street in his Popemobile? I think he was following the same course as the Mardi Gras. ‘I shook your hand at Assisi!’ yelled Cat.” Michael raises his hand. “Look at this hand Mickee-boy! It has also shaken Nelson Mandela’s hand at St. Mary’s Cathedral!” A grin.

“Cat the name dropper!” laughs Lisa.

“Anyhow, with Speedie and the other Greek milk bar owners they were like a little Delean League but the Italians outlasted the Greeks. The ‘Romans’ had a fruit shop which has expanded into a big market. While the milk bars are mostly gone now. The same thing is happening in Wollongong which I always thought of as the last outpost of the sixties. When I’m in Leichhardt towards the Café Sport end I’ll nip into Parramatta Road to go to Antonio’s and Maria’s. It’s the last of the old time Greek milk bars that I know. You can still buy a hamburger for $2.50. Antonio knew of Speedie when I mentioned him.” A sudden pensive look. Although there is *also* that confectionery milk bar in Summer Hill and that other one in Stanmore next to the movie theatre.”

Uncle and aunt in front of a wall of confectionery; it is stunning to see how the hard work, stress and long hours has aged them. “Look, a little scar on his forehead. There was always a bodgie - or someone - who’d be taunting him…blood was spilt in that milk bar – his and theirs…as my youngest cousin said in his wedding speech they were on the front line of multiculturalism for twenty years, anyhow it was a great fun hangout most of the time; at least they were lively days. You had things like the ‘Woglcon’. My cousins would play two of their best mates - the West brothers - in a five series pinball contest. After squaring up two-all the last set was like a Grand Final. The atmosphere in that crowded pinball room rivalled the tension at the S.C.G. especially when the Convicts made a spectacular comeback to win.” A pause. “It was Christmas Eve so afterwards we all went down the road to Humptys to see the Radiators. Everyone staring at my young cousin dancing over the whole dance floor by himself. STRANDED!” sings Michael. “Saw the Saints there once…on New Year’s Eve three of us decided to drive up to Newcastle to see the Castanet Club at the Palladin…” More nostalgic thoughts. “Across the road from the milk bar there used to be this huge slot car place…Homer Street…everywhere now seems really sterile-”

“We’re stranded!” laughs Lisa.

A poem on yellowing paper - written by the eldest cousin - is tucked in the back flap:

ZEUS

I sometimes envy the family cordiality of the Anglo - American middle classes
when I compare it to the psychological upheavals of my Grecian family history
Which nevertheless goes back to the beginning of time
To the time when Prometheus stole fire for humanity
To the time when chaos was replaced by the universal order of the gods
Who fight and debate amongst themselves
shifting the fates of both men and women
according to their whims
according to their lusts
according to their jealousies
according to their drunken states
States of mind
States of body
States of soul
and other Aristotelian dichotomies
(tri-chotemies?)
States of divine judgement
States of human error which do not guess correctly the divine moods
To the moods of my father who has the temper of a thunder god
I understand now he is none other than Zeus
I his son
The son of Zeus
Doomed to deal with a god who has the gruffness of a Spartan warrior
(How I envy the apparent civil manners of Anglo-Australian society)
Hey there's Zeus studying the racing form guide
with the discipline of a university academic studying the
mysteries of quantum mechanics
Hey there's Zeus picking oranges and lemons from the backyard
Hey there's Zeus taking out the garbage
Hey there's Zeus shouting at everyone in sight
Hey there's Zeus who feeds my mother whose body has totally been worn down by disease and by the hours of hard work and emotional pain inflicted upon her over the long years
Hey there's Zeus watching the footie
Watching the share
market
Watching the parliament
debate
Watching endless episodes of American sitcoms
Watching John Wayne kill all those bad men
from out of town
Watching his grandchildren who play in the backyard created from the life force of his soul which contains enough energy to explode and tear apart the known

universe from the suburbs of Sydney through to Circular Quay
It is a mystery to me
as I play with my sister's twin three year olds
My nephew
My niece
on the swings
(There I am pushing them to and fro in time with the rhythm of the universe)
to think of the push and shove and determination of my father who had his family working for twenty years in the milk bar
I'm still on the swing with my nephew and niece
We are all three silent enjoying the midday sun
In a paradise made from harsh toil
Yes it is still a strange realization to me that from the endurance tests foisted upon us by life can sometimes come such tranquillity

A vacant look.
"Hey you backyard Archimedes you thinking up another new strand of mathematics?"
"Sometimes I reckon my old man thinks he's Moses striving for the Promised Land. It's my responsibility to succeed to make sure he didn't move half way around the world and labour for forty years for *nothing*. It's a burden. A few days ago I had to go to the funeral of a second cousin; in his late fifties he'd just died of stomach cancer. The wake was at his Lidcombe house. In the living room I saw this old photo of him at a party laughing with his mates; looking young and fresh-faced. Some of the people at the wake were in this photo. I hadn't seen them since the big weddings I had gone to as a boy - I still feel like that boy. All my cousins were also there. The youngest who works up at Kings Cross in real estate can talk. He was the life of 'the party'. Rents cheap office space to these shoe-string film directors and reckons that Tropfest and the Australian film industry owe him a lot of thanks!" Michael shrugs his shoulders. "I remember when the Tropfest was just seeing a few home-made videos at the Tropicana café - not the big short film commercial event it's become. There I go again… 'Serpico' especially knows I like to think about the 'old days.' (Even though they can feel like a mirage). Anyway he was definitely the life of the party. Cheering everyone up. Maybe you should meet him. Talk about the Cross…"
"Hey Micky mate! Howz it going? Get into that souvlaki! Haven't seen you for weeks. You haven't been down to the disco looking for a wife have ya? Did you like my wedding? I hadn't been so dressed up since I wore that tuxedo on Perfect Match! Everyone except you said I raved on for too long in my speech but I was paying for the whole thing so I did what I liked! There was a whole damned Greek village there like there is now! Mick! I'm in a good mood! Picked two winners at Canterbury! Janis would have been pleased! Down at the T.A.B I even saw a few of my favourite clients! It's the unsung temple of multiculturalism! We all wear our hats on Melbourne Cup Day! Mate! Its good to have the afternoon off! I'm going crazy! Call me mate! Mick! We all say mate

here! We've all become good Aussies! Huh! The Aussies get so jealous when we make more money than them! Did I tell you what I did on Christmas Day? The shop was easier! I had to close a shooting gallery! I've got nothing against heroin addicts but I have to keep the properties clean! I feel sorry for them Mick. Mate! Yet there's little I can do. What do the police do? You know Mick I got threatened at gunpoint. Right in my own office! Take the money! The guy said. It's a gift. Shoot me! Pull the trigger! He thought I was crazy. I am Mick! No one believes half the things I've seen but believe me Mick when I say the inner city is just one big dirty bottomless black hole! There you go Mick, the glass is clean! Those kids on the streets. I've seen them hiding their syringes when they get off the train. They think they're going to find a way out. First week they're healthy. Second week a little skinny. Third week they're sunken eyed. Scrawny. By the fourth week - look how I'm squeezing this lemon. Have you got enough on your kalamari? Its good food isn't it Mick! Great food! There! Nothing left! That's what happens! Mick. Sucked dry! Thrown away! Sometimes, there is no light! There! First time in the bin! Haven't done that since school!"

Apocalypse Now

"Our primary school teacher in those days took us into the playground to see the first ever Boeing 747 Jumbo. It flew right over us. We all got so excited, it was the same with the moon landing, and it was as if NASA had taken everyone on earth to heaven. Now I wonder what people in Vietnam were doing, or thinking, when Neil Armstrong walked down the ladder of the Eagle.

When I saw Apocalypse Now I was with Caterina, she couldn't stop crying. The atrocities, which to me seemed like ancient history, were to her something that Washington was still encouraging in Latin America." A shake of the head. "To think as a young boy I looked up at the moon, after clambering up that big iron-grating rocket at Earlwood Oval, marvelling how America and eternity was the same thing…how that *whore* was as great in her goodness as the stars."

The American Future

'With the thought of space travel on my mind I see with my inner vision a television with static lines scratching across the screen. The sound changes to the drone of bees as the static flashes off the screen to reveal a swarming hive. Much like those nature docos in school science which displayed nature's social status quos' a familiar male voice narrates of the aristocracy of the Queen bee.

A bed of magnificent red and white roses lining a river sparkling with sunlight, glistening as if reflecting jewels. The bees hover amidst the open petals going from them to the hive.

Astounded, I have a closer look at this river of light, as if to drink from its glowing waters, the dazzling light temporarily blinds me. When sight returns the river has become a lake of shimmering stars, with the flowers merging to become a Rose of Light, each sparkling star unmasking its brightness to each

reveal a sci-fi image. Deadly Earnest appears from his late night Friday timeslot to introduce old space age, monster and horror films.

"A sci-fi paradiso…"

Flying saucers attacking the major cities of the world, with soldiers, tanks, artillery pieces glowing, vaporising into nothingness; disappearing anonymously in a ray-gun shower of tracer beams.

A bright flashing death ray fadeout.

A thousand thousand spinning circles of a thousand thousand pictures. Shirley Temple tap dancing, singing The Goodship Lollypop, which is the New World.

"Here's looking at you kid!"

My name said out loud through the magic hoop at the end of Romper Room.

A divine ecstasy.

A television suburban goddess smiles.

A thousand thousand repeats in an all-encompassing make believe world of a television nirvana. All round good guys of an American fantasy parade in front of me. The mind of my generation becomes as one with the divine omniscient mind of Hollywood.

Eternal film time.

Pure light.

A pristine American Future which will outlast even the vision of Dante Aligheri's Paradiso.

Screaming naked burning children were surreal to a boy whose world consisted of pinning up coloured drawings in his primary school classroom, collecting Scanlens footy cards, those big Whacky Plax cards accompanied with chewing gum, buying seamonkeys by way of the ad on the back of comics, playing Simon says, riding his scooter, stuck-in-the-mud, Lego, Chinese Checkers, Mousetrap or Scrabble, Barrel of Monkeys, playing with little plastic toy soldiers, every May staying up late on a Saturday night to watch the F.A. Cup final, racing in three-legged, egg-spoon and sack races at school carnivals, sitting on one side on the top floor of a school special double-decker bus with all the other high school boys who were trying to tip it over, making a balsa sailing boat, doing his homework on a laminated desk top with its colourful map of the world which included the vast expanse of the Soviet Union, going to Wolli Creek to look for tortoises or play soldiers, wearing superhero outfits, two-tone cowboy shirts, playing junior soccer for the Earlwood Wanderers at Earlwood Oval on Saturday mornings, watching Walt Disney's Disneyland at 6.30 pm every Sunday night then later on the 'Big Sunday Night Movie' at 8.30 pm, the original B&W Batman episodes, looking also at two dinosaurs on black & white television fighting it out, enjoying ice cream birthday cakes made from the local Streets factory in Turrella, buying ice cream from Mr Whippy's van, sucking on or poking his tongue into the hole of Peppermint Lifesavers, reading On the Trail to Sacremento, John Steinbeck's The Pearl, Marvel Comics, Prince Valiant, Hagar the Horrible, Lil'Abner, along with WWII battle comic books, putting together model tanks, battle cruisers, planes from Hobbyco with Airfix glue, playing Battleship as well as Ludo, Monopoly, Twister, Scrabble, dominos

and ESP, learning half-hitches in the scouts, coming home from the school fair with a shoebox filled with silkworms, cutting the tails off lizards, crushing your teeth on lockjaws, eating honey and chocolate crackles, Fruit Tingles, Pezs, drinking Cottees green cordial, pavlova, watching it's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World at Earlwood's Chelsea Theatre seven times, seeing jungle movies which have people being killed by piranhas and quicksand, looking at the railway poster at Bardwell Park train station with the dinosaur eating fare evaders, buying bags of dried apricots from the old man who ran a little health food shop, saying "start at the knees please!" whenever walking into Speed's Milk Bar when it had the large masonite board cut-out of Yogi Bear, playing Space Invaders which was the new craze overtaking the pinnies, watching spring rings go down the stairs, drinking shandy, Milo or Quik; reading about Hollywood's stars on yellow Fantales wrappers, buying yogi bears, Caramello koalas, musksticks, hundreds of thousands, chocolate Waggon Wheels, Cornetto Drumsticks, Chiko Rolls, SMITH'S Crisps, Sunnyboys iceblocks, and candy cigarettes from the old Coles with its rows of wooden glass-topped, assorted confectionery and lolly filled cases colourful as the mountains of oranges, apples and other produce forming the fruitscape of a never-never land in the Royal Easter Show's agricultural pavillion, buying twenty-five cent Allens & Cadbury, Freddo Frog showbags, enjoying the slides, turning barrels, magic mirrors and spinning wheel at Luna Park's Coney Island-

No whizzing shrapnel.

The Rotor has head and body pushed back against the curved wall with the centrifugal force stopping the young boy from falling; in a big showground tent he wears 3D-glasses so as to 'ride' the roller coaster, water ski rapids, drive a Formula-One, snow ski, sky-dive while from the corner of one eye see a friend, wearing a terry towling hat, laugh and prance on the spot while behind her sharply defined body the swift steel twists and turns of the roller coaster make the stomach churn.

Screaming, just for fun.

The Cuban Missile Crisis.

The secret bombing of Cambodia.

Irangate.

Are not recalled in any empyrean of illusion, by any celluloid duplicity.

Suddenly on the television is a tongue speaking white self-righteous southern Baptist man holding a rattlesnake in his hands.

Heaven stained.

No failsafe.

Reality passing the point of no moral return.

'The Three Graces'

Michael and Cat are stuck behind a bus. On the poster on the back of the monolith are three women stripped right down to the skimpy briefs that are being advertised. Backs to camera. Holding hands. Only the woman on the left has her smiling face turned. Eyeing seductively at all those who are staring at

her.

"MICK! I know what you ARE thinking! The Three Graces! Don't be fooled! That one may be no other than Lachesis of the Three Fates. Luring us to some dire consequence!"

The bus circles a roundabout to go down a different road. Yet as the vehicle curves away from Michael Lachesis is still able to stare right at him with her glamorous eyes; smiling continually with her luscious lips to tempt this hesitating male driver to steer after her.

"Unholy Siren! Go straight ahead Mick! DO NOT change course!" Cat commands ferociously. "Let's keep on going to where we must be!"

So Michael continues on the only main way to Kingsgrove.

Loneliness is an Absolute Form

"Its good for me to have Cat around to keep my feet on the ground." The album is shut. "The other day while we were walking through the city he stuck his finger out at this advertising hoarding."

Michael stands up to pose the same way.

"Look at that woman Mick! Isn't she just the most perfect form of Beauty! The Great Satan knows how to use Plato's Theory of Absolute Forms to ensnare us to our aspirations! Oh yes! Plato's Beauty! Big Business wants to entrap us Mick with these promises of perfection; with these claims of Eff-I-c-ien-cy! Turn off the radio, the cable, the multi-purpose mobile phone, the www…send down that cone of silence!" Michael smiles. "Mainstream they call it," he explains, "while I only wish I could get away to some little stream…"

Lisa suddenly leaves the room. She goes outside to sit by the barbeque in the grassy backyard. It is night. Above her is a full moon. She stares at the stars. "I can't cope Mick. All these tests…so many pills…I'm lonely Mick. So lonely. At least you always stayed in touch. Some of these stars don't exist Mick. It's only their light we still see. I'm like that. A dying star. Heading to nothingness. You can still see me but that won't last. A ghost before my time."

Achilles

"If you look through the telescope you will see the star Sirius. Its one of the largest stars in the galaxy and this is the reason you can watch it in the day. We know Sirius as the Dog Star but in the times of Ancient Greece it was attributed to the greatest Greek warrior at Troy who was Achilles. The star represents the heart of this hero who took up the choice of the gods to live a short but glorious life rather than a long but tranquil existence."

Lisa eyes the little sparkle in the blue sky.

After Observatory Hill and a 'rest stop' at the nearby Hotel Palisade it is a walk over to the Art Gallery. As the trio pass under the huge broad arch along the road that will take them down to Circular Quay Michael suddenly stops and glances up. "Someone ought to paint a mural on this to rival the Sistine Ceiling."

Passing by the busy ferry wharves the three marvel at a display of model wooden ships built with matchsticks; there are many buskers including a Cambodian man playing whiny sounds on a stringed instrument and an Aboriginal didgeridoo player; there is also a juggler on a unicycle throwing up flaming torches and long knives into the air; one other performer on a little platform on top of a pole - that is kept standing up with stretched out ropes held by male members of the audience - does a similar juggling act but blindfolded. He has children – including Melissa – take turns to walk through a maze of obstacles to collect lolly prizes. Yet, the one busker who truly intrigues the crowds is a silver man who stands still only moving his arms and head with slight movements which could be missed with an eye blink.

After sifting through the Quay crowds the trio amble through the Botanical Gardens. "Look's like there's a fair." observes Lisa. Along the pathway to the art gallery is a row of stalls selling food, drinks and cakes. Two or three hundred people are picnicking beside them. "Let's have a look." A little bandstand with a string quartet. "Lovely music."

"Sounds like Vivaldi's Spring." remarks Michael.

A woman selling home-made lemonade. "I used to do that when *I* was a kid Melissa!"

"You can buy a cup for $2.50 or a small bottle for $5.50."

"We'll get a bottle, please."

"I'll pay Lisa."

"Na, na I want too Mick. It's a present for Melissa."

Michael flicks open the rubber stopper which is attached on the top with wire. The bottle's flat sides curve towards the neck.

"Like a rotunda."

"Yeah, it looks special. I'll use it for something *special* for Melissa. Like the one I've painted for her christening."

Captain Thunderbolt

Once inside the gallery the trio first meander into one of the great halls filled with mainly eighteenth and nineteenth century art works in gold gilded frames. There is admiration for a small Pre-Raphaelite work of an angel from Revelations named St. Ursula holding a shining ball which is the light of the world.

After tarrying in front of the large historical painting of the battle at Rorke's Drift the three eventually end up along a length of wall that displays works from the Heidelberg School: Australian Impressionists from Melbourne who had captured for the first time the harsh splendour of the Australian light.

Sirius Cove by Tom Roberts. Near to it is Bail Up by the same artist. Lisa rests on a leather bench looking at both paintings. Melissa sits beside her mother and draws in her colouring book. An old man wearing a dark suit stands in front of Tom Robert's bushrangers. He looks very dignified with his well trimmed greybeard and thick mane of silver hair; it would not look out of place if his head was placed on an Ancient Greek statue of Zeus.

"There's a bushranger hiding among the trees on this hill above the stagecoach." The old gentleman speaks to Lisa. "A lookout for the bushrangers robbing the passengers." A pause. "He was called a cockatoo because if he made a cooing sound the other bushrangers would know police were coming along that road. Roberts has portrayed the hold-up as if it was an ordinary every day event. I mean, when you first have a look it seems to be just a group of men on horseback around a coach. This bushranger is talking to that lady passenger while you've only got this man in the middle pointing a gun but he's holding it in such a casual way that it's not threatening. I guess the hot sun is making them lazy." The old man frowns. "Death can be lazy too." Takes out a stopwatch from his inside coat pocket. "Roberts played on the popular myth that bushrangers were Robin Hoods. Just doing an 'honest day's work' in robbing the well-to-do. Not so that Mad Dog Morgan. He was a brutish thug. Seems the jury's still out on ol' Ned. Australians love the underdog. I guess it's all tied up with our convict tradition." The old seer coughs into his handkerchief. "No need for me to cover *that* old ground. There was a Captain Moonlite in Victoria…a lay minister who robbed a bank. Wanted to take the whole blame on himself to help out his gang mates at his trial when a policeman had been shot dead at a later scrap. They hung him good and proper just like that Little Jimmy Governor. A tough Aboriginal. Had fifty bullets taken out of him and he could still walk to the gallows. The only 'gentleman bushranger' I can be sure of was Captain Thunderbolt. My mother told me he was always very polite. A very good horseman and very resourceful. Escaped from the gaol on Cockatoo Island with another bloke. The only two men to do so. Got him out of ten years prison for being a horse thief but for the next six years he had to live off his wits until a policeman shot him dead in a creek up by Uralla. In all that time he never killed another human being. I saw a fine Australian movie about him back in the fifties. It was a low budget sort of thing but still it was a welcome change from all those American westerns." Another glance at Bail Up. "Local legend has it that when some musicians from Germany pleaded with Captain Thunderbolt to not take their money he let them off after they played him a song. It's interesting that it took a rogue to set us such a fine example of human kindness. A lesson to us all…like a bolt out of the blue." A wry smile. "I imagine you could do with a bit more human kindness lady. We all could…" A shrug. "Now I'm giving off 'warnings' - like a 'cockatoo.'" Laughter. "Galah more likely! For all it is worth miss whatever trouble comes your way or to the little one always keep a firm hold on your character. Like Thunderbolt. Or that chappie Tom Uren. He's learnt a thing or two about forgiveness." Another sad look. "Too bad there was no 'letting off' with a few songs on the Somme…or *that* Burma Railway." The elderly gentleman pats his chest. "Nothing more important than your health. Excuse me. I have to go and take my pills."

A New Sirius

Lisa hovers towards an Ian Fairweather work titled Sirius; an outline of a serene face on a blue background. Meditates on a Dorothy Lange iconic shot of

a thoughful mother in dustbowl Oklahoma. Michael takes note of a bronze head by Henry Moore entitled Helmut Head V; in the bookshop he flicks through exhibition catalogues on Aboriginal art:History and Memory in the Art of Gorden Bennett; Kitty Kantilla; Rover Thomas; Crossing Country. Dird Djang (Moon Dreaming): a bark painting that is mainly of two large cross-hatched circles and a half-crescent. It is by Mick Kubarkku."Hey Melissa that's you with your mother and me." A long wooden dotted pole with a flat-faced head, little arms and a fish-tail by Crusoe Kurrdal. It is a mermaid spirit. In the notes Michael learns from Mick Kubarkku that there is a shooting star spirit called Namorrodoo who is dangerous. "Better not wish for anything when he appears." Reading about Bennett's 'The Nine Ricochets (Fall Down Black Fella, Jump Up White Fella)'. The books are put back on the shelves. "Let's go to the Aboriginal section. They're may even be a Koori performance for the kids." The trio head down to the lowest level of the gallery. However, a detour towards a large installation. Rows of little beams that make a large square with letters on it's top.

Michael comes across another catalogue:[1]

Raft

Ruark Lewis
Paul Carter

The Art Gallery of
New South Wales

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U O S W R T I S P H V A L  I D E N H A T T E G A R A
N P K I L G E N A N J T F  T L E T C U E R I N G F A
M A L A O F T H E N C R E  T A M A R S S O U F T T I
B S A N G U J T A N A L P  U E R I N G O G T H E M A
G U O S W R T I S P H A L  I M N A B C F R T U Y X Y
O P L M P E A S W Q R T I  I O N H A T T E G A R A N
A M A L A T A M A R O C L  A M A G O G O G I N I C K
N I C O L A W R O T E T H  I S R O C L T A M A I C K
U G A R A B Z X I Y T U O  P O P U S T U L M N B V U
I O P A Q R M N B Y I O P  K I L N C R E D D T O F T
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Carl Strehlow the German missionary had become seriously ill and desperately needed medical attention. He attempted to travel the four hundred miles from the Hermannsburg Mission to the Adelaide-Alice Springs railroad. Yet, Strehlow became 'shipwrecked' at Horseshoe Bend where he died. The letters are markers to Strehlow's attempts to impart his reason on the desert. Yet, inevitably, the terrain swallowed him. He had always been on a 'funerary train'. A white ghost.

Lisa softly sings Neil Murray's 'My Island Home' as a lullaby to her daughter. The weather is humid which also encourages the child to sleep. The attendant is not perturbed when mother and child lie side by side beside the raft.

Michael knows Ulysses - estranged with Calypso and her enchanted island - had built his raft not to escape any danger but to simply go home. Siberian shamans believe a person's spirit goes homeward to heaven on a boat. Michael senses the possibility, while looking at Lisa next to the raft, that a similar vessel will also assure her a safe passage to 'home.' Lisa's gypsy spirit would, at last, be restful. To shine brightly. Lisa would reveal her celestial presence to her daughter while awaiting the day she would join her; Melissa will orbit her mother like the white starry dwarf that revolves around Achilles scorching star.

Melissa's tranquil body is lifted off the floor by her mother as the descent is continued.

A Hills Hoist with rows of brown ochre lined black bats hanging from the wires.

"Bats...funny." Melissa is awake.

"You like those Melissa!"

A Sally Morgan screen print white outline of a dog with stars around it on a black background; it resembles the Egyptian embalming jackal god Anubis and is wearing a dog tag with **AUSTRALIAN CITIZEN** written on it. Underneath its chest is written:

In 1944 Aborigines were allowed to become "Australian Citizens." Aboriginal people called their citizenship papers "Dog Tags." We had to be licensed to be called Australian.

"As I get sicker I feel like a non-citizen." states Lisa abruptly.

A delightful series of brightly coloured batiks done by Top End artists.

"These are like the ones I saw at that community. I bought one."

"You'll have to show us."

"Sure."

Namijira's McDonnell Ranges.

"Remember when I worked as a teacher's aide at that high school intensive English centre? On an excursion to here these Iraqis really felt for the 'old black artist' when they learnt how he was mistreated near the end of his life and died of a broken heart." A look at the roughly weathered rock. "They also know the wilderness can be a sanctuary."

The Desert

The Iraqi girl slowly draws a sad looking boy. "Mister…mister…My brother killed in my village." She rubs the side of her palm across her throat; a picture of her father in the ground with flowers emerging from his body. "My uncle took my mother and me across the border of Jordan. We hid in the desert so army not see us. We stay alive. I still think about my father and brother every day…"

Barnumbir

Michael eyes the people disembarking from the Sirius. Lisa had spotted the ferry's name as it reached the wharf. She continues to look down at Circular Quay from the high vantage point of the rail station; thrust as it is under the grey ribbon of the Cahill Expressway. "Its like that big star has come to meet us. This whole harbour is the universe." Walking out of the gallery Michael had

suggested going down to Stanley St. to have a coffee at Bill & Tony's. Yet a long walk to Darlinghurst was out of the question for Lisa. So a brief rest at the Domain. "This Aboriginal elder guy dressed up in red, black and yellow has been debating the white punters for years." Finally, a pleasant walk through the Botanical Gardens. To Customs House at the Quay. A look at the swastikas on the mosaic floor of the foyer and at the plaque which explains that they are Hindu sun symbols and that the floor was done before 1933. Perusing overseas newspapers on the ground floor a poster is sighted of a photo exhibition of resilient A.I.D.S African children in the upstairs library. However, they are mainly at Customs House to visit the Djamu Gallery. "It shows Aboriginal art that's done now." explains Michael. "Gregor's taken me to a few galleries that specialise in Aboriginal art: like the Hogarth up at Paddington, Boomalli when it was in Chippendale – now its in Leichardt - and the Annandale Galleries. This singer in the Stiff Gins often works at this one. She's really nice." A large photo of a kitsch black doll by Destiny Deacon. "Reminds me of when I would go up to this Chinese restaurant every Sunday night up the street with my cousins when we were kids and buy take-away fried rice to eat in the milk bar. This old Chinese guy would always smile when we turned up. He sat next to this money box which had the head of an American Negro on top. You would press down this latch on the back and your coins would move up on a hand and drop into the mouth. The old guy would always give us a coin so we could watch the money go down the guts." Michael then views some over-size black as well as white plastic clothing pegs that seem like alien objects while Lisa tarries in a room filled with Top End bark paintings; she reads out a legend on a wall to Melissa.

"Barnumbir the spirit woman lived on an island of the dead called Bralgu. Barnumbir was a happy spirit who sang a lot. Her face glowed like a bright sparkling star. Yet she had a fear of the deep sea and did not even wet her feet. Barnumbir dreamed that if she went into the water her spirit would be lost! One day the two Djanggawui sisters who dug yams and picked berries with Barnumbir told their dear friend they were going across the sea with their brother. Barnumbir was very unhappy and pleaded for her two friends to stay.The two sisters said they didn't want to go but had to support their blood brother who wanted to settle in a strange land across the sea.Barnumbir said she would go with the sisters as she would miss them too much. It would be very brave of her to go in the canoe but Barnumbir's friends said there was only room for three people anyway! Barnumbir asked Djanlin the magician for help. Djanlin would sing a magic song to make Barnumbir a star but he pointed out that when Barnumbir travelled out of sight of the island his power would lose its effect. She could not return to the island. However, her aunts who weaved baskets said they would make a long piece of string which would be tied around Barnumbir so she could be pulled back to the island when Walu the sun woke up. This is what happened and the sisters and the brother had a bright light shine over the sea at night to make their journey safe. From the sky Barnumbir can see her friends and not miss them. To this day Barnumbir twinkles over the black

sea and dances across the treetops of the Island of the Dead before being pulled back by her aunts at dawn."

A young female staff member approaches Melissa. "You should know little missy that we believe that when stars twinkle they are actually talking with each other." Looks at Lisa. "Also when you see a shooting star it can be a sign that someone you love who has passed away has come back to life."

Lisa smiles. "There you go Melissa. Twinkle twinkle little star how I wonder what you are way above the sky so far twinkle twinkle little star…"

Bitter Irony

"The last time I was at this gallery there was a drunk Aboriginal woman on the train home." states Michael. "Her son was running around in the aisle while she had a beer bottle stuck under her shirt. Kept telling the little bugger to sit down. The boy couldn't wait to get home so he could watch an All Aboriginal Rugby League team play Papua New Guinea."

Life a Canvas

"Melissa and I once went with Karin to the New South Wales art gallery." haphazardly recalls Lisa. "We stared through this window and saw Woolloomooloo. It was like looking at a painting. When we walked through Woolloomooloo to head up to Karin's Lindy Lou dance class it was like we were on a stretch of canvas." A pause. "I could really wander about then…"

Voodoo Line

Everyone on the platform groans when they hear the train will be delayed.

Over the loudspeaker it is claimed that someone is in the tunnel. The police are making an inspection and it is hoped the matter will be resolved soon.

"The trains are like little sanctuaries for some people, especially for those who are down and out. I'm not surprised someone's decided to nestle down in that labyrinth." Michael watches a train pull in by the opposite platform. "You use to be able to tell which train was which by the signal lights that were on the front. When you saw three lights you knew the train was going to East Hills. Like it was the Trinity taking you home." A smirk. "Two dots down the side meant the Bankstown line." He keeps talking to pass the time. "In those days the East Hills train used to stop at St. Peters and Erskineville. Now you have to switch three times to do the same trip and that includes going into Central."

"The last time we caught the train it was when we went to Cronulla to see Sari." states Lisa.

"Yeah…that's right…"

Michael had ruined a wheel strut stopping the car when the brake line broke. He left it outside the Cronulla Workers Club and wondered what to do while having a beer with the others on a pub balcony overlooking the sea. In the end it wasn't until the following day that Michael had the N.R.M.A tow the car all the way to Petersham. Michael's mechanic was like a modern-day Greek fire god; a holy

blacksmith who was so methodical in using his oxy-torch to re-do the strut. It had been fixed once before when the car had actually broken down outside his mechanics' on a weeknight; it had been the way Michael had discovered him; Michael had the car jump the kerb to stop it from hitting the pole of a traffic light. The brakes had failed. Looking down the blacked-out footpath - where JURA BOOKS, a gallery and a harp shop were closed - it had been very fortunate for him to see the lights of the still open workshop. The mechanic helped to roll the car back to his premises.

It was ironic that the brakes had again failed.

In the time in between the first mishap and this one a mural of an old car like his had been painted on a big wall facing the main road. It covered up the graffiti that had been an eyesore. A scene of a family picnic at a park by the sea. Michael saw it for the first time when he came in that morning with his car on tow from Cronulla. Paradise. Yet in the slowing cars rounding the street corner outside could be seen the strained expression on the face of every driver. Here was a purgatorial circle that was far more akin to the viewer's mood.

"Michael…"

"Huh…?"

"You daydreaming again? At least we got to see the first movie in that short film festival in the shopping centre."

"Yeah," grins Michael, "those two kangaroos mugging the German backpackers for their expensive sunglasses. Getting the tourists out of their combi by pretending they'd been run over was smart. Poor 'sour-krauts.' Talk about bad luck!"

"*You* had some bad luck. Must've been the voodoo talk." Lisa smiles.

Sari had showed her friends the start of the 'voodoo line' that was off a rocky point. They were on a small, rickety ferry going to Bundeena. There had been a murder and the fast current had quickly dragged the dumped body back to Cronulla.

Michael could see himself sweeping along on that current. He was feeling a little strange. At Sari's place there was a photograph of a group of guys bathing in the Ganges. Jumping joyously out of the water by the burning gnats. It was like the way Belle had described: bodies turned to ash day and night so their souls could move on to new lives. He wished it could be the same for him, yet in *this* life.

A recollection of what Gregor had said: fire can destroy, but it can also invigorate life.

Forgotten Hero

At Cronulla RSL, after returning from Bundeena, Sari, Lisa and Melissa had gone to the bistro while Michael went down to a smoky, beer drenched den to lay a bet. A horse called Forgotten Hero. *'That's me.'* He had thought. It came first. Yet, it had been too late to put down any money.

Souvlaki in the last at Flemington.

Michael had stood with two young punters shouting SOUVLAKI! SOUVLAKI! in front of the big screen as the horse headed to the front on the final straight. He made them celebrate with him by dancing a little Zorba.
Everyone had cheered, clapped the wog.

Death Masks

Lisa is suddenly grim-faced. *'Those two ticket inspectors, who looked at us from the shadows…'*

Singapore

'Lisa didn't like the hard time we had on the train back. Her straggly appearance had made those two train guys very suspicious. At Ashfield station the other week I got my 'revenge' when I realised it was only the people who were leaving the station who were having their tickets checked. I walked into the station knowing I wouldn't be confronted. I knew my history. The Fall of Singapore happened because all the guns pointed outwards but the enemy did not attack from the water.

Those veterans on VP Day. I had parked my car on Elizabeth Street the night before and had left it there after drinking over the limit at that Leningrad Cowboys gig at the Metro. When I went back to my car in the morning I was expecting a ticket but fortunately no one bothered to check the cars on this street because of these veterans who had all congregated in their hundreds to prepare for their march.

The Pacific War had saved me a fine.

Divine favour.

You had to hold your nerve like a whole nation did when the enemy whisked further southwards but was finally stopped by men like that old handyman at the Arunda settlement.

That other veteran on the stairs of Sharon's place that night. How I couldn't be bothered waiting for the lift so I walked down the fire escape; how it spiralled and twisted downwards, and how for a moment it made me feel like as if I was in a molecular string of DNA. How that old drunk with the cane wouldn't let me pass until I gave him a light for his cigarette; smacking his cane on the rail and steps. How I had to answer that riddle given to Oedipus about who was the creature with the three legs. I looked at him with his cane and answered: 'man'.

"My Sphinx!" he had cried out, then slammed his stick into a wall. How he rambled on about some girlfriend who jilted him. I thought of that spiteful bitch Hera, that wife of Zeus who cursed Thebes with that Egyptian monster. She sided against Paris for not picking her as his lover. That 'honour' was given to Helen who was, anyway, a daughter of Zeus. He had slept with Helen's mother Leda, the Queen of Sparta, while disguised as a swan.

(Yes, Zeus as a swan).

Helen emerging from an egg.

The gods and their tricks. Hypocrites. Always jealous. Lustful. Corrupt. They break the natural laws. In this case their gross adultery doomed men like

Ulysses to twenty years of war and wandering, to the likes of Achilles, Ajax and Agamemnon to untimely and ghastly deaths, (following in the repugnant nature of the gods, even the ghosts of Helen and Achilles adulterously found union with each other in the Underworld).

Yes, the cruelty of the gods, at least, needs to be resisted. At the same time: always watch your back.'

Roller Coaster Ride

Michael snaps out of his own daydream. "Life's a roller coaster." Views the grey clouds over the harbour. "I once heard a woman on a train say that a day like today was like being in the sea; you could be swimming in a hot current and then the next moment you could be struck by a cold swirl." Hands over a daypack to Lisa who will take out a jumper for Melissa.

Telemachus

A high school harbour cruise has just ended and Michael and Lisa watch a noisy procession of students leave a ferry. They soon disappear as they head to the pubs at the Rocks.

Melissa laughs at a Barbie and Ken pantomime. Lots of flashing lights and seventies music as the two doll lovers do the Twister on a portable stage by a wharf.

"We'll look at the Sharpies electric Golf House man putting his ball over his building when we go into Central. You'll like that as well Melissa!" exclaims Lisa.

Another busker faintly playing the Zorba on a harp. The lyrical sound is haunting and Michael can understand why Cat so often compares rembetika to the American blues. *"Mick this bouzouki music came from the same underworld!"*

An announcement is made that the man in the tunnel has been found. Michael looks up at the dark entrance. Peers at Lisa. "Sometimes you stand at the doorway of a crowded carriage and it's possible to feel the psyche of the city trying to suffocate you. You have to resist. Like Telemachus did at his doorway. Fighting off all those suitors. There he was with his father, returning disguised as an old beggar, no one showing him any hospitality-"

Tiresias

A train slowly pulls in. Carriage doors open. An elderly derelict is escorted by two policemen and a rail guard down an escalator to an ambulance.

As the old man is being taken away, as if guided like a blind man, everyone watches him wave a gold-coloured wand to and fro in his rapidly shaking right hand. An underground timekeeper of the world.

"Tiresias." mutters Michael.

Thalasa!

Inside the train, (this 'silver serpent' as Michael had dubbed it when the carriage emerged from the tunnel; while Melissa looked in wonder at the neon golfer hitting a white ball that arced over the building which the brightly lit up golf sign was attached too), it is seen as the night descends it is raining. The storm triggers more contemplation: *'Water. All life needs water. The sea is water. The sea is vast. Goes on forever. Like the universe. Yes. Water is life. Thalasa! Thalasa! It's what the Ten Thousand shouted when they finally saw the Black Sea. They had just gone through hundreds of leagues of hostile Persian territory to reach this body of water on which they could safely sail home. A reflection of Lisa on the streaking train window. It makes her look as if she is hovering in the night sky. Her hair outstretched by the wind. Yes, the sky will be her final resting space. All that eternity. Resurrection. A new Sirius.*

No Peace Train

As it is Lisa is curling up; rubbing with her thumb the seahorse pendant in her hand; withdrawing from the world like a flower going back to its bud.

Sentimentality; it grips Michael who can only think now of Sad Lisa sung by Cat Stevens. "Greek Cypriots and tragedies…" he ruefully concludes.

In The Belly Of The Whale

Home. Lonely. In a Gethsemane garden. Lisa goes inside, pushes to one side four long Georgian wigs on the sofa (they had been left by an actor friend of Master's. He had everyone wear them at a recent candle-lit dinner in the house to celebrate the success of a Restoration play); watches the telly. Big jaws. The whizzing rope of a flung harpoon accidentally caught around the neck of a captain. The body is sprawled along the side of a huge white whale, it limply hangs from where the harpoon has pierced the side of the giant. A ship is smashed. A mermaid on the bow falls into the freezing ocean. A lone survivor floats in a bobbing coffin. A Turkish Delight ad. Channel switch. Chaos and Desire. A naked French Canadian woman is floating serenely in the water. The subtitles say she is having a beautiful death…

"McBody Bag's on later tonight. They've still got a poster of the Turin Shroud as a prop. It's a leftover from when they did their regular gig at the Sandringham on Easter Monday. Except they call it the Shroud of Tempe."

Silence.

"You still want to go to Drummoyne next week?" continues Michael. "I'll be showing my film…the one with the desert wildflowers…with that beautiful spiritual throbbing red heart…a batik-"

A Siren

'The crisp morning light shines on the wooden mermaid that hangs on the sand coloured wall. These mysterious sea beings have the gift of foreseeing the future.

Yet, what does this gift really matter? The sea, when she is cruel, usually keeps her secrets close to her bosom.

The mermaid is smiling. I wonder if she knew I would meet Lisa that night I walked by here? Behind her beautiful smile is she hiding the manner of the untimely death of both Lisa and Melissa?'

'OH MICKEY!'

'I'm flicking through photos just picked up from Fletchers Photographics in the city where an old school friend who works there as a manager gives me 'mate's rates' on the developing costs. In walks the Greek Cypriot guy who owns the record shop next door getting a take away coffee. Yeah, I say to him, compared to my car, his gleaming white EK Holden station wagon with its pointy tips is something else. It is the day after Master's surprise fortieth birthday party at the Britannica. Eva Trout, McBody Bag, Steph Miller, Bernie Hayes and Perry Keyes were among the acts that had performed on this special evening. However, the highlight had been his female friends who had all dressed up as Aussie Rules cheer girls to sing Mickey You're so Fine!'

I'm tired.'

Teresa

'In walks my friend - another schoolteacher who has also been overseas. Her shoulder length shiny black hair is fashionably cut and she wears an elegant black dress. Yes, I'm happy to see photos. The mermaid also looks down.'

"Lietuva..."

An ancient burial mound; a hill of crosses; (continually torn down by the old oppressor but also continually, subversively built up with new crucifixes, to commemorate so many victims). The transmigration of souls; wooden totems, metal crosses with sunrays. A rugged wild coastline reminiscent of Kurnell. An unknown edge of the world. A place called Nida. Thomas Manne's holiday house on this Baltic coast. He had written The Magic Mountain. A woman who knew the writer's brother. Her husband, a wood carver. Both had survived half-a-century existing in an underworld. A return of a Russian Odysseus: an old sailor on an overnight train to St. Petersburg, very hospitable, who had offered his vodka, who begrudged no enmity to old enemies, remarking how 'all that' happened so long ago. The wizened face looked thoughtfully out the window to also remark that how back in the fifties he had served in a tank regiment on the border with Mongolia. At the base of Peter the Great sitting proudly on a mighty bronze horse is a bridal party with a small bear being prodded with a stick by its cruel tamer so as to dance on its hind legs. The tamer in suit and wide-brimmed hat looks over to say in broken English he can put on a 'special performance' for me. He laughs. There is also an old vagrant wearing a blue party hat – a crèche crown. He is holding a cardboard trident. Neptune. A hobo. Wearing a ragged coat. Looking haggard. It had been intimated by a French-Lithuanian actress that water could be a symbol for chaos. Seeing this broken water-god was proof that the power of the underworld was gone. Spring. A Russian

Autumn: A woman who had survived the siege. Playing Tchaikosky's Autumn. The forbearance of the human spirit over death. (Who had stated that listening to Shostokovich's Seventh Symphony as the shells fell around the Philharmonic was the starving city's finest moment. Who had stated how a young woman had recently thrown herself off a bridge into the Neva in despair. "So, so Russian!"). A white on white infinity: now looking at a contemporary elderly Lithuanian artist painting endlessly day after day ever longer white digit numbers on one large white canvas after another to ethereally imitate infinity. M.K. Ciurlionis: a nineteenth century image of a mystic painter from 'Lietuva' who depicted celestial myths, who aligned the human spirit with the music of the cosmos; whose work has remained submerged from the West for a century. I am instructed on how there is a primal harmony to his pictures which reach down to fill out any melancholy space in a human soul. Lisa…I coyly try to view these images through her eyes for she also has the need to emerge from an underworld: a gull flying by a mountain with a resplendent sun emerging from behind the bird's wings. (I learn that birds can symbolize travel…yes Lisa would like to be free…to fly skywards). A ziggurat with enormous craggy rocks strut spear-like in the foreground. On top of this altar is a robed figure whose arms are outstretched as if to suggest an offering to the gods. This angel - who I imagine to be Lisa - looks upwards at two large ochre plumes of smoke rising to the heavens; in the sombre green and brown hues there is a celestial quality, a dreamscape with light ochre pointed stars covering a side of the dark brown altar. I am shown postcards of his archetypical works of the zodiac signs (this wheel of stars); his works of the creation of the world. I meditate on a picture of a tsunami wave with little boats that are swept up by this full force of nature. I am swept up. As Lisa has been swept up. Another painting has two white dots: two small smouldering fires at the base of a large dark hill, by the tranquil waters of a lake, like eyes of a slumbering monster; on the horizon. Stillness. I feel still. If only Lisa could feel still. Ciurlionis.'

'Utopia'

"Russian soldiers were returning their shopping trolleys to Berlin supermarkets just to get the one *deutschmark* deposit." states Cat. "Who would have thought *that* would've happened in May 1945…"

"We never see the promised land." states Lisa. She lies very still in her hospital bed.

Silence.

"Do you know that Russian soldiers read Pushkin in the trenches?" coyly remarks James, a friend of Michael's. Traces of a harbour breeze. He is drawn to looking out at the clear sky. "In the convict days, its been remarked, that escapees wanted to get through the maze that was the Blue Mountains so they could, as free men, see what lay beyond this horizon. Some even thought they would reach China. Yet very few ever made it."

Cat murmurs. "There were German soldiers fighting with nationalist partisans in the U.S.S.R until 1953-"

"That's what I want to see…blue…" whispers Lisa.

"Lisa knows a guy named Blue – aye Margaret?" Michael says awkwardly. "Likes to swim by a lighthouse."

The Tree of Man

Blue could see the lighthouse. It had been a long time since Lisa had left and occasionally after a swim he would rest under the very tree he once had a picnic with Lisa and Melissa. It had become a totem to a pleasant reminiscence.

Nevertheless, this old man was accustomed to his loneliness. It had always been difficult for him to make friends. The war only accentuated his social aloofness. The horrors that were seen and experienced only confirmed a negative view of the human race. However, amidst this nightmare there had also been small acts of generosity and human kindness. Such occasions had kindled some hope. Getting to know Lisa and Melissa had done much the same. Though it was never made too obvious they were deeply missed. A war weary instinct had sensed that something was amiss. *'It's really none of my business.'* The two postcards that had so far arrived had been cheerful enough. There had been that time he had bumped into Margaret in the supermarket.

She would soon be going.

"Give her my regards when you see her…she and the young one are welcome to stay with me anytime." Blue stood briefly in silence beside Margaret. He was going to ask after Lisa's health but thought better of it. Margaret simply stared at Blue as he shuffled off down another aisle.

To lie under this magnificent tree. The lighthouse – standing peacefully in the distance – always held a special meaning. Its presence served the purpose of being life-rescuing. It served as the perfect opposite to the concrete monoliths that were forcefully built during the war. That stint on the Normandy coast. *'I have been a slave.'* This terrible memory crossed the scarred mind at least once a day. The searing lack of forgetfulness of the Holocaust survivors was well understood. The war had taken this mind to terrifying destinations. The cattle cars crammed with things that had once been people. Burying skeletons lined with human skin. Burying hundreds of civilians of the German Reich: victims of the thousand-bomber raids that were more frequent as the calamity lurched towards its frightful climax. Misery, it had all been misery. There had been no respite. It had been total war: death could come from the air, from the land, and also from the sea. The ALL of the creation had become a hell. Many prisoners had envisaged that freedom lay beyond the range of their guards' rifles. Yet, it was bitterly realized, that ultimately, there was no freedom anywhere. This human-made inferno would find you out. That other life in Australia was some murky memory from some pre-existent aberration. At the start an administrative slip-up in his stalag had sent him and a handful of other Allied prisoners on this journey through these 'circles of the inferno'. However, while working on the Atlantic Wall it had been difficult to comprehend that the tranquil sea was another plane of death. Then one day a German U-boat arose to the surface. The sea could be more insidious than the air or land. This deep blue peace was a veil

that below its silky surface lay monsters. Only after the return was it realised that the sea could bring a sort of salvation. There was now a determination to live by the sea, for it could become a sanctuary. The swims provided some harmony. Essentially, there was nothing in the water that ought to be feared. Only to learn to live with this body of water as if it was a conscious being, discerning its moods, knowing when to swim, knowing when it was best to simply watch, avoiding a dangerous rip.

The horror never goes away.

The concrete pillboxes and artillery emplacements were markers of an all-encompassing, deathly geography littered with 'human ruins' seen and handled; the slaughters, the genocides, the mass barbarity made possible by 'modern techniques'. Bloodied corpses, towering, twisted squares of steel now stab the television space every night.

The globe is a fortress.

The nearby lighthouse had become a marker to an older geography associated with freedom, life, and peace. Only the hills, beaches and nearby mountains which belonged to the surrounding terrain could heal. Lisa had also been enriched by this landscape and this was pleasing. A deep shadow moves over the open copy of Patrick White's 'Riders of the Chariot.' Blake claiming to have dined with Ezekiel and Isaiah. A scraggly magpie lands on a nearby tree. *'Something bad is going to happen…'* The sun passes over the sky as it heads towards the horizon; the slow arc of this celestial object glides above.

Mars

A wrinkly face. World-weary. Always looking at the shadows. Lisa has always sensed something ominous about him. The world is always a little unreal around his presence. There is a sense of some approaching apocalypse or of an apocalypse that has just gone by with this war veteran. The war is etched in deep grooves on his face. Trenches of mental geographical fissures wait to expand from the release of tension that fluctuates wildly just below the surface of his bodily wraith-like appearance. The cheeks will flame up in little rivers of red blood like the canals of Mars. The god of war will not totally release this strangled soul from his ugly service. The mind must be under this grim god's control. This old man is to remain as a reminder of devastations which have passed; and perhaps, as a warning of horrors which are yet to come. Lisa has always sensed this death instinct when she saw Malone in his house and when she left.

'Death colonises inside of him, inside of me.'

Paethon the Son of the Sun Clymenes.

'Power is always based on corpses. A hill of them. The dead are powerless…'

The magpie is intimately watched.

The book is clawed.

The shadow is unbearable.

'The dogs. It was night. The work detail had to quickly bury a man who had escaped from the ghetto; he had been one of the unlucky. A few other Jews had successfully escaped. The dogs were shivering from the scent they had picked up. They had not barked because this body already had the smell of the mass graves about him. Many had already died 'inside'; a plague was running through the ghetto. Bodies had been heaped into huge piles. There had been the strong smell of burning flesh in the last few days.'

Human ash.

The world as ash. (It seems, always, humanity's only accomplishment).

The sun shines. There is a warm light on the back of the neck. The hair bristles. It is all like a dream, those far away things. Those 'last judgements'. It is hard. Too hard. The memories taunt.

To lie on the back and face the sun.

'That fiery chariot...'

A grimace.

'Paethon. You bloody fool! You held your father's reins; to only cast the day into an abyss. To turn the world to desert. It remains so…'

The 'Disappeared'

Lifting a hand, as the eyelids shut, to switch on the radio:

'…be the first kid on the block to rule the world so join the U.S. Marines…hello Daddy I've just gone to see Mary Poppins…'

'He was my buddy and he recorded on his cassette recorder everything that happened.'

'…the ground is shaking its like ripples going through the soft dirt…lines of tracers…so beautiful…so deadly…its getting like a 12 cent comic book…you are in the Pepsi Generation…'

'When you listen to his voice on the tape during that night attack you notice....he has no fear...at any moment we could have been swamped by the enemy...I know how tense it was... my hands were sweating…I hugged the ground so hard I made a body imprint in the earth…we were in a grove when we heard this one shot…I saw them carrying him to the helicopter there were four men holding each of his limbs but the back of his head was bouncing along the ground …they just threw him into the chopper…I didn't think that was the right way to treat a wounded man then I realized...it really struck me...that...that he was dead...(a whimper). He wanted to be a journalist when he got back he was going to take his tapes around to all these radio executives to show them what he could do...he was positive a real go-getter...I like to think...that after all these years...that he made it that he's finally on the radio...I brought a copy of his tape to his grave...I feel I can visit it...him... now...play a tape for him to listen too and bury it there beside him...the war...in my life...it was a short intense period of time.'

'When the sky is clear you can see all the stars imaginable to the human mind its a stunning awesome sight the galaxies the Milky Way just big

bunches of stars but you can tell it looks different from back home we're looking at these heavenly bodies from some really different crazy angle in a different hemisphere...WOW!...there goes a shooting star...it was BIG!'

The radio is switched off. *'We ALL disappear…'* Time to go.

'My Brother Jack'

'He survived East Timor. The villagers were kind. Hid him. Yet they were all killed. Betrayed. Again and again. Over the years. By us. The top brass now seeming to hide how many have recently been massacred. Back then he also was betrayed. On his return they put him (with those others who lived through a seventy day siege in the Papua jungle) in a stable. Left him with his old torn uniform. Suffering the winter. What was he worth now the war was over? It was no wonder when he finally did himself in.'

Mother Earth

'What can you say to the innocents? How can you describe the terror of those days? Of that particular day…of my capture…when the shells fell…I screamed for my mother…I too hugged the ground…to leave an imprint…(…the outlines of millions…)…pissing into Mother Earth…Gaia…retreating…moving back all the way from Tempe…at Thermopylae…our tanks burned…men fell…met their deaths…like Leonardis and the rest of the three hundred… always…these infernos…'

The sun is a blood red. Mars mutters under his breath from Dante's infernal description of human pestilence...*

Marooned

Arriving home. Putting on some classical music. The night meal. A few beers. A hot night. An 'Asian evening'. On the boat home there were those pleasant evenings during the 'Far East' stopovers: with the exotic food, with the silk clad, slanty-eyed prostitutes. An Asian evening is life enhancing. An Asian film: Three Seasons. As an old, regal Vietnamese man dies he tells a young market woman who is wistfully singing to him that death will soon be his final guest.

The body winces. *'Death has never been a 'guest.'* Off to the refrigerator to open another long neck. Scouring the late news to see human beings from far away lands stranded in desert gulags; the heart further sours. *'Yes,'* comes the grim summation, *'the human darkness knows no bounds.'* The artist Fairweather marooned on Roti island after leaving Darwin on a raft.

4A Gallery. (The Asia-Australian Arts Centre). Haymarket.

DACCHI DANG
THE BOAT

The exhibition is about the harsh experiences suffered by thousands of Vietnamese boat people who chose to escape the new regime. The artist had been a boat person, leaving Saigon in April, 1975 in a small eleven metre boat which held 135 people. The narrow exhibition space beyond the corridor is filled with a life-size replica of this refugee boat. However, this vessel is made of cloth. On its sides are large photos of big sea swells.

'..I asked my mother what happens if we die at sea she say that is our destiny we accept it-'

"What are you listening to?" asks Michael.
Cat lifts a headphone. "Some boat stories of these refugees. You wanna have a listen?"
"Na…you keep listening." states Michael. "Lisa should be turning the corner any second. We'll have a look at the boat."
Lisa finally reaches the exhibition after slowly going up a staircase. She sits down with Melissa on a chair. Cat is still listening to the CD. Lisa makes an exaggerated hand wave and with her lips mimes a hello.

'...In a small boat in a big sea you feel so crazy we find out we were insignificant...'

Cat watches Lisa take a couple of toys out of her daypack to keep Melissa amused; then he observes Michael and Gregor going inside the empty shell of the boat. To Cat it is as if he is looking at people inside a bubble. His two friends walk along several planks set out like a little catwalk.
"*Jonah in the belly of the whale*…" sings Michael. "A song I got off Cat."
"It's pretty tiny in here. Can't imagine there being over a hundred people stuck in this space."
A nearby placard claims over a million people escaped Vietnam by boat. Out of this raw number four-hundred thousand perished.
"All this reminds me of the time when I first met Lisa." states Michael. "We both had worked as casual education department information officers at Central. A summer job. We had to answer people's college course inquiries. Another thing we had to do was to regularly go to this classroom and test how long these Vietnamese new arrivals would take to do this English test. I remember we had to use stopwatches. If these people couldn't do the test fast enough they were disadvantaged in their access to learning English – I forget exactly how - its so many years ago." A hunch of the shoulders. "It probably would have had something to do with the government and money. Lisa, I and another guy recorded quick times for everybody. Our results were finally queried by management but we didn't care if they sacked us as the job was only for six weeks. The three of us just couldn't get it out of our heads that these unfortunates who had survived war, rape, losing everything they had owned; the

death and separation of loved ones, rough seas, storms, pirates and boat sinkings would now be denied a fair go in the so called lucky country by a bloody stopwatch."

Cat sees a woman walk up to the female gallery attendant. "Is Melissa here?" asks the newcomer.

Melissa looks up at the stranger. "She's not talking about you!" laughs Lisa. "This woman must have a friend named Melissa!"

The woman looks over at the child and smiles.

"No, she's not in today." replies the attendant cheerfully.

"Oh right. She just said something about seeing Vicky in here."

"No…Vicky is not in either. Though she did say on the phone that she might be coming later…"

"I'll call. I've obviously got things mixed up. I was just going to see about our swim time." The woman leaves quickly but pauses to smile once more at Melissa. "You have a very lovely girl."

"Ta…"

Michael eyes the woman as she departs then looks over at Lisa. A shrug of the shoulders.

The Tropicana Café. Darlinghurst.

"I would ask of you
Whither is it that you head,
Little fishing boats,
Floating, drifting aimlessly
On the waves of the sea.[1]

A medieval Japanese haiku…" Cat broods; puts down his foccacia and cast his eyes from the outside table into the long, confined space; this landmark place a retreat for him, skirting just outside the hard edges of the Cross.

"Yeah! I *am* a woman!" She wears a silver mini-skirt as well as pink stilettos; her broad wrinkly face is over-painted with make-up.

"Too bad about the moustache!" Yells another woman who has on a yellow t-shirt with a large Superman S.

Both adversaries stand across the road.

"I'll show you!" The offended female starts to take off her bright orange sleeveless top.

"Stop it! I believe you!" Superwoman grapples with the stripper to stay dressed.

"Bitch! Leave me alone!" The silver-skirted woman runs across the William Street intersection. She stops underneath the towering Coca-Cola sign. "I'm real!" The voice is very shrill. "More fuck'n real than the crap on this billboard! Anyone listening!" She throws her handbag at the enormous sign. It drops at her feet. "I'm a woman! A human being!" Her petite body drifts into the main strip. Disappears. Cat pounds the footpath. His boots stampeding on the one spot. A man across the road shouts out that Cat should audition for Tap Dogs at the Starfish Club. "It's down at The Wharf mate!"

The grand Coca-Cola sign is studied. “This is the window to our neon desires! The Eternal Anti-Rose of our celluloid imaginations! Behind the show curtain we learn Disneyland’s toys are made in third world sweatshops! The unwanted die *anonymously*!” He wheezes. “What exists is a present *still*-born!” A trance. “The demagogues sit confidently in their financial megaliths feeling they are in full control. They forget the crashing towers of Atlantis. Civilizations *end*.”

Michael grins. “Its way, way too bad Gregor went home.” Claps. “Hey Cat! Elvis is alive and well! He’s working at Granville rail station. Everyday he waves one of those white flags when a train leaves. You know it’s him because he’s kept the sideburns!”

“Don’t mock The King! I will celebrate his birthday at the festivities in Parkes! A vision! I can’t breathe Brad! It’s horrible what’s happened! KAPOWWW! Oh God! Oh my God! Brad switch to CNN!”

The Great Subconscious

“I will *end*…” Lisa has another swig.

The flat is silent. Cat hovers. “THE SON OF GOD! WITH NO WHERE TO REST HIS WEARY HEAD! THE FOX HAS FOXTEL! CRUDE! *ALL* IS CRUDE!”

‘America is a subconscious place remarks Susan Sontag. Inferring that Americans kept their real opinions hidden from each other – to don’t say what they believe; it is part of the new ‘political correctness’; to be silent: it is only in their inner thoughts that the truth is revealed. Everyone prefers conformity to integrity. No one wants to be accused by the great herd as unpatriotic; as a traitor. It is shameful not to hang the flag from one’s shop front window or dwelling top. Much like it was in Occupied Europe it was possible for the Gestapo to guess you had sympathies with the Resistance if you did not fly the Nazi swastika flag when it was requested. Maybe a harsh opinion, after all Sontag has a Lithuanian Jewish background which may affect her opinions, but yes: people do know but do not say that the American Empire takes advantage of any recent tragedy; of any new terror situation to move its hegemony in a new direction. Mind babblespeak. Nothing is said. There is no criticism. Sontag says there is no real party opposition. America is a one-party state where there are two branches: the Republicans and the Democrats. They agree on most things; there is no real debate: united we stand is the national slogan; there is an ‘appalling consensus’ and she would welcome some real fracture in this imperial society. Yes, America is ‘international’. A young man came up to Susan Sontag in besieged Sarajevo (she had been putting on Waiting for Godot where the end of Europe’s historical circle of the twentieth century was returning to its beginning) and tearfully informed her that Kurt Coban is dead. Nirvana is over. ‘He has committed suicide.’ He has heard this on his little short wave radio. There is no television; no other communications. Yet some people such as this young man have been able to procure some AA size batteries; only on his little radio can he keep in contact with the ‘free world’. His soul is revitalised with this minute radio wave connection to the grand subconscious

that is America. The desolation and the murder all around can not totally destroy him; it cannot totally dehumanise him if he can listen in to scratch refractions of the great mass culture. He thinks Susan Sontag belongs to an older generation who could be a fan of the likes of Bruce Springsteen. Madonna. U-2. Mel Gibson will spiritually sustain him. Yet today he has received a little blow to his morale. However, a new global hero will replace the old; new musical stars will freshly allow the old performers to be easily forgotten. New wonders will replace old hurts. The present atrocities and other miseries will even be forgotten when the war finishes and the tourists come back again. From America. From Germany. From France. This survivor will toss his tinny short wave radio away that glorious day and watch the Great Culture on some big cable television screen. The tiny short wave will be replaced by massive satellite beams; he will have 'spiritually' moved from the catacombs to the full glory of the electronic emporium of America which desires to cover every square inch of the global space. The new heaven will have arrived.

America is everywhere: welcome to Sarajevo will be equal to welcome to Broadway. Welcome to Kabul will be equal to welcome to Texas. Welcome to Okinawa will be equal to welcome to California. Welcome to Moscow will be equal to welcome to Disneyland. Welcome to Sydney will be equal to welcome to Hollywood. New York goes on. The world goes on.

Trick or treat.

America is the theatre of the absurd and the whole world has become its stage.

'New York, New York…aha…aha…' to quote a song.[1] *Such is the Great Subconscious.'*

Lisa sleeps.

'Here lies another subconscious. Far less imperial but consequently far more valuable.

"Lisa's world is our world…"

Thunderbirds Are Go!

"Thunderbirds are go!" Michael slots in a particular video; he is looking for a community television scene that looks at a refugee rally attended by him. However, what first comes up on the television screen is the sight of burning trees.

"What's this?"

"Some old news." Cat tunes his guitar. "Those are the bushfires which happened when you went up the north coast to see Lisa."

A Final Circle

Michael was at Bilgola beach when the Blue Mountains were ablaze. It was a week after he had returned from visiting Lisa. This weekend he had stayed over at a friend's place at Warriewood. The night before he had been at a small gathering of poets and artists at a house in Mona Vale. It always felt peculiar for Michael to be on the north side of Sydney; it was such foreign territory - almost

what he imagined it was like to be overseas - and this time he distinctly remembers the smell of fire in the night air. He had decided next day to go for a little drive before heading home; and at Bilgola he was amazed to see ash in the water. He thought of Gregor who was up at Woodford to help a cousin 'fireproof' his house. There had been that walk along the rocks at the southern end of the beach drawing the ash-filled rock pools. The whiff of the fires in the air. To draw Lisa's spirit. Lisa as ash. Lisa in the sea. This could be imagined. Lisa's disease had contaminated her; like this ash was doing to this natural beauty. Water can cleanse the soul. Cleanse human remains. There is a unity here. A mystery. The ash of nature and human ash united. Making one omnipotent in the sea. For the sea is everywhere.

'Thus we can be everywhere. Like God is everywhere. God and us together. Life.'

Another previous special time in this area: with Belle along the Great North Walk that went all the way to Newcastle. They had taken up the walk from the back of a house in Westleigh where they had visited an aunt of Belle's. It had been a tea and scones morning. One of those little really polite social occasions; yet it was all comfortable enough from which Belle and Michael sat on a large sofa from which all this lush bush could be seen through two large patio glass doors. Belle would come up to her aunt's place as a child with her parents and they would always go for a long afternoon bushwalk. The light was always very sharp and the temperature – warm but temperate – was also just right, especially when it had been a particularly harsh hot day. The trees would seem to pick up the orange hues of the late afternoon sun on all their leaves and to a child this was magical. Today, the walk would be taken much earlier and it was still very hot. However, with enough shade it would still be pleasant along the track. The aunt had laughed as she said she was too old now for a long walk; so Belle and Michael embarked on their own. There had recently been storms and Belle explained that there had been a number of spot fires due to lightning strikes. After about an hour they came to a point in the track where the way was barred by red and white tape and a sign that warned of falling trees. They had reached a burnt out area. Belle ignored the sign and took Michael to the top of a slight ridge where they got a wonderful view of a large valley. They watched several cockatoos skim across the top of the thick forest. These large birds were striking to see as their bright white bodies stood out brilliantly against the dark green canopy of the bush which was below. Belle knew that they could go down into the valley from where the walk would take on more the feel of a rainforest. When they reached the bottom they could turn back and be at the house for a late afternoon brunch before going home. It was all very much as Belle predicted; however, what remains vivid in Michael's mind was the sudden appearance of a large number of burnt trees. There was a clearing of jagged stumps and many other trees that had been snapped in two with their thin blackened trunks angled to the ground. "Fallen angels." He had muttered. In this burnt heart of the bush there was one large burnt out trunk that was surrounded by the other fallen

angels. “Lucifer,” remarked Michael. “We’ve walked from the first circle to the final circle without going through all that’s in between.”

“We have our *whole* lives for *that*!” yelled Belle.

“It’s a great day being enjoyed by young and old alike here at the Annual October Labour Day Aboriginal rugby league knockout comp here at Redfern Oval.”

“Where’s *this* rally…?” Michael is frustrated.

“Don’t worry,” states Cat. “It’s coming up *real* SOON!”

“I was on my way to a lecture at the art gallery about William Blake’s lost Last Judgement. You were the one that told me about it but didn’t get there - HERE IT IS!” Michael finally sees the thousand–strong crowd. “There’s the Fab Four! LOOK! A close up of Brain! Yeah! Its Brain all right!” The bus had pulled up outside the Marlborough Hotel in Newtown and four people had burst out of the pub to board it. They looked as if to be still partying from the night before. Three guys and a woman who were all wearing these colourful psychedelic clothes. The female who was very tall also had a brightly coloured red scarf tied up in her blonde curly hair. One of the Fab Four had these big bug-eye prescription glasses. He looked like ‘Brain’ from the Thunderbirds. Brain saw a familiar face board the crowded bus. “Hey Dave what are you up to? Why don’t you join us! Hey everybody – join us! We hear there’s a big man called the *Prime* Minister who won’t let some people have a fair go! We hear there are lots of people who support him! I wonder who ALL these people are! Well we’re off to Town Hall Square to tell him what we think! Come on! Here’s the stop! Let’s ALL get off!”

Michael disembarked.

Lilli Pilli

A Titanic birthday party. ‘The sinking of one’s youth’ as the invite from an old school friend intimated. Michael with his Greek fisherman’s cap wears a Soviet submarine sailor’s long sleeved striped top. On a large flat screen is a continual DVD re-running of the most recent movie about the Titanic. “Many of those who died were in third class,” a petite young woman wearing a twenties-style dress stands next to Michael. The woman is explaining to him what is happening in the movie as the sound has been turned off. Michael had not seen this particular film before, as he had always been satisfied with the 1960s black & white version that starred Kenneth Moore. “See that man taking a swig from that flask…he really survived it! The ship’s cook!” This man is hundreds of feet above the cold sea; seated on a handrail at the stern of the ship which points skyward. The ship begins its death dive. Other passengers lose their grip and fall to their deaths. “The band played on.”

“I can just imagine them underwater playing their trombones and violins still standing on the deck…”

The sea swallows the ship. “It was unerringly silent when the screaming stopped.” The woman slowly shakes her head. “Such horror…”

“Yeah…its incredible.” states Michael. “We will never comprehend...”

Tranquil river inlets can be viewed through the two large glass windows. Amidst the night beauty are the well-lit fashionable houses, tucked into the

curving black silhouettes of the bushy hills on the other side of the river. Their interior lights shimmer as white dot reflections across the smooth bays. Peaceful. Nocturnal. Beautiful. It all seems rather magical. Yet amidst the surrounding affluence, the laughter and exotic foods Michael cannot help but think of the radio news report on the way down to the party: hundreds of people were presumed drowned from the previous night when the small Indonesian boat they had been forced to board had sunk. A sip of the expensive bubbly. "Happy Birthday! Hip hip hooray! A night to remember!" A stranger wearing a tuxedo shakes the Greek's shoulder. He looks impassively at the bloated face; not bothering to force a smile.

The Great Mobile

The community television clip ends with a silent protest outside the Immigration offices at the Rocks. Hundreds of people are standing quietly with tape covering their mouths. In front are two of the main protest organisers: Rosie Scott and Thomas Keneally. "Both PEN writers." notes Michael. "I've joined the Refugee Council since then; somewhere in my car there's an application form for you. It amazes me how in Australia we still have to deal with the same abuse of human rights that Caterina says happens in Latin America. Anyhow, I saw Brain again a week later. I was with Lisa and Melissa. We'd been doing some shopping in the second hand clothes stores along King Street. Like today when we went to the Burlington Centre at the Haymarket to buy Double Swan t-shirts. We'd just seen this girl traipsing up the road with two plastic milk cartons strapped beneath her feet when I sighted him. Brain was looking at a painting in the Walk the Street exhibition. I pointed him out to Lisa and she could easily see the resemblance. When he'd moved on we went up to see the art he'd been looking at in the shopfront. It was an abstract work that was filled with all these patches of mellow soothing colours. A caption by the artist said how he had been inspired by the sea and bush. The sea especially as it is something that is filled with lots of texture, energy and structure. Lisa really likes these qualities and wishes she could somehow be weaved with the sea. She thinks our lives should be lived out like its texture. To her the sea is like eternity."

Lisa still sleeps.

' …in this darkness I hear the near silent hums of the cosmos, these thoughts a background static which embraces all matter, there is no vacuum, no corner to be silent, these vibrations the signature to the first milliseconds of the birth of this universe…all is one…all is whole…all is unity…everything is interconnected with this first spectrum of sound, this first chorus of the cosmos, the universe expands aiming towards its endpoint, like a whiff of sound which journeys from the moment of its creation until it dissolves. Outside time the universe exists like a breath of dissolving mist…the billions of years shed away, to be a passing thought. A deathly dark silence…my sickly mind is a dark mass…my skin changes to a pussy yellow, red blotches emerge like sickly nebulas. High in the sky the trapeze of a fiery red sun and a full white moon float in unison. The universe is a moving sculpture piece. In the art gallery the

cosmos was glimpsed. Standing in front of a silver sculptural piece. A large band of throbbing elliptical metal strikes off the vibrations of the universe when it is hit by a small copper sphere hanging from a piece of wire attached to the ceiling. The clanging of elliptical line against circle. The dictum of the artist – Len Ley – that from the old brain can emerge a new one: a cerebral metamorphosis. Len Ley saw the sun for so long one day that it felt to him that it became a black ball in the sky, while he had a fireball in his head. The sun is also in my cranium. The sun, a star, the furnace of life, is giving off its energy inside.

Hope.

There was delight in the scratchy films that were being shown in the black curtained movie theatre next to the universe: jagged streaks of white or brightly coloured lines on a black background dancing around to ramba music. Melissa, Isabella, Michael's nephew and niece all with sparklers making stick figures in the air. (It was after Gregor had put on a Russian puppet play for the kids. An old soldier outwits Satan the Great. So this clever man is broken up into bits and pieces by Beelzebub to be made anew as a handsome prince). This image dissolves to wire figures floating in space moving in unison with flat colourful objects. More mobiles. Humanity fitting into its place with the Great Mobile. Ptolemy's whizzing universe of circles now makes sense in a metaphorical way. Unity. Balance. An asymmetry of order, serenity and joy.

Life is joy.

The universe will die. Rip itself apart in the last aeons. I turn over. My energy is low. I am cold. The particles in my body slow down. They will atrophy together. My life energy ebbs. I will also fall apart, yet only to nothingness. I age. The fault lines increase in the structure of my cells. My mind scratches away. Everything inside my head is cracking up. I have to learn to see again. In some new way.

A fireball.

A star walking inside my head. (Like the celestial hunter who captured humanity's mind so as to renew it, who as the lord of the underworld brought civilisation to the ancient world, humankind receiving instructions from the heavens, yes human reason was born from the subconscious of the universe). My subconscious, my night, seeks relief in the day from the blazing sun, this giver of life can also be the maker of deserts, I prefer to rest my soul in a nocturnal garden, for the curved beak of the moon to shed it's pure light onto me. To dream. Allow the ebb and flow of the cyclic tides of life born and reborn to wash over me, like a great flood. To have a cleansed heart, yes, I would arise as light as a feather from a jackal world of the dead to brightly bloom alongside the bright Dog Star.

I, a wildflower, open my eyes, my petals.'

The Ultimate Hallucination

"We are all too bound by our Mortal Vision!" Cat throws his guitar onto another chair. "Remember the other week when that couple in that café had finished playing backgammon?" The shot glass is filled. "They had that extra white counter." The Daniels is sculled. "A miracle flung at us!" Cat stands up. Walks over to the fridge where he picks up a plastic film canister and starts to shake it. "It's the gods who shake the universe!" Cat unravels some of the film roll. "I see the brink!" The canister is tossed. More Daniels. "The ever expanding branches of this cosmos we call the universe is our tree of knowledge!" The empty shot glass is slammed onto the coffee table. "How can we trust our minds?" This drunken philosopher quietly enquires. "This coffee table looks small from far away but when I go up close to it, it covers my whole universe!"

'What is truth…for our eyes? The man at the Petersham Discount Paint store explained to Michael with little Australia map stencils that when the same pigment is placed on different colour backgrounds it can appear as other hues; we watched the colours being produced on the round spinning paint mixer like some shaman exercise. Were we on Mercury we would see the sun diminish in size then grow larger as the planet travelled on it's elliptical orbit; a planet which has two sunrises every morning as it speeds up and slows down while it advances and recedes from the sun. Helios seething down upon us twice a day double dipping over the horizon as if we were looking skywards from a ship on a high swelling sea. To be disturbed-'

Cat again fills up his shot glass.

'The Ancient Egyptians believed that at night the veil between life and death opened. In my dreams the dead inform me that I live out my days in illusions!'

"Everyone thinks they're happy!" Cat knocks back another whiskey. Gasps. "The American Century: THE ULTIMATE HALLUCINATION!"

'A chicken survived decapitation. Its brain in the lower end of the head towards the neck was intact. It was kept alive by prodding feed down an opening on the top. We survive with junk food, like having a drip in our arms…'

Cat points to his temple. "Yes! We try to live with nothing better than chicken feed! We have our heads, our brains but we ALL lose our minds! In our beings we go around in circles. In our heads, we move, we go, crazy. We want to escape this world, we want, to, live, in this world."

'A kamikaze said that when his plane was about to twirl in the sea all he could think of was childhood memories. In the New Mexico desert there are hundreds of disused Jumbos lined up on rented tarmacs. We're spinning away, a civilisation in its death throes, G-forces pressing on our brains; filling up our hollow heads with re-runs!'

"The modern labyrinth is lined with television sets!"

'The Great Cyclops is a filter for our eyes; telephones, radios, cameras – all machine extensions of our organs. The human soul is encased in a technological sarcophagus. A man standing in Hyde Park was holding up a placard that read:

*THEY CONTROL OUR MINDS BY THE THOUGHT WAVES THEY SEND THROUGH OUR TELEVISIONS! Resist the Great Anti-Mickey! The Caesar of our taste test generation! I praise the church people in Western Australia who used to cover their heads and hearts with alfoil to divert mind rays from commie satellites! Mighty Mouse is on the way! As Michael Parenti says our news shows are the stenographers of power! Not the watchdogs but the lapdogs! Measuring the waves of lies; to be the mouthpieces to so many propaganda-quakes! The Reverend Billy Church of Stop Shopping shall pass thy judgement on this Disney world! Constables Polly and Reg will catch our thought-less criminals! I thank you Reverend Billy for your follower's sticker – '**fill your inner emptiness with useless stuff**' - plastered above the ads above train windows!"* A wild far away look. *'Victory or Siberia! I see the writing on the wall of the modern day kingdom of King Nebuchadnezzar. An ancient human hand scribing MENE, MENE TEKEL, PARSIN to eternally foresee that the days of this reign are numbered, in the same way Zeus weighs on his scales the destiny of each warrior as he falls in battle, Yahweh can weigh a whole empire on his equally divine scales, and find it only wanting, it will thus only fall apart, and be divided in the same manner as it has ruled with the sword to divide and rule over others. Other blades will glint as the sun sets on this empire.'*

Cat walks over to the kitchen, pulls out a Comalco roll from a bottom drawer. "Every neon cloud must have a silver lining!" The alfoil is rolled out on the floor to make a silver carpet. Cat puts some around his legs. "A silver mummy!"

"Just like an *Egyptian*!" sniggers Michael. He ejects a video that had Roger Moore showing the weird secret files of the KGB – such as digging up an alien tomb in the Sinai which is vouched to contain the original Egyptian god of renewal: Osiris - and puts on more late night television: a bizarre ad showing a variety of stick-on outfits to put on a fridge magnet of Michelangelo's David.

"Business suits! Beachwear!" screams the prophet. "The modern age is a cacophony! We turn life into nursery rhymes! Human beings only have value from a financial point-of-view!"

"I AM WORTHLESS!" screams Lisa who tries to knock over the television. Michael who, like Cat, was unaware that she was awake grabs her swinging fist in mid-air. He calms her, hands over a glass of ice-cold water. Lisa drinks it and then suddenly picks up from the floor two small dumb bells.

Osiris

'Oh God! Our minds are empty bowls that we fill up with what is putrid! We turn the whole world into a shopping centre! Look what's now on the TV! Seinfeld, Elaine and Jerry (where is Kramer?) are in a Chinese restaurant waiting for a table, when nothing happens, we are nothing!'

"Nirvana is emptiness!"

'I've seen a street urchin lapping up the water in a baptistery font. There is your river of life! I have seen the Tiber that river of life to the Eternal City from a park at dawn where I slept beside a water tank with the other gypsies of the

street! I have seen the sun the giver of life to our world worshipped by the primal multitude while at the Druids' stones.'

Cat rubs on his temples some Anti-Bad Mood Massage Oil. Glances at the label of the bottle with its pair of theatrical laughing and crying mask-faces. "The metaphysics of existence!" Slams the top of his old fridge with his fist. "Thank goodness for the Glebe fridge man!" He points at Michael. "Brother sun!" Points at Lisa. "Sister moon!" At an icon by Gregor. "St. Francis! I have seen the poor, the unemployed, the disabled and the infirm lined up like the damned or yelling abuse - despised and betrayed - in social security. I have helped the charities to feed the poor, the homeless in the backstreets of Woolloomooloo. There the Minotaurs sulk…we must go out, defeat them to delay death, provide a chance to purify the heart so - like Theseus - save ourselves!"

"Save *this* city!" exclaims Michael. "Give us some Status Quo! I saw them at the Hordern Pavillion! The concert was sold out but I got in with a pass out I found on the ground! I then went back out and got two new ones off two different door people so a schoolmate could also get in for free! AC DC was the support band!"

'Hercules was given the Twelve Labours to clear the frontiers for a new world. Like Tempe, that northern gorge, (the original site for the stand that happened at Themopylae), that was considered by the Ancient Greeks to be the penultimate border point between 'civilization' and 'barbarism'. Yet, barbarity is also there within the supposed bounds of human civility: Socrates was granted an opportunity to review his fate (for there was always a stay-of-execution while the annual mission to Delos - to give thanks to Apollo for Theseus's victory - was away); yet, a recently sacked Athens still performed the criminal act of scape-goating this thinker. The Athenians debased democracy through the Delean League in their ultimately failed quest for a lasting empire.'

"Who's afraid of the BIG BAD WOLF!" screams Cat. "He'll HUFF and he'll PUFF and-" A loud handclap. "KABOOM!"

'Socrates harangued his fellow countrymen for their political hypocrisy who in turn brutally turned on him. Yet, his wisdom would lead to an empire of the human mind. Athens would redeem herself by becoming a great centre of learning for the world. Consider, as well, the humanity of that balding, long haired, bearded beat poet Ginsberg - accused by the American Empire of also corrupting the young; who tried to calm America's youth and police force by sitting cross-legged and chanting OM as the violence of the 1968 Chicago Democratic Party Convention riots occurred around him - I learnt of his death when I bought my City Lights pocket copy of Howl in Amsterdam - who said in his Uluru poem that it only takes a raindrop to begin the universe; when the raindrop dies worlds come to an end!'

"White Man's Uluru wants the top of the Rock sliced off! So 747s can land! Wants the inside carved out for shops! Pockmarked with double glazed hotel windows; with escalators for the damned tourists who still want to climb it! Many will scream at the end of the world!" Cat drinks.

'All matter is made of buzzing regimes of subatomic particles. It is hopeless to deal with the myriad infinities of this universe. Consider we may only be some cosmic froth amid a trillion-trillion multi-universes!'

Cat's beer froths.

'Captain Kirk! I AM an instrument of the gods! The spirits; the spirit of the age speaks through me! The end times! Hal Lindsay gives us The Late Great Planet Earth! The Discovery Channel. A dream set on the spaceship Discovery:

"HAL…"

"…yes…Lisa…?"

"The President is Gog."

"…it is he who leads Magog? Lisa…my memory…banks…Megiddo…Armageddon…the…Don…river…daiseeeecutters …daisieees-"

I saw the unrighteous as outcasts in the thousands on Enmore Road as the Rolling Stones played to the elect in the Enmore Theatre! A three-piece Trinity playing Hungarian gypsy music at the old pre-renovated Gladstone Hotel in Marion Street! Gough Whitlam reading out aloud in the Great Hall Dante's portrayal of Brutus and Cassius suffering in the mouth of Lucifer on Easter Sunday! (He may yet suffer in the mouth of Roger East).[1] *In the Eternal City of emperors I shared a cheap room with an undercover neo-Nazi major who had long straggly hair; who always wore a leather coat; who proudly had a photo of Hitler taken by his grandfather; who said he was in Rome 'on business'; who said the Turks in West Germany would be scape-goated as the 'new Jews' to initiate a far right unification of the two Germanys. The young 'major' was moody: "Not Marx!" he shouted. "I said I like MARS bars!"*

Democracy to be tampered.

'Tampered' at the Bat & Ball Hotel at 5 pm on Saturdays.

Tampa.

A Florida nurse who I met at the Stonehenge rock festival which gave star billing to Hawkwind had given me a dry flower which was in between two small rectangles of amber glass sealed with leadlight. She was stationed on an U.S. Air Force base near Brackley outside Oxford where they had practise drills wearing gas masks just in case there was a Soviet nuclear attack, she once asked me: 'Who is Jesus?' That High Court Judge who picked me up on the way to Hastings - who always when he returned from overseas made a beeline to a country pub that had his favourite local beer - told me that he had fought in North Africa and was a paratrooper on D-Day. He told me that many of his fellow high-ranking officers treated human life as cheap. A veteran smashes up his precious toy soldier collection when asked by his grandson what is war like. Onward Christian soldiers! Marching as to war! A Salvation Army band with the homeless in Central Park! The Lady of Snows soup kitchen feeding the HOMELESS! Yet our bodies are tents! To have new homes! The Rapture WILL come! We will be new creatures! Everything will stay fresh! To encase our souls in spiritual tupperware! Time will be defeated! To see all that has been in your life and all that is in the universe at the same time! A burly poorly dressed

migrant man with a sun-baked face and with a vinyl trolley at the Newtown Festival endlessly cutting out in one minute silhouettes of people's faces on black art paper at two dollars a go to make a living.'

"Sophocles inquired through Odysseus in a play called Ajax if all living things are merely phantoms shadows of nothing!"

'It may come to pass that the immortality of the soul will be verified through the analysis of some radiograph soundwave; much the same way the x-ray art of Arnhem Land records the internal organs; these unseen body parts keep alive the beings in which they are contained, proving their existence. The traditional owners have been amongst the first to understand that there are realities the eye cannot see. Humanity's advances must be seen in the context of human mortality. Although we aspire to put on the armour of Achilles we must be prepared to suffer the fate of Patrochulus – who died in battle wearing it. The Ancient Egyptians stated that Atlantis existed near narrow straits. Troy. The Women of Troy at the Annandale Hotel. The Hollywood Hotel next!'

"A shadow!" Cat looks drunkenly at Lisa. "At least people can stay alive in my mind!"

Cat glares at Michael, then stares back at Lisa. "We live alone, we die alone!"

"The Lone Ranger!" screams Michael. "TONTO!"

Cat looks back in anger at his Greek Cypriot friend. Puts on Allegri's Miserere.

'Odysseus the lone wanderer in the sea wearing his Greek fisherman's cap. The straits of the Hellespont – this geographic topography of the east - are the templates to our western mindset. With the universal human geography of the birth canal the flow of water through this eternal passage has affected the flow of history. The Great Flood that cleansed the world occurred here. It has been claimed that settlements have been discovered on the floor of the Black Sea; through an opening of the Bosphorous the water levels rose. The cultural shock from the huge displacement of refugees that followed this 'flood of heaven' stays in our collective memory. This canal brought on the birth of a new world from what seemed an end-of-the-world catastrophe. The to and fro of human history…of civilisations…can be equated with the rise and fall of the tides of the sea.'

"Yet we are all part of a great river going somewhere." coolly remarks Cat. He crawls on the floor on all fours. The music runs through Handel's funerary Sarabande in D Minor, Marcello's Concerto in D minor, Pachelbel's Canon in D, Vivaldi's Gloria in excelsis Deo followed by a glorious rendition of Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 with the Ode to Joy.

'It was Arthur Miller, the great playwright who said these words. In an act of cosmic miscarriage Osiris was murderously cut-up. Yet this god of the river was then lovingly restored to represent the miraculous renewal of all life. The Nile is a mighty waterway and the Ancient Greeks learnt much from a great river nation. This knowledge has helped to form the foundation of what is still good in 'civilisation'; our modern culture is a by-product of a river that annually resurrected the land. We form a small part of the whole of this great river-'

Chiron the Centaur

"-you are a holy centaur! A mad king! Yet, Cat, the good Lord gives you reason as you continue to do good works! In hospital I'll predict the time left to me by the ever-lessening centimetres I can lift these two weights! It'll be the only 'truth' I'll trust!" Lisa laughs. "I go *nowhere*! I *must* go on! My spine *hurts*! Twinkle, twinkle LITTLE…ON THE…*highway star*."* Lisa stops. Weeps. "I have. No *diversions*! I *have to be*. My own prophet!" She tosses one of the little dumb bells onto the floor. "It is. *Too* much!"

The Mind a Cave

A wistful look by Cat who then picks up Plato's Republic so as to run his eyes over the Myth of Er. [1]

Cat holds up a clear glass.

'It is a slow process, to teach the soul, to go from one level to the next, to be educated on multiple realities in an absolute psyche; with jealous gods, on top of Mt. Olympus, marking in dead-end trails, or avalanches, to keep us at some base level, away from a pinnacle where our always rueful human condition may be more insightfully examined, for our just benefit.'

Tightening both hands; a sigh: to sometimes feel one's destiny is in the inescapable grip of unpredictable recalcitrant divinities; fists punching the air to not so much resist fate as to deflect it. "Unruly gods!"

'Nevertheless when we are ensnared only our physical selves are cast away. As Plato keenly reminds us the Orphics state when I die my immortal soul will see two grand chasms while above me will be two enormous holes. (A broken sky). Uncountable multitudes will be ascending or descending from these four passages all moving like ions in positive and negative currents. The unjust would carry a heavy pack loaded with their misdeeds upon their backs while more favoured souls will have on their fronts a token which is their ticket to ride out the next millennium in a heavenly state of bliss.If I am to suffer tenfold for my sins in the Underworld for a thousand years - rather than go to Paradise – I will be directed by the Judges of the Universe to go down into the earth (with obol in hand). At the end of my time I will mingle with other souls who have either descended from heaven or rose like me from Hades to mingle in a vast field. (A carnival of the dead). All purified either by our punishments or our pleasures. We will be led by a pillar of pure light bending through the Heavens and Earth like a rainbow to a vast spinning rod. Fixed at the bottom of this shaft will be a series of vast bowls cupped one within each other so only their rims are revealed. The orbits of the fixed stars, Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Mercury, Venus, the Sun and the Moon all whirling around the Earth. A revolving cosmos. At the end of a stick that twirls on the majestic knees of Necessity – the law goddess Themis. Necessity's three daughters – the Fates who determine our individual destinies – will help to spin the cosmos. At each orbit a Siren will continually sing a note unique to any other that is sung at a different orbit. Yet, in harmony so that all eight notes will create a perfect

Pythagorean scale. While Atropos, Klotho and Lachesis will each chant of things past, of things present and of things to come. Time will be gone. Eternity will swallow us. (A thousand years in this mysterious Limbo may only be an hour in the afternoon of some pleasant, earthly Spring day). Unto Lachesis who holds the thread of life in her hands this laser beam of pure light will lead me to stand. I will have to make the experience of the life just past to be my only guide. I will snigger. It is convenient for the gods to offer us a choice. They absolve themselves of any blame as to the fate that will befall us. No, their omniscience goes missing in the revelation of what happens to a single human life. They are not responsible. We are each prodded in front of the Three Fates to make our guess as to how we must best fair in the next life. Of course, a soulless Plato, as it seems, befitting of a supposed descendant of surly Poseidon, would cast blame on the human soul for all the misfortune that may befall it. This 'collaborator' of the gods. Who does their dirty reasoning to perhaps find divine favour among them for his own destiny. So he may return as his precious philosopher king. Plato's eugenic 'good Republic' where the weak must die at birth. Where only the strong of mind and body are to be nourished. Children torn apart from their mothers to eventually be graded from the status of Alpha Pluses to epsoloms. Only the knowledgeable few deserve to rule over the many who are seemingly incapable of arising from their ignorance. Women emancipated, yet dutifully used at regular intervals to produce the human grist of this 'perfect society'. What use is your Immortality of the Soul, of the Pythagorean Mind aspiring towards the Absolute Forms and Ideas, of the Mathematical and Abstract Contemplation of Good, of a Universal Education, of liberation from the Cave of Shadows, of the wise Philosopher-King, of your abhorrence to the state persecution of Socrates as well as to the criminalities of the Thirty Tyrants, if tyranny also foully – if unwittingly - becomes your endgame? Did Dr. Mengele behave as a Platonist as he graded the human forms ejected in their thousands from the daily cattle cars? (Here was the 'emotional freight' of a whole generation). Are the Australian architects of the Stolen Generation also Platonists? Return to your senses philosopher, for as you undoubtedly know, without reason all justice is lost. (For too often the just ideal is corrupted by the reality of a desire for insatiable power). I will grimace as I look up at the whirring wide band of heaven which holds in the whole seen cosmos - like a rope that holds in the tension of a trireme wrapped around the outer skin from bow to stern – and chillingly hear the screams of the man who will choose to come back as a great tyrant yet will have to eat his own children; who are the children that an unhinged Plato will eat? Genghis Khan, Vlad the Impaler, King Leopold, Vladimir Lenin, Josef Stalin, Adolf Hitler, Mao Tse-Tung, Henry Kissinger? Will such maddened 'philosopher-kings' spend eternity attempting to wipe the blood to wipe the blood from their hands amongst the few souls - so mired with human evil -that their redemption cannot be sought? (What ghastly horror awaits a hundred fold for these human monsters? Some of the cruellest despots now at the mouth of hell. In front purified spirits ascend to the meadow all souls must wait before picking their

next life. Horrendous screams. An unimagined fear pierces every departing being. A final heart-felt warning from the worse damned who realise they will not be released. Fierce guards drag these wraiths over thorns to Tarturus. The lowest hell. Deep. Chilling. Black. Unforgiving. Another climb. Other tortures. To only face one more weeping future). Yet, I know after my choice I will drink - like hundreds of thousands of other souls - from the river of Lethe to 'wake up' in a shower of shooting stars having totally forgotten my other world experience, to serve once more as oarsman or navigator on this celestial ship we call Earth.

Immaculate Transmutation.

The shaman lifts his arms up.
Both hands pointing to the ceiling.
Stands.
A human Y.
'Light is around the Looking Glass[1]*, this x-ray that reveals the inner workings of human consciousness; the female and the male psyches seek, like the sun and the moon, to enter upon a cosmic union. Androgyneity to lead to immortality; there is no physical connection, yet there can be a coming together on a higher plane in the mind. New growth for a Tree of Life which has branches that bend into circular shapes, gravitating in synch with the pull of dust circles that will form new planets; this settling soil to be fresh ground for living seed.'*
The Y sits.
'From the smallest twists of DNA entwined in our blood cells to the largest revolving galaxies the whole membrane of the universe is all from the same vast spinning cosmic catherine wheel. Whizzing, streaming consciousnesses. Sparks of life. Whirring rotor-reliefs. Spirals. Star discs. Saturn's circles. Join all the dots: Alpha Centauri to Orion to Canis Major.'
Y suddenly pulls the lampshade down even further.
'Thetis, a bride from the sea, was more than stripped to produce a superhero. Yet, Achilles was corruptible. Nietzsche, where is Superman? I last saw Superman running down Darlinghurst Road with a large toy kangaroo in his hands. I was on my way to a garage sale with Michael where I bought a large wooden-framed photo taken at twilight of a young woman in the desert staring out-of-frame with a circus trailer parked behind her. I bought the photograph from an actress who told Michael about her Greek Cypriot boyfriend. It was the day for supermen because across the road we could see a muscle man in a purple leotard in the front living room of his terrace house lifting some big dumb bells after coming home from walking his terrier. Two female joggers stopped outside on the street to have a gossip and a smoko – here was the Human Contradiction.'
"This IS the MODERN WORLD!" yells the Y.
"The CLASH!" exhorts Michael. He plays with the video. "Look at this A Current Affair clip with this guy who fixes up old bicycles in his junkyard and

gives them to kids. The council wants to close him down because it thinks his lot is an eyesore!"

'A clash of civilizations in a yard of bicycle parts! A field of readymades!'

The Y is hysterical.

'The universe is a readymade! From atomic fields to asteroid belts we see only the signature of God!'

The Y opens a window. Looks mutely at the street.

'If we live in a universe that is anti-art then we must align our minds to a unified illogical theory of contradiction! We must break up the either/or balance of binary oppositional thinking! Destroy the theses of Aristotle! What does that other madman say to us? The German with his 'overman.' That fate is a force that resists free will? Yet are two opposite motives that need each other to function in their binary way upon our psyche? That we can only perceive our freedom to the extent that our physical senses allow us too? "

If *it* doesn't kill you - you can only be strengthened…"

'We remain entrapped by our bodies and rely on an intuition or on a circumstance outside our domain that we call fate to comprehend the wholeness of everything that is beyond our peripheral vision? That what we think is freedom is only the dream of freedom?'

"The American DREAM!" The Y giggles.

'We must go beyond our retina to our 'mental organ' to 'see' how all things are possible; that the cosmos is not a mere shadow play upon which Apollo sheds his light. We are not tin cut outs with some showman's light flashing on us; we are solidly made of many physical and mental dimensions that unite. We must learn to know who we are. We are multiple selves that form one soul.'

"We can all be superheroes!" laughs the Y.

"Or *pretend* to be! Just for one day!" adds Michael. "Born in the U.S.A!" A fist thrust upwards. "Let's go to the Bruce Springsteen song night next week!"

'One and three were combined when the extra white counter turned up when that café couple were packing up their backgammon game. [2]*Three for the Trinity and one for Unity with the Eternal; the apparition of the white counter brings up the bond between the Godhead and Creation; a Final Synthesis between the Physical and Spiritual, a Total Unity with All Known and Unknown Reality. Human Intelligence involved with the Finite and Infinite Processes of Fate.'*

"The totality of being!" The Y holds up an empty pizza carton; stares at the street as he places it over his forehead. Throws it on top of an antique booklet titled Practical Mind Reading.

'Understanding the ALL of reality includes knowing that this cardboard may have been made from shredded top secret documents which would have contained information obtained from spy satellites eavesdropping on every communication made on this globe; a vaudeville act in the heavens which reads every human mind.'

"Live Aid gave us a global conscience! Let us never be denied special moments like THAT! We should not spend our lives slinking in the shadows of the world's history while the all-powerful revel in the global limelight!" Announces

the Y. “Bob Geldorf you ‘wicked’ Irish son!” laughs the Y. “STRIDER!” The Y screams at Michael. “The day will come when the Age of Man will cower and be defeated but it will not be *this* day! It will not be at the Black Gate of Morder! Live by Gandalf’s wisdom! For we do not always know what will hold good! Or true! Or which path to truly tread!” The Y with a steel rule prods a copy of G.I. Gurdjieff’s *Meetings with Remarkable Men*. The book is on top of a video marked **PAGANS. COMPASS**.

‘From the Neolithic to the present is the transmission of human knowledge which reveals our connection to the material universe. It is no accident that the smith-god Haephestus was given the revered task of making the shield of Achilles. Magician. Wizard. Shaman. Name them what what you will but the smithie who lived on the margin of the village, (like the Creator existing outside the universe), smelt tin and copper together. Here was glinting bronze formed from stone, shining like the stars, was the material of the stars, forged on earth. Inside the furnace were conjured the elements of the cosmos, this knowledge a ‘secret weapon’ as mighty as the swords or agricultural and medical instruments that were mysteriously produced. Power through nature. The Nebra Sky Disc with it’s bronze emblems of the sun, moon and stars - a shield star-map which served the same astronomical purpose as the massive wooden and stone henge observatories - to align humanity to the winter and summer solstice; assuring survival of the human race through sourcing the harvest to the life enhancing energies of the cosmos through the Sun, the mightiest star; with the seven-starred constellation of the Pleiades marking the March to October agricultural season, a sun ship marking the passage of the life star through the night; to be reborn for another day; a horizon line for the midsummer and midwinter solstices and the moon the marker of the passage of time itself. The shaman also as time lord with his bronze cone hat with its rows of suns, moons and stars, a calender into a solar and lunar past, present and future that gave the wearer insight into the everlasting living machinations of the universe. Not only could stone be transformed into metal by the cosmos but the mind could also be opened up like a flower’s petal to take in, visualise and journey – to fly - within the spiritual realm. The sky as spirit world. Stone, a substance according to the Ancient Greeks could also consume human flesh within forty days, the human soul eeking through an earthly sarcophagus to arrive at the underworld. Such is human belief. The power of the mind has no equal, consider the pagans who would in turn burn to ashes a whole circular wooden chieftains meeting house as a way of teleporting it to the underworld of their ancestors. The mind to connect us with nature and the universe yet within this stone sarcophagus we call the city it is our minds rather than our flesh which are being eaten away. Alienation. Community is lost. With each other and with nature. Lost in the universe. Darkness. Fear. Death. Knowledge lost must be regained. Only through the knowing can a deadly ignorance be overcome. Deadly nightshade, yet the poison of this lethal plant if taken in the right dosage could liberate the user to communicate with night spirits, with the dead. (Life over death. Negotiating with Fate through spiritual knowledge. To have the very cord of

Fate cut at the right spot…). Blood. Red mushrooms blossoming at the time of the winter solstice and thus consumed to signify to this day by the Christian Christmas that life empowered by the Universal Logos can overcome any mere mortal decay. Neolithic beliefs transfigured by the Middle Ages- '

The mid-riff is suddenly poked.

'Our middle-age…before was youthful folly…afterwards…what then…only the end-'

"LIFE *IS* A CRISIS!" The Y rushes towards the balcony with the rule held high.

Michael is flabbergasted. Breathless. Feeling as if he is Sanchez looking on at Don Quixote attacking windmills. (Yes…here was a mind which sparkled with surreal visions like fireworks or a night shower of shooting stars).

The Y looks at the sky. "A bridge over troubled waters!"

'The inner circle who all knew the actual date and place of the Normandy landings in the last few days before the D-Day invasion were known as BIGOTS - a term based on the word BIGOT which was used for the highest security code. People at the top echelons of world power always know top secrets.'

"The world is controlled by BIGOTS!" screams the Y. "Poor PIGGY! Crushed by the LORD of the Flies!"

'As the bride of the Looking Glass hangs in the ether is she to be sacrificed? For the life force is trapped when it enters inside the material world; yet spirit can make matter evolve so that life is magnified. Sky on earth.

"French paratroopers dropping into war-torn Kosovo to give Christmas presents to Muslim and Christian children!"

'In this charlatan hundred years we see at the beginning the so called silly antics of the Dadaists prompted by a logical willingness to negate the murders in the trenches.' (Catharsis from chaos).

"Yet they would already know the Coca-Cola Santa Claus!"

'DADA destroyed everything to save everything! The theory of human relativity is filled with human absolutes! The century started as absurd and stays absurd! Nihilism gives way to annihilation! DADA knew life hung by a thread!'

The Y goes over to a sewing kit and measures out with steel rule three pieces of thread one metre each in length. They are dropped onto the floor to form three different chance contours of a so-called 'absolute measure'. The Y knows he has repeated an enigmatic act first carried out by Marcel Duchamp nearly a hundred years ago; with Einstein's Theory of Special Relativity somewhere in the back of his comic mind. (After four years of atrocity comes the 'noble scientist' with his revolutionary theory to give Europeans an opportunity to restore to themselves a blind faith in their own supposed 'nobility').

'Another 'eternal return'. We must learn. There are infinite possibilities of what a metre can be. As there are also infinite directions that our lives can take. Chance shapes us.'

The Y glances at Lisa on her twirling bicycle 'readymade'.

"Let's go down to ol' Mexico way. Pass the 'tortilla curtain'. Cross the land of the living to arrive at the land of the dead." After singing his little ditty Michael goes quiet.

The Y is in another trance.

'Our everyday memories used everyday for the good of money.'

"We are the hollow men. We are filled with straw." He looks at the television. Flicks the channels. Straw!" Thumps the top. "To be making ONLY haystacks!" Steps back. "They are larger. Ever LARGER! With NOTHING inside! ALL STRAW!"

Another damned state of mind: "THEM! I had seen THEM!"

'Colossians 3:1-4. Keep thy eyes on heaven…for Thine is the glory sayeth the LORD…Romero knew the truth…he uttered words of forgiveness as he lay dying at that blood-soaked altar...his blood-'

Pressing the remote.

"THEM!" 'For what 'glory' have we befallen on ourselves?'

Fists.

'A little girl at a police station yelling: "THEM! THEM! THEM!" Giant mutant ants had emerged from the Nevada desert, like the skeleton warriors who rose up from stones to fight Jason; like the valley of bones that rose up into an army of fleshed out people in front of Ezekiel.'

Hovers back to the window.

'At the turn of the century we were amazed by frozen frame after frozen frame of a motioning human figure collated together to form the illusion of a many-limbed, many headed Hydra. Time as a centipede.

Captured.

Curving on a linear plane.'

Thinking of Lisa

'Who was the extraordinary ancient spirit that would choose to be clothed by this ordinary, fateful woman?'

Failsafe

Teresa tinkers with her teaspoon.

'I want to slam this! On this!'

The spoon is gracefully placed on the café table.

'An old man with baseball cap and bowtie who shuffled down wintry city streets and spoke to me of the years of limbo. I have met the exiles. That man, that woman, their child. The lost years. In Siberia. The recovery. Also lost. No paradise follows purgatory. Only further struggle. I met a man who fought. With his mind.'

Teresa studies her shaking hand. Grips it with the other one. Teresa stutters. To herself.

'He had spent half his life. In exile. Yet. Volunteered. To fly. In nuclear bombers. He wanted. To know. His enemy. A guerrilla knows. To steal. His enemy's weapons. Otherwise. Steal. His mind. No one asked. About. His background. Otherwise. He could not. Be. Trusted. The planes. Flew. Everyday.

To failsafe. Then turned around. Some planes had bombs. Others did not. He never knew. What was a decoy. What was real. Like. Everyday. Life. What was important was what he learnt. Yes. Know thy enemy. To defeat him. Previously. In prison. He saw. Life. On the streets. From his 'fourth window'. He wondered. Why. The so called followers. Of liberty. Never came. To defeat. His foe. Yet. His enemy. Reached. A different. Failsafe. To defeat himself.'

Blackbird Café. Waverly.

It is late at night, after the Guatemala benefit. Michael, Teresa, Caterina, Gregor, Cat, Master, James, the man-with-the-black-fez who had come to the benefit as a 'thank you' for the attendance of Gregor, Caterina and others like Michael at his own benefit for the homeless people of San Francisco:

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SATURDAY MARCH 5
NORTHPOINT TAVERN
MILLER/PACIFIC H'WAY NTH. SYDNEY

BENEFIT CONCERT
FOR
THE HOMELESS PEOPLE OF
SYDNEY'S SISTER CITY IN THE U.S.A
SAN FRANSISCO
THIS BENEFIT CONCERT IS TO PUBLICISE THE
SOCIAL INJUSTICE EXISTING IN THE VERY HEART OF
THE CAPITALIST ICON: THE U.S.A

BY ASSISTING OUR NEEDY SISTERS AND
BROTHERS OF SAN FRANCISCO, WE ALSO WANT
TO BRING A FOCUS ON THOSE WHO'D HAVE
AUSTRALIA FOLLOW THE SAME SOCIO-
ECONOMIC POLICIES.

'INJUSTICE ANYWHERE IS A THREAT TO JUSTICE EVERYWHERE.' MARTIN. L. KING.

SALMA GUNDI **AKA**
URBAN GUERILLAS
THRASH BALLADERS ANTIPOPPISTS
THE NAME SAYS IT ALL!

SPECIAL APPEARANCES FROM CAESAR SPEED, BLACK THURSDAY, AND OTHERS
9 PM_____*_____$8
ENQUIRIES & DONATIONS: DOUG WAKEFIELD. P.O. BOX 214 LANE COVE 2066.

****

His friend 'Fenwick' and other friends associated with this core group are sitting outside around coffee tables across the road from the hall.

"Women had political power when societies were dependent on the textiles they made for wealth." states the man-with-the-black-fez.

"That explains why Penelope with her spinning wheel comes across as such a commanding figure." surmises Cat.

The man-with-the-black-fez holds up his one thousand five hundred year old Roman coin. "However, gold was seen as a divine substance from the sun and so with the coming of the iron-age political authority shifted elsewhere."

"Yet the Devil remains *everywhere*." dryly remarks Teresa. She puffs on her pipe.

'I saw the devil masks in many houses. No one feared the 'death-maker.' At least he was dependable, a constant companion who would never leave your side; who could be trusted to come good with his sobering promises. At the Devil Museum I saw the demon figurines and other devil masks from many other countries. Yes, there is nowhere to hide from his 'hospitality'.

Michael knows the Devil is certainly by Lisa's side.

The Burial of the Dead

Teresa slowly stirs her spoon. To a remark about her background she smiles. "To quote a line from T.S. Eliot's The Wasteland: *Bin gar keine Russin, stamm' aus Litauen, echt deutsch*."[1]

"On a windy day," remarks Teresa, "while I stood on top of a castle in the middle of the baroque city my face iced up as I listened to the wooden rails I was holding creak. It was like being on a ship. My host told me of a man in Siberia who saw a blackbird suddenly appear over a white horizon. He immediately knew that his new-born son half-a-continent away had died. It was true." The pipe is lowered.

"That's like in Harry's War when Harry - this Aboriginal soldier on the Kokoda Track – knows he is going to die when he sees this black crow spirit-"

Michael recalls a movie he saw at a black short film festival at the Roxy in Parramatta; a memorable night when he saw the great Bob Masa in the flesh.

"Woe to our first-born offered unto Moloch!" exclaims Cat. "Death is always in need of sacrificial victims!" He grips his hip flask. Cat knows what it is like to be laughed at; while inwardly in tears.[2] A glance skywards. "Who will even devour this starry atlas!" Arms stretched out. "An empire with no limits!" Another swig. "The northern titan *know*s! Friends, in Chicago I vividly witnessed the ugly nature of this gluttonous, self-eyed colossus. In the depths of the blues den that Muddy Waters had played were two, foul drunk – *business* - men. I, fawned by these harsh mouthpieces, simply for being an 'Aussi*ee*'."

A golf swing.

"God bless Greg Norman!"

A forehand shot.

"Roche! Rosewall! Newk! Fitzie! The Woodies! Hewitt! Cash! Philippousous! We admire all those great male tennis h*ee*roes from Down Under! Hey bud it was truly amazing you guys taking the America's Cup from us! Really fine sailing!

That Olivia Newton-John in Grease sure has great arse! We love Crocodile Dundee! He kicked butt!"

Cat flicks open his coat and acts as if he is grabbing a gun in an imaginary shoulder holster.

"Just like how Ronnie Reagan made Americans feel proud again after all that Iranian hostage *shite*! No one's goin' to treat the U.S of A as a laughing stock anymore! No more of this pushing us around! Giving us the big piss! Our might *alone* will prove to be goddamned right! Texas boys hell prove that! Today your country celebrates its war heroes! Its called Anzac Day! K*ee*wee*e*s fought with the Aussi*ee*s where? In goddamn Turkey! In 1950- oh you mean 15! Aussies fought beside our troops in Vietnam? For our freedom! For our way of life! Is that right!"

Cat pants. Sweats.

"I hitched a ride with a truckie! An ex-Vietnam military helicopter pilot! Who said the Aussies had guts! Who whispered to me at a crowded truck stop, after looking to the right, then left, that under Reagan God's own country had turned into a dictator-*ship*!"

People watch this maddening orator strut his index fingers onto either side of his sweltering, reddening forehead.

"The Devil has his towering horns!"

Thunder.

Cat looks in its direction.

"Gift of the Cyclops to you Zeus! Come! Defeat *thy* father Cronus!" Cat drives his wet head into his chest. "Revolutions! Reason producing nightmares! Goya! War! More *grotesque*! Psychotic Spartans! Leroy went to the Big Apple to blow some guy away!"

"Don't forget to mention a few biblical plagues, Cat!" ads Michael. "*Ee-ee-eeee*! The cicadas that ate Five Dock!"

Everyone laughs.

Lightning.

"It's a good time to order some honey and locusts!" continues Michael affectionately. "Mister John the Baptist!"

Teresa sips her drink.

'The summer solstice is dedicated to this beheaded martyr. I saw the bonfires, the lit wheels up high on long spikes as well as the candle armadas floating down waterways such as lakes, rivers and streams. I can still distinctively see that carved angel's head in the river with candles floating around it. I had immediately thought of the writers and artists of the Angel Club who were having an angel made to stand in Uzipis, that rundown area by the river, which was to be dedicated to a deceased friend. However, I then considered Orpheus. A despairing figure, ever since that unwitting glance back at Eurydice damned her to a shadow existence. He chose from that moment to only sing amidst nature. It was the animals who became the sole audience to his beautiful voice. Yet cut short when a band of wild jealous women, followers of Dionysus, caught

him, beheaded him. The head thrown into a river, floating down, still singing, longing for his beloved.

Love resists death.

That saxophone player in the underground walkway by the Victory Column. I did not know where the music was coming from as I arced around the roundabout. It was clear, haunting, it was like a soundtrack. I thought of Wings of Desire. There he was when I walked down the steps. A Berlin Orpheus.

I walked back up the stairs, feeling like Eurydice.

Even now I can easily imagine his music…it was mystically reassuring at the time for I had just had a 'near miss' in Poland: three thugs eyeing me at a tram stop, fortunately two young men appeared out of nowhere. I stood beside them, explained the situation, they were happy to be my guardian angels. My would-be-attackers walked off, one of them shouting out profanities I caught the train to Berlin that very night; however, I had to huddle in a corridor, an elderly man took pity on my prodigal circumstance and had the other passengers in his cabin make room for me.

Security. Sometimes the inner city can feel like a spider's web yet it is a web I know extremely well. Ultimately I prefer a comfortable destiny rather than the possibility of living in foreign territory…of entering into some hurtful unknown…

Cat settling down, strumming his guitar. The spirit of Bacchus within him has subsided. That Roman debauched god of wine. Yet, originally he was the Greek Dionysus, once an agricultural god of vegetation. (Like Osiris). Dying every winter to come back to life in spring. (Thus, we may find hope in the musician's cruel demise).

Love brings resurrection.

The budding of new life.

Wildflowers.

(Light shines in darkness.

The spirit overcomes the body).

Yes, Orpheus is buried on Lesbos.

Yet, I feel, his love will restore him.

As Cat's love of this world, of others, will revive him, as well as these others in his orbit.

Dionysian bliss.

(Cat as our Dionysus who sees if we have sought to comprehend new insight from past chaos - for a life off the rails can get back on the wheel of life and hold it with a firmer grip – the god of renewal to exalt us into a rapture akin to connecting one's multi-faceted being to an ever-changing starry zodiac that is whirring continually).

Life to be a kaleidoscope of experience that is to be constantly twirled, to be part of some great schema, to live it without necessarily knowing what it is.

"My younger cousin told me once, at his wedding, he had a tenant – an Arab in Campsie – who fought in Vietnam. In the Australian Army. Yeah, I was surprised too. Apparently, there were even Lebs in the original A.I.F. Fat Pizza

isn't so off the mark when it shows Pauly at Gallipoli. Anyhow, this big beefy sergeant had this Campsie guy and the other wogs do all the maintenance work around the base camp. Clean the latrine, dig the trenches, that sort of stuff. He always got the migrants doing it. Weren't very happy Mick! Says my cousin. Not happy at all! One day they got to go out on patrol. Guess who took them into the jungle Mick? Guess who didn't come back? Mick! It's like what I heard Lou Reed sing on the radio coming over here: you reap what you sow![3] Mick! Always best to keep people happy!"

Cat's flat. Roslyn Street. King's Cross.

'SHINING PATH = PERU is spray painted on a white wall in a Surry Hills street which I saw while waiting to cross over to Moore Park on the way to see Nick Cave. Aussie Stadium had red and green balloons covering its front gate-'
Michael curls his body on the sofa.
I shiver.
The night lingers.
Time dissolves. Runs askew.
Revolves around in a whirl. A tempest of disorder. Disunity.
The future becomes the past; the past the present; the present the future.
It's best to go to sleep. To achieve a mental buoyancy. This I have lost; this I must regain. Life seems sliced up; cut up; tattered and in pieces; like an edited filmstrip; spliced into all
the wrong sequences. Memory fragments, like film frames, keep randomly emerging from many different co-ordinates upon my mental map.
The morning will bring a new day.
A fresh start. Whereupon I can start from A, go to B then to C and beyond, proceeding through the normal run of events such as waking up, showering, having breakfast, going to work, lunch, finishing work, going home, having dinner, watching the news, a comedy, a drama, or going out, brushing my teeth, then sleep. My father had once declared to me, literally getting down on his knees, that you are born to go to school, to work, to buy a house, marry, have children, grow old, tend the vegetables, then die! This simple pattern of life's expectations seems by so many of the species to be the most fulfilling, and which keeps human existence at a consistent base. To think beyond the primal makes life confusing, empty; to aspire to grander things only makes one aware of his or her cosmic inconsequentiality.
Best to keep the nose to the ground. To keep the soil turning so new life could grow rather than aim for the stars where one may only face the tragedy of Icarus.
My uncle taking his kids and me up to Earlwood Oval to fly kites. (Huh! Just like I took Melissa and Isabella up to Sydney Park to do the same thing; as their kites fluttered over
the tall, lean chimneystacks of the old brickworks I realised that I too was becoming old).

We cheered as the brightly coloured diamonds went heavenwards. Fluttering so high in a very windy sky. Yet, as our guardian followed the high ascent of the kites a deep furrow came across his forehead.

Speedie threw his cigarette to the ground. A worried look. A quickly lit cigarette.

Our excitement only grew as the kites disappeared into the sky, while now I can't help but think, after all these years, that my uncle must have been thinking of the tragic fate of the labyrinth maker's son.

"The Law!" came the sarcastic shout, whenever my uncle felt it was prejudiced towards the powerful.

Zeus rattling his trolley in the supermarket, fed up with the bad service. An Australian woman in the long queue agreeing with him. "They should open up another counter luv." she said to Michael. "All these New Australians never seem to realise they should be getting better service. "

I had to agree as I watched the same managers, who I had often overheard the checkout girls complain about, surround my angered uncle.

Yet, my uncle also knew that the gods could only bear so much human defiance. The natural laws could be dismissed, but only to a point before some vicious consequence is meted out.

This mind is always wandering...

Yes, best to sleep, to give my mind some rest. Lisa's misery has skewed my emotions far too much towards unknown tangents. Thankfully, Lisa, finally, restfully, sleeps.

(Star-fire burns inside of her, all life comes from the stars yet the stars will also consume all life. Her mind's been in fever).

Yes, there's the business at hand to rest fitfully. I would appreciate this. It's in this way I can accomplish the task of safely and happily starting from A and making it to Z. This is the way to seek fulfilment. The Alpha and the Omega of any human life.

I stroke my forehead.

After all, what real choice is there?

Human biology captures the human spirit.

When my body dies what happens to my soul?

This is the question. The answer will only come when the annihilation of my physical being is assured. This cannot be changed, so best to get on with life in all its fullness before the end. Yes, I turn on this sofa. I need a good sleep in what's left of this mad, humid night. A good night's rest. The moon, the stars, in this dark tranquillity I seek some peace.

To then allow the splendour, the glory, of the sun's day to reign.

This is the cycle of life.

Sleep. Renewal. Splendour. Glory. Happiness. Fulfilment.

I yawn. Too much thinking Mick…too much thinking…hasn't made you feel more alive…this day. It's only worn you out. Tomorrow…there's always tomorrow…(thank God it'll be Sunday.)…cheer on then…cheer on…through to the semis…until the Grand Final…yeah until the ultimate…grande finale…I see

the cheering crowds. I'm in the centre of my dreams. The cosmos. Eternity. Night. Night. I sleep.

Imojen

As Michael flicks his burnt-out rollie he sees two policemen in the right corner of the park; they are both wearing white gloves and are approaching a vagrant lying on the grass.

The homeless man has to stand-up. His body is groped, pockets checked and the torso prodded.

A finger is again jabbed into the side after pressing into the ribs. He is a sack of bones.

The ground around him is scoured.

A police van parks beside the park, and the man is taken down to it and placed in the back.

As the vehicle drives away Michael notices a young woman lying on the grass; she suddenly stands up; looks around, then casually proceeds to her observer. "Do you have a spare five dollars?" With her long black hair and darkly tanned skin, she appears to be an islander.

"Five dollars? What for?"

"I want to buy some port. I've had a rough night."

"Fair enough…at least you're being upfront."

"Well…I am…" the woman looks Michael up and down; she is mildly surprised that he is being so agreeable.

"Listen. I've got a bit of time to kill. How about we walk towards Oxford Street. I'll buy you a coffee. Then we can go to the Courthouse bottle shop."

The woman shrugs her shoulders. "As long as you're paying."

"No problem…"

"Let me get my suitcase." The woman walks on her own down to the Bandstand Café which is in the rotunda in the middle of the park. Near the entrance is a German Shepherd which appears to be the woman's pet.

Beside the dog is a small brown suitcase.

Michael walks towards the rotunda but the woman points to the road.

The two strangers meet on the footpath.

"This is Trouble."

"That's funny. I would have sworn he was the Littlest Hobo. What's in your suitcase? All your earthly belongings?"

"Na…just the one that *really* matters to me. My trumpet." The woman opens the suitcase. The musical instrument is in several pieces. Each bit is in a separate cut-out foam compartment.

Michael glances at the panting dog. Looks back at the woman. "What's *your* name anyhow?"

"Imojen – with a 'J'. Means image of God. Yours?"

"Michael but it's okay to call me Mick."

"Do you want to help me with this latch? It always bungs up."

"Sure." Michael uses his thumb to tightly press the latch down onto the suitcase

until it clicks. “There. It’s done. Do you want me to hold it?”

“Na. It’s okay.” Imojen takes the suitcase from Michael’s hand. “Let’s start walking.”

They head towards Oxford Street.

“I noticed you looking at those coppers doing over that guy. You seemed concerned about him so I thought it be alright to ask you for money.”

“I suppose you and Trouble can sniff a sucker a mile away.”

Imojen casts her eyes to the ground. “Where do you think they took him?”

“Dunno…maybe to a refuge. I don’t think he was arrested.”

“Where have you come from just now?” asks Michael.

“I was in a café at the other end of this street. I was asking for some money when the manager told me to get out. Said his customers didn’t want to be harassed by people like me. I told him to fuck off! I was so fed up I just kept walking until I came to the park.”

“It’s gone all overcast.”

“The sun will come back soon.”

“The Odyssey Lounge…”

A café with large glass windows which allow people to look out onto Taylor Square is open.

“Let’s go there.” suggests Michael.

“Okay by me. Trouble’s always happy to sit outside.”

The interior is spacious. However, the pair still sit by a large window.

“You’re a muso then?”

“Yeah. Although at the moment I just do a lot of busking. I’ve been staying with a guitarist for the last two months but last night he was *too* much. You mind if I smoke?”

“As long as it’s okay-”

“There’s an ashtray on the table.”

“I’ve got rollies-”

“Na…I’m right.” Imojen pulls out a tailor-made and a lighter from her handbag. “We slept in separate rooms. Everything was sort of fine then last night ‘Terry’ comes home from his *little* gig in some poxy café up at the Cross and straight away starts groping me. I went straight to my room and he follows me…eventually I fended him off.” A sigh. “He’s about fifty something but looks a lot younger. He was pissed.” Imojen’s hand is shaking. “I’m not talking straight.”

“You’re talking fine. I’m not fussed.”

“Terry knows the only reason I’m staying with him is because of my kid.”

“You’ve got a kid?”

“I know I look too young to be a mother but I’ve got a little daughter. Anyway, even though she’s an accident I *still l*ove her. I was one of them party strippers for a little while just to earn some extra cash. One time I had to perform at a fire station…seems like those guys get really bored. One of them had it off with me afterwards. The bloody condom split. Now DOCS have her. They don’t trust me

to take care of my own daughter. I'm on all this medication. I just want to forget last night. We should go buy the port."

"After we have our coffees…"

"Terry is supposed to pretend he's my boyfriend. That way in court there's a chance I'll get Sophie back…but I don't want to stay in his place another night!"

"Ta," says Michael to the waiter who glances curiously at Imojen. "Listen. I'm *with* you. Drink your coffee. I just saw someone I know come in." Michael walks over to another table where a young woman has just sat down.

"Oh hello…I remember you…"

"Penny." states Michael. "Where's-"

"I live on my own now…"

"Oh."

"Things are quite okay." Penny looks down to scan over a Sunday newspaper. "You with a friend?"

"Just an acquaintance. Well anyway I just saw you and thought I'd say hello. Maybe see you around."

Penny looks up. Smiles. "I'm sure you will. I'm still across the road. What was your name again?"

"Michael."

"Well see you Michael."

"Bye." Michael goes back to his table. "Sorry about that. Just someone I met one crazy night."

"That's okay. I've finished my coffee."

Michael gulps down his flat white which has gone cold. "I guess we might as well go. I'll pay up."

Imojen unties Trouble from a pole. Michael sees her conversing to an old man in a dusty blue suit and wearing a worn hat.

"See ya Bob."

The man tips his hat. "Goodbye."

"Who was that?"

"Just a guy I see on the street all the time. He's got schizophrenia. You see a lot of mentally ill people on the road now seeing they've been kicked out of the places that were supposed to help them. The likes of Bob sleep at refuges like Matthew Talbot's. I often talk with the guys who hang out at the one on Bourke Street."

"You know those down and out blokes who hang out at that place?"

"Yeah when I buy the port I'll probably go and share it with them."

They cross Taylor Square and pass a man wearing a red silk shirt and large Dr Hooks pirate hat. Michael goes on his own into the bottle-shop. He emerges a minute later. "It cost a bit more than five dollars but here's your bottle."

"Thanks!" Imojen takes the port out of its brown paper bag. "Do you want some?"

"No way. Its too early in the morning for me," replies Michael. "Plus I've got a christening to go too. I'll walk up with you to the others though."

"First I need to go and buy some more fags. I'm nearly out."

"So you have money?" inquires Michael.
"Enough for some cigarettes and food for the day. When you're as poor as me you really have to watch every cent. I can't afford to drink this and eat with what's in my purse at the moment."
"I should mind my own business."
Imojen shrugs her shoulders as she hands over the dog leash. "I'm used to people being nosy. I'll be back in a sec." She goes across the street to the newspaper vendor who is always outside on the corner at Gilligans nightclub where Bourke Street continues down a hill. On this road, at the same spot, an ambulance is departing. A police car is parked up on the kerb.
"A guy threw himself at the traffic." states Imojen. "The police are still interviewing the driver who hit him."

The Devil

Several haggard men stand outside the refuge. The sun re-appears. A man sunbakes by placing his bare obese torso against a wall. He is wearing a cap and his arms are stretched out.
A crucifix pose.
"What were you saying about a christening?"
"A friend of mine who is a single mother is having her daughter christened. They've both got A.I.D.S."
"That's sad. Really sad."
"It's going to be up at that church with the big spire. I don't know its name."
"I *know* it. Met this really strange guy just outside its front gate only two weeks ago. This German backpacker had just stopped me. She wanted to see some Russian submarine that was on exhibition. Docked down by the Fisherman's Wharf. I wasn't one hundred per cent sure of the best way to get to it but this codger with a gammy leg comes over and says he can take us most of the way. He didn't realise that the backpacker and me were strangers. I decided it wouldn't hurt to tag along and I think the backpacker was happy I did. 'You've just had breakfast at the Fez Café.' He says to the German woman. 'Oh that is good! To eat. Break bread! To commune! We must all commune. To drink the wine…ah …this is best. I like to drink.' He took us to the steps in Victoria Street."
"That makes sense - they lead to Garden Island…"
"Yeah but he tells us how he lives nearby. 'Let us replenish our strength. We can have a pot of tea.' I think it was just out of sheer curiosity that we went along to his home. He had this room in this shabby terrace. The walls were all grimy, bare and they had this horrible musty smell. Don't know why we didn't piss off then. His furniture looked like leftovers off the street. He wouldn't stop leering at the backpacker. She was this blonde stuff. 'The devil comes in all sorts of guises; you must be very careful to who you talk to; to who you meet.' wheezed the old bugger. He was sitting on this creaky chair but thrusting his face towards the German.
'We got to go now!' I shouted.

'Your tea! Wait for your tea! The water is just boiling!' He slammed his cane against the kitchen table. He screwed up his face which made him look like a bulldog!" Imojen's first smile. "We laughed and laughed as we walked back to the steps. That's where I said goodbye to the backpacker. I imagine she finally found the sub."

Ballina

"Yeah…well…if you wanna turn up you can come along. The more the merrier. I gotta go – I'm late to meet a mate."

"Might see ya soon…thanks for the port!" shouts Imojen.

"See ya!" Michael rushes off. In his hurry the Good Samaritan makes a wrong turn, he ends up in a street that only leads off to The Wall. He backtracks but momentarily stops. "Ballina Street. That's the town just below Bangalow."

Victory Gin

An old man. He calls out to two young fashionably dressed men in front of him for a cigarette.

One of these two well-heeled night-clubbers turns around. He holds up a cigarette. "Here's one but there's no way I'm giving it to you!" Both men laugh. The old man stops. A tearful expression comes over his face. His two mockers go inside a café.

"Hey matie!" shouts Michael. "I've got a cigarette! Just wait a sec. I gotta roll it."

"Thanks…thanks…" replies the distraught figure.

"FUCK'N YUPPIE COFFEE-FASCISTS!" yells Michael at the top of his voice.

"I ain't got much money but I remember when you could get these for a gin," The old man gratefully puts the cigarette between his dry lips.

"Well matie the only gin I know is 'Victory Gin'." reasons Michael.

Plato

"Lisa! Lisa! Lisa!" exclaims Cat. He thumps the coffee table. "Do you remember when we saw Zulu at the Encore?"

"How could I forget?" replies Michael. "That was the afternoon I had the run-in with that bald guy."

"A pity I wasn't there!"

"Well I only just said goodbye to you. It was later that night I bumped into-"

"Back to the film Mickie boy!"

"Yeah? What about it?"

"FRONT ROW! STEADY! STEADY! LET THEM COME CLOSE! REAL CLOSE! CLOSER…FIRE! RELOAD! SECOND ROW FIRE! RELOAD! FRONT ROW FIRE! RELOAD! SECOND ROW FIRE! RELOAD! FIRE! RELOAD! FIRE! RELOAD! FIRE! FIRE! FIRE! FIRE! FIRE! LIKE A TYGER BURNING BRIGHT! HOLD THE LINE MICK! KEEP YOUR

NERVE AND HOLD THE GODDAM LINE!" Cat is exhausted. He is standing up puffing in the face, his chest heaving. "Remember how all those Zulus were running straight at those two rows of soldiers? Both lines would have been wiped out by those brave warriors but their cool mental discipline kept them alive. All that Chaos! CHAOS! Mick! It's like LIFE!" Cat screams. "You've got to hold the line in your head or you'll fall apart! Lisa knows how to keep it together. She KNOWS!"

"Yeah but Cat she's losing!"

"Micky boy we all LOSE!" Cat is exasperated.

"Yet she's going ahead of time!" snaps Michael.

"We can't change Lisa's fate!" Cat sighs. "Look Mick. LOOK! There's two ways to respond-"

"Yeah but-"

"LISTEN!" Cat thumps the café table. "I'm as upset as you about Lisa and the little one! TRUST ME!" Cat's face sweats profusely. "You know Gallipoli?"

"Yeah, yeah I know Gallipoli Cat. You Aussies lost against the Turks. Us Greeks should have been there. If it wasn't for the Russians being jealous about the idea – we would have!"

"Yes Mick, yes! Maybe we should have stayed the ten years like your forefathers did at Troy. Yet after eight months it was all too obvious we were going to lose. We *had* to retreat. Nevertheless, there's just as much skill and courage in learning to withdraw as there is in learning to advance."

"What are you getting at Cat! It's a wonder we haven't been kicked out yet!"

"There was an islander woman in here before who was thrown out-"

"Yeah I know, I know…"

"You know? Anyway, Mick you can panic and be routed, or be calm and withdraw…slowly. Like real slow…not a man was lost leaving that narrow God forsaken peninsular – you could say the open sea saved them and within three years Monash would organise the A.I.F. to mount the first ever *blitzkrieg* attack.* Look at the charge of Chauvel's light horse at Beersheba. Eight hundred men on horseback who galloped over two miles through heavy machine gun fire to finally beat their Turkish foe." Cat frowns as he looks at his disconsolate friend. "Life can be like a slow withdrawal and to handle life in this way it's a test of our character. Failure…or tragedy – if you handle it the right way – can build you up; or if you like – help transform you. We owe Lisa that…"

"She's *dying*…"

Cat stands up. Forcefully nestles his guitar case under his armpit. Firmly holds it. "That is so Mick…but…we *must* hope…for all we *really* know about this world is its shadows; we have not left Plato's cave…at best we are at the entrance…"

Orpheus

Cat and Michael walk quickly towards the hospital.

"My friend Teresa thinks you're Orpheus, that you'll guide Lisa out!"

Cat stops. He looks at the road covered in shadow that has to be crossed to arrive at the hospital.

'Darkness, there is an unnatural darkness which slices the road which separates us from Lisa which is like the shadow of death across which valley? Across which human kingdom? With many beliefs there is a divine kingdom, which it is said is likened to the

to the cool shade on a hot day where there is the Word, in which we can repeat many words, they are like echoes, in our lives always these echoes, to mirror the many repetitions in this existence but this Shadow resists the day it slices the road like a sharp blade, the sun in the city is lost there was before the sun the moon and the stars a softer blackness a garden of serenity where it was possible to rest, where it was possible to sleep in order to wake again to experience light not heat Lisa is in the furnace, humanity was given fire but the flames are no longer a gift, concrete and metal consume us the river of life evaporates…I am no Orpheus, but Lisa is our Eurydice…(yet we are all in some mandala, yes…we head to the middle, which - in our case - is Lisa, the focus of our love).

Thus, it is deemed - via birth to death - that we come into the finite to head to some infinite, (the way music, art sways us too…), the whirring spheres of the universe which create the music of the heavens can be replicated by the earthly musician.

Music can direct us to the stars, which exist within an eternity.

(The same goes with art, philosophy…all that is pure in culture, spirituality…I, at least, to be able to be a little Orpheus…).'

The guitar case is violently tapped.

'No looking back, to be trapped in past hells. (Yes…to draw Lisa out from that Greek Hades!).

The Eternal Sea

The hospital.

"A sinking ship."

Cat is transfixed.

"This is what we see! Within this massive white leviathan, this sealed furnace forged of concrete and iron, are trapped human forms, human faces filled with despair and terror! Remember the words of Blake who said that Cruelty has a Human Heart! Jealousy a Human Face!"

Cat stares to the right, then left. In front. Behind. "Micky boy! Look all around you! The world of the leviathan! A human image!"

The prophet yells.

"What will be left one day of ALL THIS," Cat waves his hand towards the city skyline, " is something akin to a rusting bulwark! A wasteland. However, this dry riverbed we call a road can by day's end be transformed into a river of light!"

He looks at all the roads; the buildings upon their artificial concrete bases.

"This asphalt is an illusion for in our mind's eye what we should see with our spiritual restoration is a glorious sea of life! I do not *exaggerate*! Lets go! Let us

help open Lisa's mind, for it to *be* the sea! To become like the 'eternal ocean', the universe!"

Infernal Region

Michael is about to wheel Lisa across the road when a small red car screeches into the main driveway of the hospital. There are three people in the vehicle and the young driver - who has red dyed hair - jumps out. "Where in hell's name is Emergency?!" He shouts at a hospital employee.
The car is driven manically down a side road.
"This whole area *is* the Inferno!" Michael is exasperated.

A Traditional Land Owner

After crossing the road the trio head up to the church. They see that the coffee shops along Victoria Street are now very busy.
Cat spots an Aboriginal ex-boxer at the Coluzzi.
"It's a blessing to see a traditional land owner today..."

The Minister

Lisa slumps a little in her wheelchair. "I'm tired *already* guys..."
"That's okay Lisa. That's okay." assures Michael.
Ambling in the driveway of the large stone church Lisa and her 'honour guard' are greeted by Melissa, Margaret and Master.
"Mama."
"Hello darling…" Margaret places Melissa on Lisa's lap who tries to hold her. "Mummy's very pleased to see you." Lisa rummages her face into Melissa's hair. "Such a pretty dress…" Lisa glances at Margaret. "Take a hold of her. I can't grip her well enough."
"Don't worry Lisa. I have her."
"Thanks Margaret. Thanks everyone for being here…"
"No probs Lisa." states Michael on behalf of everyone else. His eyes glisten.
"We better get inside people. Its after starting time." states Cat.
The group walk inside the church and make their way down the long aisle to the front to be near the altar.
The church is large and empty. Yet, there is a sense of serenity and even intimacy in the quietness of this vast space.
It is still early in the morning and very few regular parishioners have turned up to this first service of the day.
However, the family who live next door to Cat have turned up. While in front of the new arrivals sit an elderly woman and a man.
Lisa notes that sitting in the pew behind her is the minister's wife who is similar in age to Margaret. Lisa also recognises the stunning auburn-haired woman who is sitting beside the minister's wife as well as her Irish husband. Their four young children sit in between them. Beside this family is a young well dressed Asian woman; a doctor friend of Michael's who Lisa and Melissa had visited

with him; (helping to paint hundreds of little pretty flowers on the two large shopfront windows of her ex-shop Marrickville house); and another somewhat slightly taller woman with less than shoulder-length brown hair.

A tall, lithe blonde haired woman is in the adjacent aisle.

Two young men sit a few rows back: a blonde haired guy and another guy who has dark auburn hair.

Lisa is noticing everyone's hair colour as the rays of the sun are coming in at such an angle as to highlight people's heads.

These two men have both looked coyly at Lisa but, like the others, in a friendly, understanding sort of way.

Gregor and James are sighted. They are sitting by themselves but in the same pew.

While further towards the back is another woman: Teresa; accompanied with her six year old niece dressed in the same sailors outfit worn on the one occasion she had met Melissa.

Two elderly bedraggled men suddenly walk into the church. One of them is very tall and he surprises the 'first-comers' by kneeling down to go through the motions of bowling an imaginary bowling ball. He promptly sits down in the last pew with his much shorter companion who has burn scars on his aged face. Both men wear beanies and overcoats.

"Estragon and Vladimir." quips Michael.

The minister is at the altar. He has patiently waited for Lisa to arrive before starting the service. He is in his early sixties but looks fresh faced, lean and youthful. The first remark the minister makes is he asks people to keep an eye on their belongings throughout the service to avoid theft. Assisting him is a much younger priest with a long ponytail, looking bleary-eyed.

Caterina - with Isabella - and a small, petite strikingly blonde-haired friend finally turn up.

"It's always the last moment with her." mutters Michael like an old Greek gossip. Nevertheless – like Lisa - he is very relieved she's made it to the christening.

Lisa dispassionately watches the minister who has started to go through the rituals. It was on the same night that she had bumped into Michael on Taylor Square that they had met.

Storming out of Dan's house Lisa had meandered towards the Cross; for some survival instinct was drawing her to a world she, at least, knew. Despite her many misgivings about 'her nemesis' - as Lisa had been prone to call this neon strip - it was familiar terrain.

Yet, along the way, the swings in a grove to the side of the church were sighted. After a perusal at the rugby league jerseys in a brightly lit window display in a sports shop; then a stop at Govinda's next door to see what movie was on: "Siddhartha…it's too slow…" then to finally view the line of bedraggled people waiting for a free plate of food from the Hari Krishnas there was a forlorn walk back to the swings. "God I wish I was a child." Lisa swung on them, crying.

It started to sprinkle.

The swing was violently pushed away. A look at the trees which furiously swayed in the wind. The high steeple of the church stabbing the low clouds. The wet was then avoided by cuddling up to the big wooden front door of the church. Whimpering.

The silhouette of a man. A frightful scream avoided when it was instinctively realised no harm would be intended.

The man forlornly rubbed the bridge of his nose of his lean face; ignoring the rain which had anyway died down to a light sprinkle.

"Come with me."

Trust. The man was followed. A huge house next door. Yet still on the grounds. This man had to be the minister.

A reading room filled from top to bottom with books on all four walls. The minister picked up a large diary that was on a big oak desk. He then left the room but soon returned with coffee in a foam cup. "I'm busy at the moment. I hope this warms you up. Do you have milk, sugar?"

"Some milk. Two sugars."

Off again to the kitchen. Looking down to see a leaflet: a Vanunu benefit cabaret. On the second return the way was led to the front porch. The door to the rectory was then locked. "I'll leave you here. You can make your own way when you've finished the coffee." He smiled, walked away with the large diary under his arm.

On the following Sunday Lisa wandered down to the church's coffee shop which was under the Crossways Theatre in Darlinghurst. It was a popular hangout for the local street people, sex workers and transvestites. (However, Lisa was more familiar with the theatre as it was the venue for the popular Brackets & Jam. Every Monday night a large audience would see for free amateurs performing, doing musical acts). She talked to the Irish guy who was now present and then to his equally understanding wife. Lisa asked them to pass on her thanks to the minister.

Yet a week later Lisa went up to the church and after the morning service she approached this kind man and said to him that she hoped that he would one day christen her yet unborn child.

It was while she was staying at Cat's place that Lisa, with Melissa, tentatively once more approached the church. She was supremely relieved that the minister was still there.

Prayer

The Lord's Prayer is said.

Lisa is thankful that today has arrived before her death. Although she has never been conventionally religious there has always been some sense of an unseen world, yet what the consequence of such a mystery could mean was never considered: spiritual ignorance could be lived with. It was always *this* world that needed to be further explained. While a possible connection between the unseen and the seen was rarely perceived. No comforting reason existed to explain her *dying,* yet some sense of good was still essential in her response. Deep down, at

the very least, it was felt if Lisa's agony could not be resolved it was still worth the effort to maintain the integrity, the life value, of her child. The first meeting with this stranger, presently standing at the altar, had been a positive intervention. The christening had ever since been a life-enhancing notion.

The Baptism

Water falls from my painted pourer over Melissa; amidst this deluge she's glimpsing sparkles of coloured light. Her weeping wavers, my child feels assured.

I feel proud, satisfied. A strong overcoming sense of accomplishment overtakes me. My spine tingles.

The Celestial Rose

(His hands are outstretched then clasped together.
Eyes looking upward).
"Above us is a large rose window which is a medieval religious symbol of divine love. The Celestial Rose represents Mary the Mother of Christ, with each petal, in perfect symmetry, in an eternity that is bound by the perfect shape of the circle."
(I too look at the circumference of the rose window).
"The perfect order of the universe can only be sighted outside time and space where it is possible to see all things at once. An eternal, harmonious perspective akin to the clear, horizonless view that is gained when the world is seen from the air. However, on the opposite side of the Rose our medieval architects portray, for our spiritual consideration, the Wheel of Fortune.
This plain wheel represents a mortal perspective in which the pilgrim's vision could be clouded by an impenetrable maze. This unsatisfactory situation only initiates confusion.
The cosmic order was revealed to the medieval pilgrim only when he or she relied on 'the divine will' to move through this lower labyrinth we call the world.
As the faith of the 'blind pilgrim' was tested, holy enlightenment was sought out, so the right 'turns' would be chosen on the journey of spiritual purification."
(I observe the Rose).
"The medieval mind comprehended that one's eyes had to be solely kept on heaven if the soul was to escape this mortal conundrum.
In short, the Rose represented heaven and the wheel represented earth and the two were inextricably linked through this perfect shape."
(He's arcing both hands so they touch each other at the fingertips and thumbs to suggest a circle in mid-air).
"This perfect form helps one to see their place in God's masterpiece, which is the whole universe. Harmony reigns when the unseen connection between earth and heaven is recognised.

However, the divine order was constantly usurped by an earthly chaos which was exacerbated as the descendants of Adam and Eve continually failed to abide by the principles of the Creation.

The 'all' of reality was constantly before the pilgrim but if heaven's point of view could not be sustained then in the next world death would ultimately prevail over love.

Celestial circles which served as umbilical cords to heaven would - for those who stayed 'uncorrected' - be replaced with earthly chains…through the creative act of spiritual liberation, human tragedy could be overcome. The pilgrim's eyes needed to remain open to the eternal. This, after all, is what our medieval friends would like us to believe.

The despair inherent in the wheel of fortune is reflected in the turning wheels of Bosch's nightmare hallucinations of hell that has its tormented victims tied upon these deadly spokes.

In these so called 'modern times' the automatic whir of a factory wheel can equally enslave the person who has to serve this lifeless object.

The medieval mind was warned that it could be trapped on a treadmill of repetition that is without the creative power inherent within the cycle of regeneration; with no spiritual growth a pilgrim's life would be fouled, with the soul withering to become a wraith.

(Decay.

Yes, I listen but feel a little feint).

"The Fall has turned this world on its head, the pilgrim is ensnared in a web of impersonal fate which keeps him or her towards the periphery, thus Christ went out to the margins to be with the lost, yet rather than draw them to an earthly centre corrupted by human power, it was more profound to guide them to the Rose. The kingdom is on the streets because this is where the oppressed are forced to reside, and our compassion can be measured by say how much we welcome the stranger, for it is such hospitality which nurtures justice. The medieval pilgrim accepted the order of heaven, for human sight was spiritually blind - it could only see the visible world - while the light of heaven, invisible to mortal eyes, revealed those spiritual values which marked the way to salvation."

(He looks again at the Rose).

"The Creation is based on the restraint of chaos, this creative tension is akin to the keystone which keeps an arch intact, the divine is this keystone."

A pause.

"Consider how we are in a building which is shaped like the crucifix, that instrument of death, yet as the world's light passes through the wheel of fortune it is transformed by the eternal Rose, to glow in this dark space."

(This dim interior is my dim mind).

"Tradition tells us that a 'divine light' gave sight to a blind soldier after he put on his eyes a mixture of blood and water that came from the speared side of Christ…thus the essence of God's 'eternal vision' is love, and this morning we have witnessed both an act of love and an act of defiance that has moved the human spirit from death to life."

Silence.

(He's taking Melissa from Margaret's hands, to carefully hold her up).

"Here is the real meaning of the resurrection. The principles of this life act can still be a reality in this precious life…in every life…this day…this minute."

Eyes go misty.

(I take my child.

Yet, I still feel frail).

"In my old age I often relate to the spiritual unease of Greene's whiskey priest."

A wry smile.

"Yet, I feel assured that the life sustaining reality of certain spiritual principles can positively affect the way we live now, on this earth…as well as affect, to the good, the way we approach our deaths, our inner strife may paralyse us, but such turmoil may be overcome, if for instance, we recognise the love we have seen today. Melissa's christening will hopefully change the character of her fate in much the same way Christ's body was re-created, to the point that he could walk through walls. It is possible to regain paradise. I claim Melissa to the eternal, on this day: her birthday."

(He pauses.

I hold my breath).

"To start concluding I'd like to say that after waking up at dawn I glanced through my old worn student copy of Hesse's Siddhartha. Towards the end of the book Siddhartha, as an old boatman, at last surrenders to the flow of the river in which he finds a harmony and unity with 'all things' in this water stream. There is a serenity in this little tranquil passage which gives me a great sense of peace and which encourages me to believe that the flow of water which covered Melissa on this beautiful morning will help sustain her life and provide her with some semblance of heaven. Look at the stained glass window above the altar, it shows the miraculous feeding of the five thousand. There are different theories about what happened, such as there was a lot of food which was actually hidden, that Jesus inspired people to be generous and so on…I prefer a more metaphysical interpretation, that a liberating union between the human imagination and the infinite can overcome the restrictions the physical world usually places on the human spirit. After all, the human imagination usually finds expression through our creativity which often displays some resonance of a 'higher force' like the sun's light which shines through the coloured fragments of this magnificent window, making it splinter into red, yellow and blue hues. This broken light once more merges together to become whole. This white light rests easily on the eye – our 'window' – and extends beyond the retina to travel inside us to overcome the shadows in our mind, or 'mental court' to borrow a term from Dante. This pure light represents the mysterious unity and immateriality of the divine, this never ending river of 'spiritual water' exists outside time and space, unlike the original beams of sunlight. Our eyes, or as Blake calls them, our 'doors of perception', can, along with our intuition, thinking and emotions, can help reveal heaven on earth."

(He's looking towards me…)

"This complete light, which surrounds us, also – as I have mentioned - encompasses this large interior. We are in the mind of God, and the mind of God is in us, for there is no beginning and no end, to this eternal shine, which can, also transform us. God's love, ultimately, has no circumference, or centre, it is a divine compassion, which equally moves the stars, as well as each individual heart. The heart of every pilgrim is a true centre if it beats in unison to the rhythm of God's will. I suspect Aboriginal song lines journey the same way to Uluru and to other 'sacred hearts' that are the original spiritual epicentres of this ancient land. Just as the desert blooms with flowers, new meanings can arise in our lives as the warmth of God's light blankets us. In short, such spiritual enlightenment enriches our lives and our coming together today – which in itself is a spiritual act – as friends of Lisa and Melissa, have formed a new community which to me is a miracle. Thus as the human imagination dialogues with a divine intellect life's fragile breath is sustained, and in our case exhales Lisa and Melissa to the centre of this society."

(He's stretching his hand out in a wide arc to everyone sitting around Melissa and me. I am overwhelmed).

"I feel very humble to have performed this christening. I never thought this would be the result of my first brief meeting with Lisa. I thank her for the opportunity to have played a role in this rite of passage for her child. This christening is such an important event."

(Again he looks right at me…)

"Lisa understands more than anyone else why she has done this. It is a defiant step. You offer to us today an example of spiritual strength which far outweighs your present physical weakness. Motherly love is an essential quality of the Rose and it has been Lisa who has inspired me to examine Mary's Empyrean.

The fruits of the Spirit encourage the human spirit yet Lisa's courage, her independent spirit, her strong mind displays how she has moved - by herself – from the clutches of fate, to venture towards the bosom of God's love. I bless you Lisa but I also thank you and Melissa for blessing us."

Brown Eyed Girl

The minister smiles. "We may as well stay here by the baptistery font. We do no singing in this early morning service but I believe we are going to have a musical item."

"Yeah, Cat is going to play a song." confirms Lisa.

Cat fine tunes his guitar and looks up to sight a woman and her dog discreetly moving from the entrance of the church to the nearest pew. "*To open the Eternal Worlds, to open immortal Eyes of Man inwards into the Worlds of Thought, into Eternity ever expanding in the Bosom of God, the Human Imagination*." Cat smiles. "William Blake. I had thought of playing a slow, lingering soulful bluesy song but I've decided for something upbeat." Cat taps his guitar. "I'm going to play Van Morrison's Brown Eyed Girl." He looks over at Melissa. "Everyone has to join in on the chorus!"

Everyone does including Lisa who valiantly claps.
The singing stops.
A moment's silence.
Lisa is trying to hold back the tears.
Imojen plays her trumpet to break the stillness with a much slower rendition of Brown Eyed Girl. This is followed up with a lingering performance of the Hunters and Collectors classic Throw Your Arms Around Me.

The Rotunda

The service is continued through the prescribed liturgy, the one difference being that the minister also gives Holy Communion by the baptistery font, this is to emphasise Lisa's role in bringing everyone together. At the finish Lisa and Melissa along with Margaret, Michael, Cat, Master, Gregor, James, Caterina, her friend (who is introduced to Lisa as Rosie) and Isabella all wear party hats and amble off to the Bandstand Café for a combined christening-birthday brunch.).
Teresa also comes but only for a quick latte. "Katerina needs to be re-united with her parents."
Imojen is also invited, Michael offers to pay, but says she has to feed Trouble. However, Imojen's flat is not far away so claims she may turn up in half an hour. Cat's next door neighbours, the Irish guy, his wife and the minister have also walked over to the café to give their gifts to Melissa but are unable to stay. However, after also giving their best wishes and promising to visit Lisa in the near future they all walk away wearing or holding their party hats.
Lisa is content her inner circle of friends has stayed.
Everyone is very cheerful and Michael and Master carry a giggly Lisa up the stairs to reach the open-air top. Coffees are ordered and a large carrot cake with candles is presented. Happy birthday is sung, then people chatter. Lisa goes quiet. Looks thoughtfully at the happy scene. Suddenly the party atmosphere seems very unreal. Eyes close. Eyes open. The feeling of not being here, of being somewhere else. Remaining silent. This world is also silent. A screaming heart; this flurry of beats which could stop at any moment. All is vivid: the curves of the chairs, the facial laughing expressions, the deep blue sky, the grassy ground which looks so far below, the dark blemishes, the yellowing skin, the decrepit body, the contours of the hands, everything is in sharp focus, as if it is all captured on gelatine silver. This strong sense of mortality brings new clarity to every thought, this striking awareness, both exhilarating and frightening. "I am here but am not here." she softly mutters. *'…the universe is a boundless expanding cycle in a process of cosmic evolution and within this changing womb the earth evolves. The world ages towards its own ripeness while we live as complex beings in our own right which within us emerge our own spheres of emotional, spiritual and physical evolution. The many layers are built and then rebuilt as we go through each new stage until at last we wane and disappear back to the dust as if we never existed yet the labyrinth of inner cycles which make me human have already started to collapse amongst themselves I*

can feel the fractures split my chest my heart weeps slowly as it pounds faster but quietly resisting the downfall of my solar system however, the centrifugal forces of my disease are drawing my psyche towards a dispassionate black hole behind my ribs whose weight becomes that much more heavier with the passing of each day...it feels blank...is this what death is? I find it hard to breathe...the congestion and pain is great my heart burns I shall become ash before my time...my lips quiver I'm so...heavy...heavy of heart...please, please God bring back Eden...please...(Lisa scratches her dry skin her body has become a wasteland) *the emptiness of days* (Margaret passes her a cup of tea)... "Ta"...*the passing of time second by second...another universe inside of me explodes...yes, I shall become an apparition...of dust...I sit still...very still...I waste away...I waste time...I have no will to move...it doesn't matter, nothing matters, matter is nothing, I cannot change...the world...I am a slave to the physical laws of nature which are imploding my internal organs...my skin is white...stars...*(Lisa looks up at the white cupola of the bandstand cafe) *this universe reaches a centre-point above my head all things arise towards it but I am far away...very far away...I will reach no such end...my body diminishes towards the dust...towards the shit of this world...on the ground outside are the cigarette butts, discarded syringes, used condoms with their 'dry white mucous' - as I call it - all covered with dirt, pathetic looking relics of so many hopeful desires, of so many attempts to reach little nirvanas by way of mandalas which seem directionless...*(Lisa scratches a sore and wonders at the mystery of this allusion). *Yes, I have lost...my way...the refuse of life smells, the vast dying worlds contained within me smell* (Lisa sips her tea*) I disintegrate as white nebulas shine in their last milliseconds of existence over the dead world which is my body...*(Lisa softly sobs...she is still...everyone stops their chatter and stays still...only the folds of their clothes flutter slightly with a slight breeze) "I have...lost...I am...(Lisa looks up)...lonely..." *the world will go on and end and go on and end and go on and end as its been said with little bangs and little whimpers going on and on and on and on around me and without me a bird flutters inside the cupola, seizing the shade as a relief from the ever strengthening sun...the furnace which is the sun will consume me then consume the world...the Milky Way will consume the sun and so on and so on where is the beginning to this end? In our birth or in our death?'*

There is a haunting loneliness in Lisa's presence, (nevertheless, people can see their own well hidden fears savagely exposed on this stark face).

Lisa looks fidgety and a little frustrated having to deal with the heat, dealing with the people around her and knowing in a couple of months there was a very good chance she would be gone.

The *Piñata*

"Right!" exclaims Caterina. "It looks like we've all finished our food and coffees. I suggest I tie up the *piñata* on one of the railings here and see if Melissa can smash it open!"

"Great idea!" shouts Rosie who loudly claps her hands as she stands up; a quick-fire loud flamenco stomping of her feet.

"*OLE*!" yells Cat.

The *piñata* is shaped as a boat. Two funnels stick from the top and Caterina uses these to help tie it to the outside rail of the Bandstand Cafe. Michael notices Caterina still has the ball of string he had bought for her all those years ago. The *piñata* hangs limply by the side of the cafe and Michael suggests the party move to a tree. Caterina undoes the *piñata* and the group walks to the corner of the park where Michael had seen the derelict man receive this morning's special treatment from the police. Caterina ties the *piñata* to a tall bush. Melissa reaches it with a long stick and Isabella helps her swing it.

"Come on Melissa!" yells everyone while Lisa smiles.

"Come on..." Lisa whispers.

Melissa hits the *piñata* several times. When it seems that she will never be able to smash it open the *piñata* is split in two. The lollies and chocolates shower over her body (in much the same three days hence on Lisa's birthday another *piñata* shaped as a horse will be broken over her while she lies in bed). Melissa is all smiles and everyone claps. Isabella helps Melissa pick up the sweets.

Kites-by-the-Sea.

"*Vamos* – off to the sea!" exclaims Caterina.

A three car convoy find parking spots outside Michael's place at Evans Street. The group then walks down the road to Bronte beach.

At the grocery, which is in the very middle of the row of cafes by the park next to the beach, drinks and milkshakes are bought as well as hot chips from the single fish and chip shop at the end.

Melissa and Isabella have a ride on the children's train that operates in the park. Both mothers join their daughters for a second ride and all four are thoroughly delighted. Cat remarks how it is so appropriate for the females to be so joyful. "Apparently Bronte was a secret women's spot."

"You never cease to amaze me!" laughs Lisa who is in much better spirits. "You should have been an anthropologist!"

"He *is*!" states Michael.

"Where's his pith helmet?" laughs Rose.

"At home! Inside a sarcophagus!" Cat grabs the handles to Lisa's wheelchair. "In any case both of us *mam* will now lead the way!"

The 'expedition party' then takes the cliff walk around to Bondi. Along the way the males take it in turns to push Lisa in her wheelchair. Melissa and Isabella occasionally hitch a ride on Lisa's lap.

Everyone appreciates the rusting bike frame with its corrugated iron angel wings at the base of one of the cliffs.

"That's been here for years." comments Michael. "It's the original sculpture-by-the-sea." He quips.

The last corner is turned and there in front of everybody on the broad sweep of Bondi beach hundreds of kites hover over the sea. Thousands of people are lying

and milling on the sand and grass slopes and along the walkways and shops of Campbell Parade. Every hue of the spectrum forms a vast rainbow band that is moving across the sand and streets. Bondi Pavilion is surrounded by this large army of colourful 'ants' who are attracted to the shade and to the drinking and eating spots this building provides. To Lisa the expanse of reds, yellows, blues, oranges, purples, crimsons, and greens that are suddenly before everyone remind her of the stained glass in the church; it feels for her as if she is moving in a picture of splintered colour.

"Festival of the Winds!" exclaims Caterina.

Rosie skips along the path and lifts an arm up to the sky to look as if she is touching a large kite hovering close by.

The group walks towards the crowds looking for a café that will accommodate all of them.

A couple of spare tables outside a place cluttered with umbrella awnings are spotted. Refreshments are ordered and everyone settles down to a welcome drink on what is turning out to be a very hot day.

Lisa looks around at the sea and watches the surf scramble up the beach and then slide back to the ocean.

Michael is watching Lisa and fears she is returning to another dark mood. "What are ya thinking Lisa?"

Lisa swings her neck towards Michael then says nothing.

"Cat got ya tongue?" Michael smiles.

"Cat has no one's tongue Micky boy!" exclaims Cat.

Lisa looks back at the sea. "I was thinking if we'd been sitting here billions of years ago and if we will be sitting here again in a billion years…" *'I can't help but think…these last days…how life is always coming from and going back - to eternity…'* Lisa faces the others. She grins. "Let's go and get our feet wet!"

"Are you right to walk?" inquires Margaret.

"Yeah…I think I'll be right for a little while. It's not like trying to go up stairs. Mick just give me a hand out of this."

Michael with Gregor's help pull Lisa out of the wheelchair and with Caterina, Rosie, Isabella and Melissa head down to the beach.

"We'll pop down a bit later."

"We should go to the pub." states Master.

"Yeah," agree Cat and Gregor.

"Maybe when Lisa gets back." suggests James.

"You 'boys' can go if you like," states Margaret. "I'm happy just to sit here and mind the wheelchair."

"It's settled then." decides Master. "No point hanging around here in the hot sun if Lisa's going to be in the water."

"We'll just go for one drink Marg." promises Michael.

"Don't worry Mick. I don't mind being on my own."

Thomas

Margaret casts her eyes onto the beach. She spots Caterina, Rosie and Isabella in the water. (They had brought their bathers). Lisa and Melissa are at the edge of the surf and appear to be speaking to an old bearded man wearing some sort of strange headgear. He is wearing blue Speedos and his torso is very muscular and darkly tanned. A billum hangs from his left shoulder.

It is while looking for seashells Lisa and Melissa have met this fellow. They had noticed several shell necklaces around his neck and so approached him. If Margaret was closer she would see that shells also covered his head and which to his 'guests' appeared to be pressing into his skull.

"My name is Thomas." Thomas has a soft English voice. "I'm also looking for shells. The sea discards them on days like today at a greater rate. I don't know why but it seems to have something to do with all these kites. I know on All Souls Day there are always more shells. Today it seems the souls are visiting their shells. It's a strange thing." Thomas looks out at the ocean. "There's a myth out there beyond the horizon I don't know about. What I do know is shells protect the souls of the deceased and when the soul passes onto eternity more shells are left in the sea. The shells belong to the sea; it's their world. The sea is time and space for the shells. We live in a vast sea of time and space. I like to wear these shells because they protect my mind. It's inside this physical shell." The man knocks the side of his head. "Have a go." Thomas kneels down. Melissa knocks his head. Laughs. "Pretty thick skulled aren't I. You've seemed to pick up a lot of shells." Lisa comes over and kneels beside Melissa, not minding that her clothes are getting wet.

Thomas looks at Lisa's scrawny physique. "I believe wearing the shells on my head will protect my mind when the skull dies. It'll be carried to a place where my mind can finally sleep." Thomas picks up a large shell and places it to his ear. "People think they are listening to the sea but if you really listen you can hear a human soul." Thomas places the shell into his billum then looks absent-mindly at the wet sand. "Life is sometimes like looking through a mist for me." Shrugs his shoulders. "I don't understand why the kites bring more shells." He once more starts looking for 'his shells'.

Lisa looks at Thomas who has forgotten all about Melissa and her. "Melissa we've got enough shells. Let's go back to Michael." She thinks of saying goodbye to the old prospector but walks off without doing so.

Abandoned King

"What a strange lovely old man!" Rosie has caught up with Lisa and Melissa on the beach.

"Yeah he *is* strange. Anyhow he likes to collect shells. It gives him peace of mind."

"I started to come in when I saw you speaking with him."

"Just go up to him if you wanna talk…"

"Na! I'm going to dry up. Caterina said she's getting out soon too."

"See you both at the café…"

"You bet!" Rosie shakes the water out of her hair who then races off to the dressing rooms; as Lisa watches Rosie diminish in size she is amazed by the amount of energy this small figure contains; when Lisa greets Margaret, Rosie is also arriving.

Caterina comes along a little later. "Where are the men?" she enquires.

"At the pub," replies Margaret. "Said they would be right back. Believe it when I see it."

"I'm feeling really wasted everyone." states Lisa. "I don't want to spoil the party but I'll have to head back soon."

"Well we'll catch up with the others and head home."

"Na, na…you all don't have to go. I'd like Melissa to stay out here as long as possible. It's a special day for her. I'm just feeling a little overwhelmed."

"I'm happy to go back," states Margaret. "We can catch a taxi. Firstly, I'll go over and see the *men*!"

As if on cue, Michael arrives.

"Lisa wants to go home." curtly remarks Margaret.

"That's a pity! We were thinking she might want to join us at the pub."

"I like that idea but-"

"Just for one drink Lisa! It's a good atmosphere. Can you have a beer?"

"A middy shouldn't hurt…I could just have a lime and soda."

"*Buen*!" smiles Caterina. "We go for 'one' drink!"

At the Bondi Hotel everyone is at a table that is by a large window that looks out onto the beach; there is a clear view of the flotilla in the air. A large Aztec kite shaped like a hexagon hovers directly in front; it reminds Michael, James, Gregor, Caterina, Rosie and Cat of last night's festivities.

"We're looking into paradise!" Cat is tipsy. "Light! The preacher man this morning was right about that! It can renew us! We can be suns! Let the sun swallow us when the last days come! We'll live forever when we've entered into Heaven's Light! Don't let our hearts petrify! The preacher man spoke the truth! Friendships can drift apart! Just like the stars in this growing universe! Thanks to Lisa we've all been brought together today! Like the beginning of time!"

Michael cheerfully raises his glass. A few patrons on the neighbouring tables also raise their glasses after clapping Cat.

Lisa defiantly shakes her head then slumps in the wheelchair. "I'm tired. I need to go home…"

"Then you leave us like a shooting star!" Cat claps his hands then goes quiet when Margaret looks madly at him.

"I saw a falling star before I came down to Sydney…it went right over the beach…I still want Melissa to stay…" Lisa is exhausted.

"I'll go with you Lisa." states Margaret. "We'll get a taxi and I can catch a train from the city to get home."

"Better still Margaret I can give you a lift from Darlinghurst." offers Master. "Gregor was going to go soon anyway so we can get back to the hospital in his car. We'll just get a taxi around to Bronte."

"I'll come as well so that'll help with the fare." remarks James.
"Good," states Margaret. "Michael can drop off Melissa later."
"Yep…that's fine by me. Cat could come for the ride."
"Well Mickey boy sorry to disappoint you! I've already arranged to meet these artist friends in Hall Street. I'm going to see their short film and some art they've helped a group of street people to do. Next time Gregor you can meet them. Anyhow I'll be off within the hour!"
Lisa, Margaret, Master James and Gregor leave while Caterina, Rosie and Isabella go off for a quick dip.
"We'll go down to the beach as well Melissa." Michael gently takes her hand after she hugs her mother. "Make a sand castle."
Cat stays. "I gotta finish my drink!"
Michael takes one last look at his drunk friend and sees him as an abandoned mad king.

Small World

"It's not right to be here without Lisa." remarks Caterina who is drying herself beside Michael and Melissa after not staying in the water for a long time. Rosie and Isabella also soon arrive. "Anyhow the children have had enough sun." Caterina helps Isabella out of her swim costume after her daughter has helped Melissa finish her sand castle. "Let's buy some ice creams and walk back to your place."
"Cuppa anyone?" offers Michael on arrival.
"A tea would be so-*o*-*o*-*o* refreshing!" Rosie says excitedly.
"The little ones would like some juice." yawns Caterina.
"I thought everyone was going to come back here so I've also got some goodies." Michael produces from the fridge Lebanese sweets, some dips and a bowl of party frankfurts which only need to be reheated. He puts them in the microwave. "I got a bit done before I went out last night. I'll open up the CCs."
"Nice teapot Michael," observes Rosie. "Lovely dark brown colour. Is it from the forties?"
"Yeah, it's bakelite." I bought it at Surry Hills markets. In the park in Crown Street. They're on the first Saturday of every month. It was Lisa's idea to buy it."
"Trying to domesticate you!" laughs Rosie.
"Something like that." smiles Michael.
"Lisa knows I like old things. Look at that car of mine!"
"64 model isn't it?" inquires Rosie.
"That's right. A EH. I guess your father had one?"
"He had a HR. It's a few years later isn't it?"
"67 I think. Do you want sugar?"
"Two please."
"Milk."
"No thank you."

"You did some magic tricks a few years ago at one of Isabella's birthday parties. I've never forgotten those magic coins."

"Oh yes!" remembers Rosie. "I bought them in Bangkok! I had to perform magic tricks that day because I couldn't get my stilts! I'd borrowed them out to a friend who was using them in this big fire show the same weekend! I think it was for a street festival in Darlinghurst."

"Is that right…"

"May have been the Kings Cross festival - or the Newtown one - but I'm not sure…could have been with Icarus but maybe it was with another street theatre troupe…you've got me thinking now…" Rosie stirs her tea.

"I saw a fire show - in Darlinghurst – with Lisa. I met her while getting some string for that party for Isabella…"

Broad and Alien is the World

Caterina slouches back on the couch. She has just placed the two girls on the bed in the main bedroom so they can have an afternoon sleep. "They are *really* tired." A yawn. "I had planned to put on a Wiggles tape for them."

"The girls know the health value of a good ol' fashion siesta…our 'seer' at the pub would agree that one lives much longer with a regular '*cat*-nap.'" Rosie smiles; studies a retro magazine rack. "BIG ISSUE. Meanjin. The Bulletin. Granta. New Internationalist. QUARTERLY ESSAY. The New Yorker. London Review of Books..." Rosie peruses two big bookcases. "Mmmm…here's a big photo book: One day In The Life of Australia…both collections of a thousand & one movies - books to see and read before we die…looks like the usual collection of nineteenth and twentieth century classics…there's quite a smattering of Latin American works just like at your place…Caterina…"

Caterina is asleep.

"Broad and Alien is the World by Ciro Alegria." Inside the front cover. *"From Mick this wizened Victorian traveller who gave me this book at the bar of the Festos Hostel in Athens." A* look at the back cover. "The life struggles and adventures of a Peruvian Indian community set at the turn of the century. This looks interesting…" Rosie sits down to flick through the book.

Michael grabs a sheath of travel short stories that belong to Gregor. A look at the one on the top.

nicaragua october 12...

There is a desire to make the pictures in our mind stand before us. There are many expectations which we seek to fulfil, on certain dates and with certain people and in certain places. Memory is based on an overlapping of experiences that gradually shape and reshape who we are and who we will become. Memory is submerged, yet our forgetfulness can influence our surface thoughts and in the end there is a blend between our dreaming and reality. Nevertheless, there is the disappointment of those desires which remain unfulfilled and so we strive to compensate with

reason or with substitute experiences. Yet these efforts may only lead to a melancholy that stretches across our hearts, much like twisted trees which spring up in the dark nights of our discontent. In our imaginings we pretend that what we seek is real or non-real whatever satisfies our haunting, preying illusions and life in its entirety seems rippled by those moments that change the course of our stream...there is the absence of things, the absence of events on certain dates, in certain places and with certain people and nothing we can do can retrieve our sad concerns. We realise how fragile, temporal and unique life is as we go through each passing moment which is always waiting to be experienced and then remembered. We yearn for the fullness of this world and thus we discover a love for the present, this here and now, and discover little wisdoms through little deaths. Thus we reach heaven as peace is found in things that we do not see and our feelings, moods, are a reflection of what we call spiritual things, like our emotions and our dreams, and we conquer those obstacles which try to take away what lies inside of us (whether we call this our soul). We meet people with whom we build up common experiences or histories which last out the remainder of our lives until our generation with its common bond of life's struggles and loves dies along with us, only to be replaced by a new generation of unique desires which are partly shaped by what has died and is reborn from generation to generation.

So I consider my own recent past and think of strange images which stay fresh in my mind and which in other ways are far away in my feelings and in my geography. I wake up from my own thoughts and looking at the past I study maps to discover my travels and to seek to see and cling to words to make the past real and not a dream.

I look out to a new tropical dawn with the future still uncertain. I consider the experiences of my trip, especially my last few weeks across different points of this Latin landscape as far as Managua. There is a circle we travel on and a point we return to and so I think of a quote by T.S. Eliot - shown to me by a friend before I went away - which said we return to a place and see it for the first time. (When then do we reach the point of no return?).

I was walking down a street in Managua looking for a Nicaraguan woman I had met six years ago. Jolanda had owned a grocery shop in the street in which 'J' - my girlfriend - and I had been staying. We had built up a friendship with Jolanda, going to her shop to buy bread, Coca Cola and Jolanda would tell J of her difficulties of being a single mother. I could not find Jolanda's shop and I did not know where else to look in a city which did not have street signs and addresses. I continued to walk down the street and unexpectingly saw a plaque which I had first spotted six years ago. The plaque was hanging from a thin pole and it was in memory to a twenty year old man who had died during the revolution. I had read the dates of his birth and of his death and learnt that he died only a few days from his birthday. I had printed an etching of this memorial back in

Sydney and called it 'The Birthday Martyr'. I was taken by surprise by this image before me; I also thought of the image in my memory and of the printed image. I stood looking at the memorial thinking my present was the future shaped by my past which also was within the present at the same time. (The past, present, future had become as one: is this what they call eternity?). [SOME SCRIBBLE]. While earlier in the day I had been intrigued to read in my copy of MEANJIN - which I had brought from Australia - an article about the renaming of the Grampian mountains in Victoria to their previous Aboriginal title which was Gariwerd. I read of the Anglo protest and learnt of the importance of geography to a people's identity, shaped by the stroke of a cartographer's pen. Yet blood had also been spilt: tribal blood in Australia and tribal blood in the Americas-

There was rubbish in the streets.

Six years ago Jolanda had helped to organise the people of the *barrio* to clean up these streets. I remember the cheerful boys who helped with wheelbarrows and shovels to level out a patch of land...this Sunday I walked by some boys who were playing with their spinning tops on the footpath. They only half-smiled at me when I said hello. These boys would play every day and I felt they were trapped in a country which had lost its way and was haunted by the possibility of returning to a past it had tried for more than ten years to escape. The boys stared at their spinning tops...

Michael looks up to see Rosie is still reading. However, he sees that she is now perusing through a collection of Western Australian short stories. The afternoon sun spreads a golden glow through the small living room. Caterina rustles in her sleep as the warm light falls on her body.

I am standing in the small courtyard of my *pensione* filling up the dry wash basin from the water drum beside it. There are still two days in each week when each *barrio* in Managua has no water from the taps. Six years ago there were two days in each week with no water from the taps. I assume six years from now there will be no water from the taps. Is the denial of things the remaining constant?

The *barrios* take turns on selected days to lose their water supply. Our *barrio* must go without water on Mondays and Tuesdays. I vaguely remember that in the *barrio* where I had stayed six years ago it was Wednesdays and Thursdays. I assume if I return to Managua in another six years I will be somewhere where there is no water on Fridays and Saturdays. This leaves only Sunday. Where in Managua would it be denied on *this* day? Would it be denied on Resurrection Sunday?

However, there is silence in the streets and there is no water.

The strong sunlight suddenly lights up a small Aboriginal artwork which is resting on top of a bookshelf. The reader is distracted. This painting had been bought by Michael in Alice Springs and consists of a large grey circle in the middle of a cross made up lines of grey, brown and white dots on an orange background. In each corner is a grey quadrant of a circle bordered by arcs of the

same grey, brown and white dots. WOMEN'S DREAMING is the title. Mt. Chincogan comes to mind. It is decided that this painting should stay with Lisa in the hospital.

'Columbus Day. 5OO years since the discovery of the New World. I sit in the courtyard and watch the full moon. Smoke a rollie. Listen to Paris Texas. On my dictaphone. I am haunted. Luis the young guy who works at the pensione walks around with a hose filling up containers with water. He has stripped down to the waist and is wearing green military pants. I guess his age to be somewhere in the early twenties. Luis walks over and sits down beside me; he is intrigued by my non-filter cigarette.

The DRUM pouch is displayed. "*Cigarillos para Norte Americano.*" Another cigarette is rolled. Luis coughs after the first drag.

"*Fuete.*" Luis says no more. It is well understood that my Spanish is poor. The tobacco is very strong for him. Luis rubs his leg. Stands up. Kicks the air. Rubs his leg again. Luis explains that he had hurt it at his kickboxing class. I turn the tape around as Luis sits back down.

"*Americano* music." I state.

Luis listens with interest and makes a favourable remark when *Cancion Mixteca* comes on.

I tried to explain that this was my second visit to Nicaragua. "*Siete anos*…ago…" I did a back flip with my palm. "Sandinista *muy fuerte*…very strong…" A reference to the past.

Luis does not say anything. We listen to the lingering serenade and smoke the last of our rollies.

A trip to the bathroom. As the flush button is pressed the photos that were examined in the morning are looked at again; it is wondered by this wary spectator if a soul may remain trapped in such moments of time or keep moving along with the present. Going out to the balcony. Eyeing the sea. Sitting down to read about people attempting to involve themselves in normal pastimes: playing bingo; watching quiz shows; attending a street carnival. As the sunlight floods over the reader he feels like a god on Mount Olympus.

This god is bored, flicks ahead. Is about to finish with Hades when it further draws him in: Jerome's Day on the Atlantic Coast.

'...devils were running down the muddy street. The heavy rain was not deterring them. Intrigued by the gradually increasing numbers of demons I walked down to the main intersection of Bluefields. Many young men were dressed as old women wearing dresses that came down to their feet and sprawling over large behinds. These men were also wearing colourful face masks and carrying long sticks in their hands. From the intersection the road inclined gradually until it reached the market sheds which were beside the wharves. To the right on this last stretch of the road was a restaurant bar which was filled with 'old women' and blaring Carib music. A crowd of spectators was building up and hovering over Bluefields was a grey sky spitting water drops. I stood beside the women selling bread on a

corner and watched the 'old women' who were coming out of the shop. They were running up to the young girls in the crowd and hitting them with their sticks. Amongst these 'old women' was the one wearing the dress of the U.S. flag. The crowd, filled with trumpeters, drummers and men shooting off skyrockets which they were holding in their hands, started to venture down past the wooden buildings of the main street of Bluefields. I looked over from where I stood beside the restaurant bar and noticed the lone 'old woman' who was tightly gripping his stick and standing to one side of the large stone warehouse which was behind him. Along the front of the warehouse was the name SOMOZA with the part of where the Z of the stone lettering broken away. I thought of the ex-dictator, of the past contra war and of the old woman whose body was covered by the United States flag and who had resumed striking several spectators...'

The god thinks he really must stop as he goes inside. However, he reads a few pages back:

STALINGRAD.
I saw this large headline across the top of a *der spiegel* magazine in a newspaper rack in the Intercontinental Hotel Managua. I flicked through the magazine very quickly before putting it back. The title brought to mind images of defeat, retreat and death. This day I would be reminded of defeat, retreat and –

Divine concern. A sudden glance at the bedroom. *'That walk to the beach after meeting Blue. This underworld is also Lisa's world.'*

merida, november…

Marilyn. I was awake. We would meet at the *Louvre*...I lifted my body...*Cafe* for breakfast. Names are like icons. Monroe. I walked towards the escalator. Paris. I descended...

"Ooooooh not Marilyn Monroe!" Marilyn smiled at Mr. Castro. The hostel proprietor placed two fingers on either side of his cigarette and lifted it from his mouth. "Your first name is the same." He smiled cheekily.

"Now you know where I stay." We bid Mr Castro farewell and walked out onto the sunny street. Marilyn had been to Vietnam. I had visited Cambodia. I remarked how I had met two French lawyers at Ankor Wat.

"One of them was returning to the surroundings of his childhood. His father had been a diplomat. You say in France there is a fascination with many people to revisit Indochina? You are pleased with the French defeat? I once met an American who had seen the crosses at Dien Phen Phu. You crawled through the small VC tunnels which were dug underneath the American bases? The guerrillas would slit the throats of sleeping soldiers? You were with an Australian who shone his torch on the cockroaches which lined the ceiling of the tunnel. He was naughty! You say?"

"In war everyone is naughty." remarked Marilyn.

"A Vietnamese woman asked you to take a picture of her with her daughter? You will send the woman a blow up of the photograph? She told you her back was burnt by napalm when she was a child? Yes, it is very tragic the scars on their bodies. Look at that house."

Marilyn eyed the colonial mansion across the road.

"Yes, that one, it reminds me of a similar building in Phnom Penh. You say the Vietnamese told you they preferred the French to the Americans? In Phnom Penh the elder restaurant owners had such polite European manners. They spoke impeccable French. In the restaurants the cuisines were French. I remember one night we had *soufflé*. I wonder if the Khmer Rouge would have killed these restaurant owners over *soufflé*? You want to learn Esperanto so you can stay with a Vietnamese family? There is a Vietnamese man in Ho Chin Minh City who can speak Esperanto? Esperanto speakers will help other Esperanto speakers? You speak five languages? In Vientiane I met an old Laotian woman who could speak English, French and Russian."

We came to a large roundabout with a wide circle encompassing a monument which was in the centre and shaped as an arch.

"I have seen something similar in Phnom Penh," I muttered. "You say the road has been modelled to look like the Champ Elyees? Walking in this city and speaking to you I do feel I am in Paris."

Caterina awakes.

"Sleeping beauty arises!" announces Rosie.

"That sun is strong!" exclaims the resurrected. "Is it nearly sunset?"

"Not quite," Michael replies. "Although it is late afternoon."

Caterina stretches out her arms and yawns. "Well I guess we should go soon. I need to give Isabella her supper. Have you two had a good talk then?"

"No! We've been reading!" states Rosie. "It's been a very meditative afternoon."

"Good thing I didn't join you!" Caterina points to her forehead. "This *latino* has a headache!"

"According to Brian Castro Athena sprung from the head of Zeus. Maybe you're related 'dear goddess'!" Rosie faces Michael. "So what is keeping the Achaean warrior bemused?"

The folder is held up. "Nicaragua, Cuba, Mexico…" it is tossed over to Caterina. "There's one story about a young French woman nicknamed Marilyn Monroe. A cigar-smoking hotel owner is a Mr. Castro. It's set in Merida which is in the Yucatan. Marilyn talks about the Champs Elyees, Esperanto, the Viet Cong while having her breakfasts in the Louvre Café…who says war *is* very naughty!"

"Michael! Make me a *very* strong coffee!"

"Sure thing *maestro*!"

"*Mucho gracias companero*!" Caterina goes to the bedroom. A moment later the children are giggling: they are being tickled.

"Let's have a quick *fiesta*!" Rosie jumps up from her chair and goes out onto the balcony to tap dance.

Michael puts on some gypsy music by a Sydney band called Masala as the others join Rosie.

"Kalashnikov!" Caterina shouts the lyrics. She is dancing with Rosie as the children clap and bop between and around the grown-ups. The host comes out holding a tray with three small glasses of Tia Maria, two orange juices, a fresh brew of tea and a coffee.

"HAPPY BIRTHDAY MELISSA! HIP HIP HOORAY! HIP HIP HOORAY!"

White Dream

Both women and child are sweating profusely as they each give Melissa a big hug on this special day.

"Wave bye-bye Melissa! Wave bye-bye!" Michael and Melissa watch the others go before getting into the car.

"Everything comfortable Melissa?" Michael asks the guest-of-honour after she is strapped into the baby seat.

The day is fast coming to its end which means large traffic snarls have formed as hundreds of cars leave Bondi. This heavy traffic is worse along all the approaches to the city and as Michael crawls down Oxford Street, in the bumper-to-bumper traffic, it is unimaginable to him that in the morning it had only taken a few minutes to make the same run. Whizzing down the road with a sixties Ford Falcon beside him. The other car crushed a white foam box, throwing up hundreds of small white bits that went across Michael's windscreen. Whiteout. This 'snowstorm' enhanced the morning memory as a dream.

Ariel

A rare parking spot alongside Victoria Barracks. Michael grabs it. "The Good Lord has blessed us." Michael says sardonically. "Melissa we're goin' to surprise your mum! I'll take you home later!" He takes the pram out of the boot. After crossing the road at the lights at Ariel bookshop Michael walks into this brightly lit large store. He had vaguely intended to buy a birthday card for Lisa and now it was possible.

A Beat Man For A Beat World

A glance at a biography on Jack Kerouac.

For inspiration he would go down in the dead of night like some blind Homer to the Californian beach and as if tapping into the heartbeat of the universe would listen to the rhythms of the sea.

The Flying Nun

At the card rack Michael is surprised to see a card which shows men dressed as nuns in a park. On the Nicaraguan night there had been a similar group. In the background is one nun who appears to be flying.

The Birthday Card

A William Morris card is picked out. "Your mum will appreciate this intricate design.

U.N.C.L.E

"I've got to go to the toilet Melissa." Michael walks into the Albury hotel but wonders if it is a good idea to be in here with Melissa. Yet as he turns around someone from the back bar calls out.

"Michel-angelo!"

"Virgil!"

"Come over and have a drink! I'm far too comfortable to move! Come! Who do you have there – a *reproduction* by you! I've been sitting here on my *lonesome* waiting for *any* friend to come by as well as for the entertainment. The most *exquisite* singer performs here *magnificently* here every Sunday night – have you ever seen him?"

"Yeah, he's pretty good but it was a while back."

"He sings *all* the classics!" Virgil taps his spirits glass on the table. "He'd be a true hit on Red Faces! Did I tell you that Hey Hey It's Saturday is my *other* favourite show? I *never* go out before nine on a Saturday night!"

Michael realises he is with another abandoned king. "Looks like you haven't been home yet-"

"I've taped Countdown! I adore Molly! Another classic! Talking of classics I've never forgotten the night when I met you and Dan at the Hopetoun! Well, I assume the little one is *yours*?"

"Actually Virgil," Michael smirks, "she's Dan's…"

Virgil raises his eyebrows, smiles. "Well, *well* isn't life just full of surprising twists and *turns*!"

"Yeah." agrees Michael. "You could definitely say that. You just never know what's around the corner." Michael stands up. "Virgil, can you do me a favour? I'm busting to go to the toilet. Reckon you could mind Melissa – that's the kid's name – while I go? I don't think it is good to take her in the Mens."

"Of course! Of course!" obliges Virgil. "I'll keep her right by my side. Would…" Virgil looks at the child.

"Melissa."

"Would Melissa like a juice – or perhaps a glass of milk? I have some experience in this sort of thing. My sister says I'm a wonderful U.N.C.L.E - *UNCLE*!"

"Well mate I better go." Michael takes only three steps before Melissa starts crying.

"She is rather attached to you," surmises Virgil. "Or should I say: rather *unattached* to me!"

"Maybe you can come with me and keep an eye on her…"

"I'll have to get someone to keep an eye on this table." explains Virgil. "I do not want to lose this *prime* position!" Virgil calls at the barman. "*Garcon! Garcon!* Place a reserve sign on this table while my friend and I take this cherub on a brief journey to those waters which stream beneath us!" Virgil stands up, stumbles a little as he is handed a RESERVE sign to put on the table. "Many thanks!" He bows and signals to the other two to follow him. At the toilet Virgil holds Melissa's hand as Michael occupies the urinal. Melissa casts her eyes onto Michael's back as Virgil pulls faces at her. "*I* should get a spot on Red Faces!" He claims as the trio amble back to the table.

"Yeah, I reckon you'd do better than the gong!" laughs Michael.

Virgil looks at his watch. "It is a little early to be here so I'm thankful the gods have brought you along to keep me company."

"Yeah well Virgil I can only stay for one quick drink. I've got Melissa to worry about."

"I agree! You may leave now if you like! I'm a big boy! *Very* big!"

"Na, na…it's okay." Michael gets out his wallet.

"No. NO! I'm very happy to pay!" Virgil goes off to buy a round of drinks; this includes a glass of milk for Melissa. He quickly returns. "Here you are *madam*! You Michelangelo: enjoy your beer!"

"Ta," Michael has a sip. Melissa, who also sits by the table, does the same.

"Okay…I was going to ask you: do you ever see Dan these days?" inquires Michael.

"Very rarely my good friend!" Virgil eyes the child and quickly surmises that she also rarely sees her father.

"He's got that hardware business now." states Michael.

"Our Dan has become a member of the *petit bourgeoisie*! Very petty! I saw him about two months ago in the foyer of the Academy Twin. After seeing Smoke – which has Harvey Keitel. A most consummate actor. Dan was there to see Kurosawa's Dreams. I was introduced to his new wife who loves to see 'arty films'. He informed me of his growing business and of the benefits of living in the leafy urbanity of the suburban red brick *milieu*. Oh yes our Dan is now a very successful man!" Virgil looks at Melissa. "Perhaps, *too* successful!"

"He's good with her. He sends money to the mother – especially when it comes to medical expenses. He just doesn't want anything to do with the mother or *his* daughter."

Virgil looks sadly at Melissa. "Satan, at last take pity on our pain!" Crosses his heart. "So says Baudeliere! Heaven's rebel would understand this poor child's rejection by her *papa*! "

Michael smiles. "My father 'advises' that what happened to the prodigal son shows that the father should always be listened too; yet, I liked what you just said-"

"Milton thinks the same." confides Virgil.

"Kazantzakis reckoned Satan was the original prodigal son. God the ever patient loving father will accept the devil if he repents."

Virgil lifts his glass. "*Touche!* What a wonderful twist on the Last Judgement! There's hope for us all! It's become an absolute delight to see you again!"

Michael finishes off his schooner. "Sadly, we have to go…"

"Well exit! Stage left! Ahoy! Look outside the doorway now – a Sydney Odysseus!" A thin, bearded homeless man with a walking stick and wearing a grey raincoat and floppy weathered storm cap is walking by.

"Oh! HELLO! *Another* friend!" exclaims Virgil. "Anthony!"

"Hello Virgil." A tall man sits down.

"Meet 'Michelangelo' and his dear 'niece' Melissa!"

"We were just leaving mate…"

"Michael - this is the man who saw that mad woman outside Kinselas!"

"Is that right?" Michael looks down then at Melissa to disguise his intention. "Virgil we're off!" He shakes Virgil's hand. Quickly leaves.

"Great to see you again!" shouts Virgil who then displays a large smile.

"Likewise!"

Karma

Outside the Albury Michael is about to put Melissa in the pram when he notices a book on a blanket.

John Fante's *Wait Until Spring Bandini*. "Fante…*D*ante." mutters Michael. The rough texture of the front cover of this Black Sparrow Press publication is softly rubbed. He understands why Melissa has 'procured it.'

"We better return this Melissa. It could be bad karma for us otherwise…"

There are two women at the counter. One woman has long black hair with a very calm expression on her white soft smooth face.

Quiet and angelic.

The angel smiles at Melissa, who happily giggles.

The other woman with shoulder length blonde hair cheerfully smiles. Her face is slightly reddish from the sun.

Jumpy, extrovert.

There is an obvious contrast between these two personalities, as they stand side-by-side. To Michael each woman represents, respectively, the inner and outer forces of life.

"Excuse me I have a book to return. Somehow I left the shop with it by accident and the alarm did not go off." The book is handed over. The angel appears impressed by this display of honesty. The other woman equally so, then says: "There are no accidents."

Art Imitates Life

Michael hurriedly goes to a grocery pass the hospital to buy a few Turkish Delights for Lisa.

Outside a café a film crew is shooting a scene of a man helping a fallen woman on the road. "Oh Lisa! What's happened! What are you all staring at?" The actor shouts at the extras walking by.

Michael is unnerved and quickly heads back to the hospital after his purchase.

Lisa's Hand

"Hello gorgeous! What a pleasant surprise! Have you had a great birthday!" the delighted mother rubs her face in Melissa's still sandy hair.

"She's had a good day. I just got a couple of books for her up at Ariel." Michael opens the shopping bag. "Here's Maisy at School and Dr. Seuss's Green Eggs and Ham."

"Thanks so much Mick. Everyone's got her the nicest presents."

"We stayed at the beach for awhile then Caterina, Rosie, Isabella and us two had a little party at the flat."

"Sounds good!" Lisa smiles. Yet Michael can sense she is fatigued. "Margaret wanted to take me down to Una's for dinner but I told her I was happy just to stay in bed eat the hospital grub. She was disappointed so it was decided that when everyone comes in for my birthday we'll go there for a meal."

"Sauerkraut for your birthday!"

"Margaret must think it'll beef me up – like her!"

"I know I'm a few days early but I also bought you a book and I have one from Cat."

Michael hands over Marcus Aurielius's Book of Meditations and Carson McCuller's The Ballad of a Sad Cafe.

A kiss on the cheek. "You're very generous today Mick! So is Cat!"

"Yeah well, as for me I can afford it. I've been working steady. Anyhow, I reckon you'll really like the meditations. It'll be easy enough to read one everyday. It's from Cat. He also gave a copy to me once. I know you've read The Heart is a Lonely Hunter so I know you'll also like this McCuller. I also got you a card."

Lisa frowns.

"Something wrong?"

"The card's really nice Michael. I'm grateful…it's just-" Lisa drops the William Morris. "I'm upset that I can't do anything like *this* anymore." She is looking at the card as it lies on the bed.

"I don't understand…"

"It's my hand." Lisa slowly raises her right hand then lowers it. "I've been losing movement in my fingers. I can't hold anything properly. My *writing* hand…Mick. Why does it have to be *that* hand? It's such a pity. I was hoping to design something for Melissa. To remember me by." Lisa is exhausted.

Dreamtime

Melissa is on the floor playing with one of the toys she was given while her mother drifts to sleep. Michael sits still. Watches Lisa.

The television is on. The news finishes. A show about great moments from previous rugby league finals. Terry Lamb under the posts rallying his men to hold the line against a determined Canberra. Michael is stunned, relives the

moment when a last minute victory was threatened. Then the fairy tale ending with the field goal. He is tearful. Lisa sleeps. While there is life there's hope.

Lisa stirs.

"Hey Mick, you and Melissa still here?" The soft voice asks. "That's nice…turn the tele off. The switch is over there…the footie is too noisy…I'm not really into it. I know you like it but I don't want to watch…"

"No probs Lisa." Hesitation. "You know Lisa…you can still do a design. Do you remember that batik I brought back from Central Australia? The one with all the flowing lines…"

"Yeah…I know it…very beautiful…" whispers Lisa.

"How about I bring it in and you can use it to help you to do a picture with your left hand?"

"If you say so Mick…" Lisa drifts.

"I think mum's gone off somewhere for the night Melissa. It's time to go home. Give mum a kiss on the cheek. That's it."

Melissa is driven to Margaret. After having a long cuppa, with her and Master, Michael drives back to Bronte.

Havana

A long day but still a restlessness. Thus the short stories are taken to the balcony, to once more flick through them.

Bongo drums. The beat comes from the beach.

A tall, lean Afro-Cuban man with a flat-top haircut asks me for the time; I give it and then end up in his place. A blackout, so candles are lit. The darkness illuminates this tall, wiry man who speaks Creole English, taught to him by his great-aunt. Thus the family does not understand what is being said, the wife the grandparents walk about, prepare dinner. It feels like sitting on a dream stage as the host explains it is his daughter's birthday; she is turning one, shares it with Havana's own founding day. In this inextricable way the destiny of a city is seen in the fortunes of a child. He needs help to organise a party. The monthly ration books do not offer enough provisions. I also obtain extra food for the family everyday at the big tourist hotels where you can have a buffet breakfast for only $US3. I stuff my pockets with food such as boiled eggs. The grandmother chooses to show the voodoo dolls behind a door. Black market rum. A black market cake are stealthily organised during the week. Socks with wings for the birthday girl are bought at a U.S. dollar shop. At last in the alleyway outside the house the party proceeds with the neighbourhood children. The neighbourhood gossip asks: is the stranger an angel from heaven? A boat piñata is smashed. A shower of sweets and presents. Reggae music, dancing, voodoo rituals in the late evening,(including touching a wooden cross in a glass of water, surounded by other glasses of water a fingertip dipped into each one then touching the cross; placing an ash cross on the father's forehead). The smiling father with his wife beside him proudly holds up his baby birthday girl. Her winged socks a brilliant white. A Caribbean Holy Family.

The bongo rhythm is louder.

I followed the other two up the dark stairwell of a building which looked bombed out in its appearance. The small dark room which we entered was crowded with young Afro-Cubans who danced to a Marley beat and who smiled when they shook my hand and offered me rum and we gave out our Marlboros and I was called brother and I saw the DJs to my left with their record player perched on a window sill and everyone was happy and slowly getting drunk and a female grabbed me by the arm and I drank my rum and looked around at the ragged darkness and I danced with her as she caressed my legs with her knees and caressed my groin and we jived to the beat and the music was fast and I saw the happy quivering figures around me and we were all draped by the dark and behind were the guys sitting on the stairwell rail and offering me more rum and politely asking for another Marlboro and smiling and the woman caressed me harder and the music was getting faster and everyone was dancing in this tiny space and her knees were rubbing faster and her face was near my face and the beat was beating and people were saying be happy do not worry be happy and smiling and drinking and rubbing and everything was easy and the beat and the beat was easing and the female stood still in her stupor and another female took her to another dark space and I saw the crowd come like a circle around the guy with the huge cone and I had a Marlboro while I saw the guy get on his knees and the beat the beat the beat was picking up and the air was hot and the grass was burning and sucking and being passed around the tiny dance floor and a tall guy smiled and I told him from where I was and who I was and who was he and a name was given and the Marlboro was given and the rum was given and the air was hot and I was hot and I wanted to breathe and I said goodbye to feel the breeze as I walked down to the ground to the earth waiting for me and the sea lurching in towards the promenade and the tall guy stood before me with his legs spread apart and his arms outstretched holding a bottle of rum and he smiled at me with his quick white smile and the breeze was sending ripples across his white shirt and he was lingering with the breeze and he called me brother as he covered the width and the breadth of everything I could see with his crisscrossing posture while I passed him by and went away and go away into the darkness of a side street).

The drums beat and beat.

A young American-Latino businessman on the plane from Merida has given me a lift in a taxi into Havana from the airport. I wait for him outside an office before we will go downtown to where I have booked at a pensione called the Carribean. A car pulls up beside me, a young tourist couple complain it is hard to find gas. The woman croons she is from Hollywood, claims it's the centre of everything; is really surprised that this island, which is so near to the land of plenty, feels so marooned, as if on the furthest edge. It is giving her much older boyfriend a migraine.

'There's fire below, the sand must be burning.'

The drums sound louder.

At last I approached the narrow streets of Old Havana. A large crowd filled up the cobble-stoned square in front of the Cathedral. I could hear classical music and stood up onto a railing fence mounted into a small brick wall. In front of the church there was a ballet performance with three male dancers strutting behind a female dancer beside an orchestra. I had a good view of the crowd and down beside me I watched several men dressed in elegant summery nightclub clothes gracefully holding each other; families were mingling pass the cafes and the whole scenario reminded me, that despite the economic severities ravaging this island, the people could find through their culture their dignity and pride. The performance stopped. After the handclapping people moved towards a building at the other end of the square; there was an equally large crowd and I realised, as midnight approached, the handing of the keys of the city was to be performed. Havana was commemorating her birthday. Midnight passed and people were in good spirits. After the ceremony the crowd dispersed. As I ambled back towards the Caribbean Hotel I noticed two men who overtook me, both men were wearing overcoats and snuggled underneath their left arms were two small violin cases. The silhouettes of the two musicians stood out against the yellow light and framed by the narrow street seemed to capture the forties feel of Old Havana. "This is Cuba," I quietly remarked.

The beat hovers over all of Bronte.

'I walk down to the park where a large feral crowd is dancing to the bongo drums. A fire show. Prometheus, who stole fire from the gods and gave it as a present to humanity (a gift which became the crux of civilisation), is chained to a Carpathian rock. His liver is eaten everyday by an eagle. The crowd cheers when Herakles finally saves this hero of the human race. I feel guilty for Lisa's body wastes away. A full moon shines above the headland. A burly Mayan woman had invited Gregor and a friend to board her enormous ferris wheel and travel to the moon. This magic realism offers me a hopeful glimpse of the durability of our imaginations. There, on the beach, an effigy of a large weeping Spanish horse. A grey cloud, then the moon shines again. The crowd cheers. I walk away to escape the noise. A recollection of a painting of stick-like beings with square heads in a no-man's land of white outlined brown hills. Moonwalkers stripped of personality. Yet strangely serene. I kneel, feel the sand. Serene is the Roman word for moon. A round stony face with two holes for eyes eclipses this celestial ibis, a slither of white crescent emerges from the side of this granite head, the universe lying in submission to the human intellect. The galaxies may guide our souls, enter into them, but the cosmos is only a ladder. I walk home. Yawn. Yes its been a long day, so much has happened, its time to sleep, yes and yes again, its time to take everything I've seen in to that inner heaven, yes and yes again to the sanctuary of the subconscious.

ETERNITY

The Motion of the Stars

Transfiguration

'I hadn't written back. She had sent the letter from Rome that I had expected and a postcard from Canakkle from Turkey where she had visited Troy and Gallipoli. Yet all I can think of now is of the photo in front of me. There is Belle with 'Dave' by the Ganges. The two of them are stuck on the noticeboard. Gregor had not thought to take it off before my arrival at the party. It seems like so many years since that parcel from Varanasi had arrived and in all that time I had not replied; and now I'm bitterly glad. It has been like a sort of self-exile that I have placed on both of us and I know like in the tradition of medieval cities that to return to the place where the exile is sentenced means death.

Absence.

Nothingness.

Void.

My body minutely pauses from its internal violent tremor: I suddenly think of Lisa - after all - it has only been a couple of weeks since her death. I walk out from the kitchen to go down a long corridor to the back balcony; I stare at the darkness of the river beyond. I am dressed as a Greek warrior with my improvised black tunic around my waist, VB sword in one hand and real VB in the other wearing my Gods Cowboy t-shirt and cardboard helmet on my head.

I feel ridiculous.

"Hey Mickie boy what have we got here! You're all done up for a good tickle!"

"Shut up Mat! Layoff!"

I turn to see it is my elder cousin, dressed as Hercules who has yelled at a mutual acquaintance who is wearing hot pink Speedos, a crown and holding a trident.

Hercules eyes me and realises I am no longer in a party mood.

"What's up…" Poseidon is smiling. "Hercules defending Odysseus!"

Hercules goes up close up to the sea king, whispers in his ear. "He's upset about something. Really upset. I know…so lay off or he will hit you."

"Okay Herc, okay…"

Hercules walks with me down the sloping backyard with its overgrown grass and huge trees, through a hole in the wire fence to sit behind the sandy shore of Parramatta River. We are in the darkness, we can hear the lap of the water against the shore as we sit ourselves down on a couple of old wooden crates. Behind us is the glare of the party lights, on the balcony way above the gods and angels of heaven are partying.

A sultry, mischievous rain goddess exclaims any sprinkling is because of her.

"Woman is of the Devil!" shouts a male guest dressed in red fez and robes holding his hand up to his forehead like a claw. The males closest to him snigger.

We remain silent, in our underworld. Movement. The ancient sea god has joined us. Sees I am still grief stricken. Yet, strangely, I also feel strong.

My mind has broken.

Passageways open. Release.

My mind is stubborn. This tremendous sorrow forces me to see life anew, transfigured.

(To fear wasting time, of a life wasted. Yes, best to stay good-hearted, not become hard and brittle, to snap easily).

(I yearn for wisdom, to obtain peace of mind and meaning to my life; maybe it is what we all desire).

Behind us on the lawn is a man dressed in black clothes and with a Greek sailors cap. Zeus who is standing on the high wooden porch yells down to him: "Prometheus I give you fire! Entertain us and may man be damned!" The king of the Greek gods throws down two firesticks that the man cleverly catches. He proceeds then to juggle the sticks above him and around him and in such other ways that it appears as if the flames are consuming him. The gods in their drunken fickle state cheer and clap. I wonder if my fate is truly held in the hands of such spoilt gods as these who absentmindly bring me both joy and misery. Whether through boredom or indifference I feel they will surely dispense with my precious life.

Another figure arrives by the beach. The three of us see it is Helen of Troy who now walks along the edge of the water. She looks out at the silhouettes of the many ships sitting quietly on the dark river. I watch her innocently sticking her toes into the slow current and consider the fate of so many thousands of men who have fought and suffered for a woman's love.

Such is the folly of all our thoughts and such is the folly of the gods who urge us to follow such misdirected paths, with promises of paradise to only lead us to the most unmentionable hells.

Fireworks. Blazing worlds above the dark, watery horizon light up and shimmer the faces of both laughing gods and weary men. I can only wonder about those other fireworks so long ago which led me to the time to head up north to see Lisa and Melissa then looking back at the fire juggler I can now only think of those other twirling flames on the night I met Lisa on Taylor Square.

I gaze once more at Helen and remember it was Paris where the last postcard had come from…'

Paris

"I have been waiting for over ten minutes for you," says the stranger who mysteriously appears. "I know you have just come from the new Aboriginal gallery." The man is sitting on a curved stone seat on the bridge which underneath flows a wide river. l can see he is a scrawny figure with pronounced black eyebrows and a hooked nose. He is wearing a white open necked long sleeve shirt and black trousers kept up by a wide brown belt. His black leather shoes have exaggerated pointed tips, around his neck hangs a medallion of some

ancient symbol that I cannot recognise. His hair is jet black but untidily kept and oily.

Physically I easily have this man's measure but there is something about his ruffled demeanour that somehow makes him very threatening. This stranger offers me a Gasgoine.

"Sorry I don't smoke those they're too strong."

"As you please..."

"I've got some rollies."

"I have a light."

I take up the stranger's offer.

The man taps his temple. "Within my mind I could see you so I decided to wait."

"How did you know I was coming?"

"I knew you wouldn't be long." The man smiles. "Tell me," he puffs a large cloud of smoke up to the sky. "What do you believe in?"

"I don't know what you mean..."

"What is it you are searching for...for example do you have faith?"

"Faith in what? Listen mate I'm just your normal Australian suburban boy."

"Ah...you are Australian...it is very far away...do you feel...alone? You are unsure of me but you do not choose to leave."

"I'm just curious."

"Ah...curious of what I have to say...however, I am curious of you. I would like to know what it is you believe in?"

"I've already told you-"

"Do you believe in God, the Devil, the afterlife - what?"

"I dunno." l feel confused. This man is toying with me and it's unclear where this conversation is leading.

"Listen, my friend." The man straightens out his legs. "Everyone has core beliefs which keeps them going on this earth. What are yours?"

"Like what is the meaning of life...?

"Yes, yes this is the sort of thing I mean."

"Sometimes I believe in Fate - the idea of the gods interfering in my life...like now..."

"You think I may be a god?"

"Who are you...?"

"Ah...my friend...you must understand...that for now...I am the one asking the questions." The man smiles and tips his cigarette. "So you believe in Fate. Do the gods do good things for you or bad...what? What exactly do the gods do?"

"In life I don't always feel I am in control..."

"Ah you would like to be in control and the gods stop you. Perhaps they would not feel like gods if they could not toy with you!" The man laughs. "My friend," the man once more puffs on his cigarette, "perhaps I could help you there..."

"How?"

The man laughs again. "You ask another question but for this one I will give you an answer. "The man folds his arms and slightly edges his torso towards me, "let us simply say I have ways and means..."

"Like what...?"

"In good time my friend I will tell you but you must understand something...yes, before I can give you some very useful advice you must understand that what I have to say will come at a cost..." The man holds out his hands in a gesture expressing finality. "After all, we know," the man now points to the ground, "that in this world nothing is free!"

"So you want some money?"

The man laughs once more but this time more loudly. "Oh my friend you truly amuse me, you think I am a beggar? Then I can understand your suspicion. There are many gypsies near here and one can never be too careful. No my friend I do not want anything as trivial as money-"

"What, what then?" I'm beginning to feel a little panicky. I am convinced I'm talking to the Devil.

The stranger smiles then slowly draws on his cigarette. This time the man shows his gleaming white teeth. "My friend," he says casually, "what I want is your very being..."

Michael wakes up in a start. He is laid out on a couch on the back porch. Strong sunrays shower his body. With VB sword in hand this Greek warrior realises he is still at the party.

Hercules sleeps on another couch. Like the aftermath of a battle other 'dying Gauls' are sprawled out in chairs and on the ground. Superbarrio - a Mexican caped crusader - lies sprawled out beside the couch with a wind-up Magilla Gorilla doll on his belly. Next to him is another man dressed up as Zorro. Looking over the balcony: in the backyard can be seen other sleeping gods and warriors, the compost bin decorated as a Darlek with a toilet suction cap stuck to the side. Next to the Darlek a winged god with a winged helmet sitting on and hunched over the bicycle handle bars of Gregor's ride-on-mower. The bicycle which has on its front two small wheels with criss-crossing grass cutting blades in between has jammed up against a rock. Beside it is one of the women of the Three Fates asleep with a a long thread which winds over the ride-on-mower. As Michael looks down at a large crop circle in the backyard he remembers how many gods and angels constantly took turns to ride this contraption around in a vast circle all evening. At one time he had seen Joseph who was wearing his dreamcoat wrestling with the proverbial angel to decide who would have the next go.

Along the wide rail of the balcony is a little toy paratrooper. An inflatable jet plane and an empty whisky bottle lie on the balcony floor below it.

Michael pushes the paratrooper over the edge. The parachute blossoms and so the plastic figure gently floats down to the yard.

The sky is cloudless.

Michael puts on his thongs. Goes inside. Uses the toilet.

Sounds.

The warrior stealthily walks down the long hallway to the living room. A dim mental image of marching down the same path with VB sword in hand; with martial purpose; with the first powerful throbbing chords of the Motorcycle Diaries soundtrack consuming his mind. The door is closed. A memory of laughing faces; strife was smashing his heart; swinging the VB sword. Saved by the goddess Athena, who later caressed him. He opens the door. A couple sleeps in each other's arms on the floor. Poseidon sits on a couch, smoking a spliff, watching a tele-evangelist.

"Hey Mick! You're awake already! Thought you'd be the last person to be up!"

"What do you mean Mat!"

"You mean you don't remember…?"

"All I remember is going down to the river. The fireworks. That fire juggler-"

"How do you feel now?" interrupts Matthew.

"All right." A shrug of the shoulders. "My stomach hurts a bit but that's all. I'll have a cuppa and when Herc wakes up I'll drive home."

"Your head, your head how does it feel?"

"Okay, I'm 'funny' that way."

"Mate, you're funny lots of different ways!" Matthew laughs. "You ended up being the life of the party! After that crying session by the river you came up here and got everyone to do the lambada using that VB sword of yours! When that finished you started stabbing everyone including the football players on the television screen! You were yelling out: go the Socceroos! Lift that African curse! Go John Saffron! GOAAALL!!! The Homeless World Cup in Capetown! Go the Australian Homeless Socceroos! " Swinging an invisble tennis racquet. "Baghdatis! A Greek Cypriot in the Australian Open Final! Running on the spot. Cathy Freeman! Aboriginal Olympic GOLD!!!" A laugh. "You also tried to suck the football players out of the television with the vacuum cleaner! The whole world found out that you'd spotted the great SBS wogball commentator Les Murray at La Vina; you then compared Johnny Warren to the Ancient Greek idea of the hero."

"Which is…?"

"To perform noble acts so the warrior's glory surpasses his total obliteration in death." A grin. "See…I remembered." Laughter. "Later on you laid down underneath these two priestesses that were dressed in black, stabbing their legs with your VB sword while they were dancing. You gave Paris a foul look after he'd come back to shoot one of his fire arrows into the river and then you had a sword fight with him and a few other Trojans. He tripped you up. You were fuming, rubbing your ankle and thankfully – for *you* – that Tina 'goddess' came along and took you down to the backyard…" A smirk. "The last time I saw you Mick was in the kitchen and you were stabbing some guy in a photo. Who's he?"

"I'll tell you later." snaps Michael.

"Okay…okay…Michael. Take it easy…let's not spoil the party mood."

"Sorry matie it's just…this photo's the reason for my 'relapse'." Michael runs his hand through his hair. "I don't remember how I ended up on that couch, as

for everything else…it's like last night passed by in a few seconds…as if time was all destroyed."

Poseidon stares. "You get really philosophical Mick, at the strangest moments."

The Big Sleep

Gregor is asleep beside the sofa. Yet he can still hear sounds; they ripple through his sleep like soundings that measure how deep his mind is submerged in a sea of dreams.

A memory-scape is emerging as a flurry of visions split like atoms to multiply his awareness in a labyrinth of neurotransmitters…*'give you the eternal lake of fire'…[channel switching…laughter…]. 'The world is seen as something which is really monochrome, which is disguised in an illusion of colour the retina makes the world look whole through a spectrum of light waves which register a multitude of sensory fragments which are pieced together to perceive reality as the sum of its many parts. A series of mini-consciousnesses combine to make one consciousness.*

White on white.

To intimate the pre-verbal phase of pure thought, leading to a silence that it is a truth that existed beyond the miniscule gyrations of the universe's first essential motions. Yet the average colour of the present spectrum of the universe is not white but a pale turquoise. Half a billion years after the universe burst into existence there were other violent explosions.

New stars.

Middle aged stars.

Old stars.

Painterly celestial colours floating in the cosmic canvas: blue, yellow, red.

I leave a postcard by Lisa's bed: Study for Painting with White Border; a Kandinsky watercolour with a large wash of green with flow curved brushstrokes of red, yellow and blue-grey hues. (Red, the colour of beauty to the Russian mind). It is explained that abstract art can challenge the eyes to seek out new contours that forces the brain as the mental organ to learn new languages to read new visions.

Human comprehension increases.

Lisa looks at the sky. She appears to desire no contours. Only space.

I see the blue reflected in Lisa's sullen eyes. To the Ancient Greeks it is the colour of death. In the Illiad a Greek warrior dies with 'blue death eyes'.

Lisa's blue eyes.

"Blue was a heavenly hue to this Russian." I remark. "Franz Marc was a German artist friend of Kandinsky's - tragically, Marc died at Verdun - and he painted these blue horses-"

"I want to escape on a wild horse, to be like one of Cat's God's cowboys…"

A sky-blue rider to journey to a cosmic end…I perceive Bellephron's victory…my eyes…may be closed…but I see now how they serve…as periscopes…to my subconscious…yes…memory is a raft…floating…on a sea of forgetfulness…a chimera of orange light flickers through my eyelids…all is

dazzle and noise and chatter…I cannot forget…Lisa who looked out the hospital window…who saw the storm cloud shaped like a flying horse…it drifted pass the blazing sun, to provide shelter…yes, I will wake up to see a blue dome…(my mind will fly…the chimera will be overcome…)…here I am…with Lisa…in a 7 UP store…in Newtown really late…on one really big night…with Michael we'd been to the Cross after going to the Mid-Winter's Dream gig with Cat…a hydra of light…we sat beside the El Alemain fountain as if it was a star that had come down from the night sky…it sparkled behind Lisa who looked as if she was being embraced by the light…a multi-pointed star…we stared at the long arcs of glistening water as the childhood memories snaked out of Michael's mind.

"Yeah I remember when I came up here once as a kid with my cousins. My uncle's idea of a family night out was to take his wife and kids up to Kings Cross for a walk down this strip. We'd look at all these old codgers getting onto the women walking the streets; I never thought they were sex workers. Around here we saw all these U.S. servicemen hanging about this fountain. In my head now they look like dark cut-outs in their khakis in front of an exploding star. At the time it seemed like a strange sight but they must have been on R&R from Indochina. I kinda revered all those young soldiers as I looked at them thinking they were all like Vic Morrow who played that wise sergeant in Combat. I used to like mimicking him when we'd ambush each other in Wolli Creek. Other times in the backyard of the shop we'd play Phantom Agents piling up empty Coca Cola boxes to make home made forts which would protect us from star knives."

Another look at the El Alemain fountain.

"On Sunday mornings I'd watch this Australians at war series and can still see in my mind Stukas dive-bombing the Rats of Tobruk. The poor bastards were sandwiched or sidelined every week in my viewing between Rex 'The Moose' Mossop on Channel Seven's Sportsworld, Frank Hyde and Ron Casey on Controversy Corner on Channel 9 and World Championship Wrestling with Spiro Arion and Mario Milano-"

"Yes, yes," states Cat, "the likes of Killer Kowalski were seen as the archetypes of European masculinity displaying their prowess in the ring to a WASP audience unaware of other European sensibilities such as pasta, cappuccino and classical philosophy!"

"I love it when Perry Keyes sings that Johnny Sattler song and he does that take off of Frank Hyde: It's high! It's long enough! It's straight between the posts!" Michael loudly claps his hands. "It was good to see the old bastard speaking at Town Hall - like some Roman Senator - at that huge rally for South Sydney!" Another clap. "Master was telling me Frank Hyde did a really good rendition of Danny Boy at Henson Park last Saturday. It was the annual running of the Rugby League Frank Hyde Memorial Cup. Oh Danny boy-"

"Stop singing that name!" Lisa stretches out her hand, touches the rushing fountain water then applies a few wet drops to her cheeks to mix them with her tears.

Like Lisa I also looked above to view the electric glow of the city's lights. The galaxies ovulate themselves into existence. Human strength is overcome by the

sovereignty of the universe.

A mass of nebulas collate above me like the billions of corpuscles that collate to create each of us.

As the volume of the universe spreads time follows space as memory follows experience.

A red lantern, hanging from the awning over the back porch, around it are other lanterns, glowing with white lights, stars swaying in the breeze, the red one, a supernova, is above a dawn goddess, who like the great swimmer, was born at sunrise. She takes a blindfold off a hunter from the stars. A red glow hovers over Orion's muscly torso who boasts that his father the water god has granted him the ability to walk on water.

A moonlight goddess, twin sister to the sun god, in virginal dress, holding a set of bow and arrows reels as the hunter lurches forward to fondle her. The huntress viciously stabs Orion with an arrow to the temple, picks up, and clumsily flings a toy plastic scorpion that lands at his feet.

The man-with-the-red-fez spreads his arms out to the glowing red lantern as if it is an enormous sun. "With the rising of the sun man as the hunter of knowledge strives to gain inner sight! Yet the gods, filled with deadly threats and blind terror, are willing to use the very knowledge that humanity aspires to gain, which can create worlds, to destroy this one! Shiva! Apollo! Artemis! Hera! Poseidon! Zeus! Jealousy is a curse! The gods can conspire to destroy each other and also us!" A claw pointed at the moonlight huntress. "Artemis killed Orion!"

I look above the red glow to envisage the hunter with his two dogs: the Great Dog and the Little Dog with Orion's star that is as large as sixty thousand suns; to which the old Greek poet 'saw' Hector being chased by Achilles. (Yes, Sirius following Orion). At the endpoint of the night sky's celestial arc, as Orion sets to dip behind the horizon before the dawn, Canis Major hovers above the stellar giant. Achilles thrusts his lance into Hector's throat. (The dawn brings victory; an ancient tragedy replayed on the heavenly stage after every sunset; the stars revolve on a twirling celestial sphere, despite the revolutions of time the essential dramatic qualities of the human psyche stay the same; only the body dissolves, the spirit hovers upwards, floating as another emblem in the evening sky. The night sparkles a little more brightly with each new death).

Death is always over the horizon.

Michael glances at the enormous 'red sun', then looks at the trees swaying in the wind.

"Having a good perv at the Southern Cross…" slurs Hercules who gently pats his cousin's shoulder. "All those stars will outlast me, outlast everything we have…or will ever have…on this earth…I'm strong…but I won't outlast…the lifespan…of that tree-"

"It's a crucifix for all of us to be nailed on-" Michael grabs a VB can from an ice-packed garbage bin.

"There we may go into the night…" a grim smile from the man-with-the-red-fez who overhears the conversation. "Actually it is Cygnus, the Northern Cross,

shaped as a swan, considered to be Zeus in disguise who in this bird-form raped Leda the Queen of Sparta, has in 'Christian days' been seen as that tree of death; to be poetically transfigured by the likes of Dylan Thomas to become a tree of life, by way of reference to that other 'water-walker.' To me the Southern Cross, as the opposite to its northern counterpart has also been marked by the rise of Christ. After our long journey, after our earthly departure, we can as children of heaven, rest our souls in the bosom of those stars. Dante even had Mount Purgatory positioned in the southern hemisphere to counterbalance hell…-"

"Mt.Chincogan – that was Lisa's Mount Purgatory; she imagined if she ever climbed it she'd go straight to the Dreaming…"

St. Catherine stands nearby. Hercules eyes the ring of light around her head. "I went to the monastery named after her at the foot of Mount Sinai. She was beheaded because of her intelligence and faith yet her spirit lives on in the catherine wheels named after her - think of the Cracker Nights when you saw all that spinning light; this Greek Orthodox monk who I stayed up all night talking too - with this Aussie guy who worked for some Himalayan mountain touring group - reminded us that from the top of mountains we can see all paradises. In the Jordan I saw from the top of Mt. Nebo at dawn the Promised Land stretched out before me…" Hercules is in deep thought.

"Our fathers…always on our backs…" remarks the other sullen Cypriot warrior. A shooting star. It appears to fall into the river. Michael looks madly towards this cosmic sign, points his cardboard sword upwards. "All those years of the milk bar! Hey Milky Way I'm a mate of the Milky Bar Kid!" The heavens make no response. Michael is frustrated, points his fingers at the Southern Cross and pulls the triggers of his imaginary pistols. "Holy Father! Christ's the Milky Bar Kid in the sky!" A mad laugh. "He sacrificed himself to give us freedom!" Looks over at three goddesses who are waiting for Paris; then back at the stars. "The Judgement of Paris! There's no worthy sacrifice without love!"

A goddess of disruption, uninvited to this little gathering, rolls a golden apple in front of Hera, Athena and Aphrodite; upon it is inscribed: who is the fairest?

Paris picks Aphrodite, however this Cypriot goddess of love grabs Helen's arm and pulls her away from her lover - a Greek king - and cheekily flings her at Paris. It looks as if a brawl will ensue between Paris and the Greek, but everyone laughs when Paris trips over a small fluffy toy dinosaur.

"A Trojan Horse!" Michael is bitterly amused. He looks over at Aphrodite, her long brown hair is swept up by a strong breeze. The love she bestowed on mortals swept them to an immeasurable joy, yet Michael has ruefully realised that love, when sullied, can lead to an abominable destiny.

A man with a bull's head appears at the doorway to the back of the house. Holding onto the end he tosses a ball of string onto the porch boards. "Hey all you gods and goddesses! Follow me in! It's time for a line dance!"

"HAH! The GODS all in a row – LINE DANCING!" Yells the man with the red fez. "LET US HAVE A HOLY HO-DOWN!"

Michael picks up the string as Aphrodite, Athena and Hera laughingly walk pass him to go inside the house. I can't help but think of when I saw the Three Sisters with Lisa, Melissa, Michael, Cat and my cousins. We'd been up to Blackheath to see Guvett's Leap and the geological majesty of Horseshoe Bend. Beforehand for Melissa, we had been to the toy train & toy museum at Leura (with all its Barbies!). Afterwards, there was that walk up the main street of Katoomba; going through the entirety of that many-storeyed second hand bookshop, having sticky date cake in the Paragon Café and musing at the Greek mythological figures on the walls. The Three Fates. The string which is used by these mythical women to determine the length of a human life can be compared to the thread used by Theseus to preserve his life in the labyrinth; thread is a symbol of life, yet its length determines the span of life available and this length is determined by the fates, they have the final say, yet we are determined to live, to make deals, negotiate with fate, to be like Penelope who kept spinning thread to fend off fate. Michael had popped into his mother's place to pick up some clothes on the way to visit Lisa in hospital with Margaret, Melissa and I, Margaret had looked at some family photos in the living room examining the faces of some of the older women as if she was looking for someone, I was with Michael who ended up telling off this old Greek bloke who was trying to recruit his mother – and her sewing machine – to work long hours for a pittance. To help him make the huge profit that would allow him to buy more gold chains to wear around his obese neck.

Justice to defeat ill fate.

"He used to call me Antigone…" Lisa whispers in the café. "All she wanted to do was honour her maligned brother. To bury him." A grin. "Funny thing is I first gained my sense of social justice when I did that particular Greek tragedy at school…" A frown at a mangled body. Lisa knows she has to try and honour herself.

The universe is vast. Yet it is not large enough to take in the mental anguish that Lisa has felt, unable to heal this waning body, the cosmos could only bury Lisa, not give her life.

Discord.

Billions of years ago – according to what Australian astrophysicists have shown - light may have travelled at slightly different speeds. The inference is that light may refract through little extra dimensions affecting its speed. Theories are developing that other dimensions with their yet unknown physical properties may exist which are like splinters brought into being the moment the universe was created. Apparently, the speed of light may keep changing as the universe changes in size, as it gets remarkably bigger as the volume of the universe grows; we live in a curved universe, where an unseen reality will always exist, like the unseen reality that lurks within our memory, which unconsciously affects our point-of-view; changing speeds of light, (along with changing refractions of forgetfulness and reminiscence) leads me to think that our perception of physical reality is no longer to be trusted and in the cosmic darkness, which heralds Lisa's spirit, are unknown dimensions that may never

see the light of day. There was that day with Lisa in the car when I bought the paper off Beatrice, that famed old lady, at the Victoria Road turn-off at White Bay. She mentioned as I took my change and the lights turned green that the short film that we had just seen had a shot of an abandoned ferry floating on Blackwattle Bay. She knew a guy who lived on it. It was all she would say as I drove her home. We had been at a friend's place who had devised a video which had these mystical looking reflections of the waterways around the wharves at White Bay. There was a haunting monologue of her voice looking at human desire and loss…we had gone to her place in Rozelle and on the way back had stopped to peer over the back fence of where Belle had used to live. We walked up the laneway beside this old rambling house, with all this rich dark woodwork, Lisa wanted to sight the lush green garden in the little cosy backyard.'

"Looks tranquil, really nice…" I remarked.

"Yeah…it's a peaceful garden…especially on a warm night…"

After so much silence, as the last few bends and turns were to be negotiated before the arrival home, Lisa perked up.

"The sea's like the universe to me…I liked the short film, thank your friend again from me next time you see her…"

(She was here last night, dressed as a mermaid).

"…I've always liked being around water."

(Yes, the cosmos was the sea to Lisa. It was revealed in her drawings. The sketchbooks recently entrusted to me…sketches of rock pools, beach rocks, and the high cliff escarpment in places like Bulli, Stanwell Park, Coledale and Coalcliff.

A rock pool; swirling heavy pencil lines around a foetus shaped outline; within it circles of a thick 8B black. A water cosmos that looks almost carved in the surrounding rock. The title: 'Supernova.'

That drive down to Wollongong to see Master's actor mate perform in a play dealing with those comical first days in kindergarten. All of us staying overnight at his place in North Corrimal, going to the beach in the early morning and then to Minnamurra Rainforest at Jamberoo. To think the whole area had once been so lush. At an exhibition hut were satellite photos of the earth at night dotted with bright white lights of the world's cities. After lunch at Jamberoo pub, which included seeing a bush band, there was the slow drive back to Sydney along the coast road after we had said our final goodbyes at Corrimal. As we reached Sydney it started to rain and everyone was amused when the windscreen wipers wouldn't work and had to use two pieces of string to pull them from side to side. "Stroke! Stroke!" commanded Lisa like the coxswain of a rowing boat. Along the way we visited Wombara Cemetery with Lisa saying how she would like to be buried by the sea. We came across a grave of an Anzac who had died at Gallipoli on May 2nd, 1915.

(Lisa and I had popped into the Three Weeds at Rozelle to have an afternoon drink. We were on our way to a short film night up at Elkington Park. I had remarked that the last time that I had been there was a long while back, on an Anzac Day with Michael, Master and Cat. This one woman behind the bar had

won big in the two-up, she said to everybody that she had never won anything in her life before and so shouted everyone each to one free beer. On the morning of that one-day-of-year I had caught the 3.30 a.m. 423 bus with Michael and Master which was for people going to the Dawn Service. The veterans would always go for free, meeting up with Cat we liked watching the column of taxis taking invalid veterans to the Cenotaph with a beer can on every back seat. Before going to the Three Weeds Master took us to the Hero of Waterloo in the Rocks where we saw these veterans play two-up using genuine pennies and an old blanket for the coins to fall on).

"The poor bastard only lasted a week." uttered Master sadly.

"Too bad life isn't like it is in Flash Nick from Jindavik." remarked Michael. "Anyone who died in that show would come back to life. No one was allowed to really die. All the guys from Aunty Jack were in it." Michael views the whole cemetery. "Hey Death come here and I'll rip your bloody arms off!" We all laughed, including Lisa. She hovered afterwards, alone – except for Melissa who was always by her mother's side - by the beach below the cemetery where she drew her supernova, dipping her bare feet into the surf).

A desire for the sea to swallow her.

Gregor Rewinds his Dream

"The woman beside Lisa in the Newtown 7UP sneezes…the Greek guy…behind the counter…says…when you sneeze…the Devil…leaves you-'

FF to Frida Kahlo

Lisa tugs at the Guatemalan bed spread that I have just lent her and although its many weaved brightly coloured patches contrast sharply with Lisa's yellow-grey, sallow fleshy body, it still helps to contribute a dignified ambience to her immediate surrounds.

"You think I'm obsessed with death these days Gregor?"

"Na…na…Lisa you just spend too much time stuck in this hospital so your mind wanders."

"You ever faced death Gregor?" snaps Lisa.

I pause.

"Hey Lisa he isn't going to say anything!" laughs Michael. "Not about those two bulls that ran over him in the stadium in Pamplona! Or about the night an army helicopter flew right down on him and his mate while they were standing on top of a hotel roof in San Salvador!" Michael looks at Gregor. "Or about the night in Honduras when Gregor was taken off a bus and spreadeagled with the other male campesinos only to smile back at the teenager soldier who had an M1 rifle pointed at his back-"

"My back…" moans Lisa who drops the Frida Kahlo book that I had given to her as a birthday present.

Lisa winces.

Cat picks the book up.

Frida Kahlo's crippled body. Yet, her art is an inspiration.
"Sorry for getting angry…"
I have a good look at the batik sprawled over the wall beside the hospital bed.
"You like it?" asks Lisa.
"It's got a good watery design." I remark.
"Michael brought it in the other day."
Lisa scratches her body. It is a parched hell. Grief. Another look at the batik. It provides a hellish mind with relief. "When I first saw it I swear my body temperature cooled…made me feel serene…" Yes, to this feverish psyche this batik is like living water.
Michael looks sanguine.
A glance at the art book.
The light bulb flickers.
Lisa shudders.
Nightmares still heavily veil the mind. The victim feels as if a wooden stake has been driven through her from the buttocks to the shoulders to increase the torture.
Cat gets up on the stool. "I'll return the Eternal Vision! Otherwise we will dwell in a nocturnal paradise!"
Lisa is breathing a little heavily. "What is happening inside of me is an act of cruelty!"
Blindness. Fear. Pain.
There it is again: the Night.
Light returns.
A calmness. Flicking through the book with one good hand.
"I can do it for you." offers Michael.
"Na, na I want to."
A small black and white photo of the artist is displayed. A white scarf around the head. Hands clasped into each other in the lap. The face is aged, wiser, the eyes strong, determined. The caption reads that she is attending, in her wheelchair, a demonstration on July 2, 1954, which is against the CIA's overthrow of the democratic government of Guatemalan President Jacobo Arbenz Guzman. Suffering from pneumonia, her doctors had ordered she not attend; eleven days later Frida Kahlo was dead.
"She's got a bit of the Mother of God look about her," I comment. "Look at that defiance, her courage. It inspires me. She'd lost her leg by then. Amputated. Lisa looks reassuringly at Frida Kahlo face. "She wasn't scared…" A smile. "Caterina, Isabella, Melissa and Rosie visited me on All Soul's Day. So did your friend Teresa."
"Oh yeah." acknowledges Michael.
"She came separately." affirms Lisa. "The others set up a little altar with incense and a big nice red cloth. Caterina brought in this Madonna picture that had flashing lights around the border! She also had some skeletons and these sugar skulls. We drank a lot of her home-made sangria." Lisa catches her breath. "Caterina told me that in Latino culture death isn't seen as an end but

as something which carries on the life cycle to another kind of life…a new one…I'm not sure what it's meant to be like…" admits Lisa, "…but any other life must be better than this one…" flicks to another page. "Look at her as a deer…all those arrows in her body…that's me all over…"

Michael shuts the book. "LISA! You're the strong-headed woman one minute and the defenceless victim the next! You really frustrate me!"

"Yeah well Mick you lie here day after day and see what it feels like! It's easy for you! Do your visit! Do your duty! Then go and roam where you like," Lisa viciously glances at the hospital window," – out there!"

"We can go for a coffee…" suggests Michael meekly.

"I can't! I CAN'T!" Lisa hits the bed with her fist. "I wish you wouldn't remind me that I CAN'T!" Lisa is tearful. "Oh God…"

Michael is quiet.

Desolation Row

"You want us to leave Lisa?" I inquire.

"No, no…stay…unless you want to go. I like visitors. Even you Mick. I know I'm difficult. Sorry."

"Hey Lisa. You don't have to apologise for anything. You're right. We don't really understand or appreciate what you are going through." I remark.

"You've just got to hang in there!" advises Cat. "Rumble in the Jungle! When I saw that boxer at the Coluzzi on the way to the christening one of the many things I thought about was Muhammad Ali's big fight with George Foreman in Zaire. This puny David was up against a Goliath who Norman Mailer said was like a 'dark forest'. Ali tried his punk tricks in the first round but these only made the great champ madder. Mailer said that from his ringside seat he could see that Ali knew he was in deep trouble; the fear was dripping from his face; realising he didn't have the strength to beat Foreman he had to use his head," Cat taps his temple, "so Ali taunted Foreman: 'Come on George, you can do better…you can do better…' So Ali hung in, absorbing all this pain, yet there was shrewd method in this sheer madness: Ali was using the great man's own strength to tire him out. After surviving punch after punch, it was still Foreman, rather than Ali who wilted. It's incredible what happened: Ali won by a knockout!" Cat waves his two fists in a comic fight pose. "The 'champ' is staggering while 'the greatest' is standing!" Cat lifts up his arms. "Lisa! Don't let no Congo darkness beat you!"

"Don't worry, be happy." Lisa says sarcastically. The atmosphere around her chills.

Nirvana

I fidget. I shiver. Clouds cover the sun. I can really feel the desolation caused by the ordinance of Lisa's bitter outbursts. It is hard. Like frozen ice.

Impenetrable.

Yet to chisel, to break through to reach a softer organic membrane. Flexibility. Movement. Fluid thought. These are three of the more vital signs for life, growth and regeneration.

Sheets of ice. A rocking motion. I am on a train. Outside is a white wasteland. The desolate snow covered plains of Siberia. Travel weary after many months spent in Asia I head westwards to Europe to catch a flight home. I wonder if I can measure with a ruler or lens if on this journey I am strategically advancing or retreating across this vast white plain? In my cabin is a Chinese woman who speaks fluent Russian. She produces from her travel bag several frozen snakes placed in flat plastic trays. The snake woman smiles as she holds up her vipers that can be seen through the clear plastic wrapping.

Frozen serpents for a frozen world.

It is suddenly evening.

I look up at the starry heavens perceiving the universe expanding from its centre like the petals of a lotus flower, straight above me are clusters of dots like the patterns in a silkscreen.

"The Milky Way."

(I search out the conjunctions of the stars to account for a faith in life which can spiritually move me from the absolute nothingness of the pre-creation to the ever continuing light of this universe. A cosmic spectrum which can be transplanted into every human soul: thus my mind desires to discover a passageway to the furies of existence. Yet death can appear to be the mightier empire, for it will swallow up not only me but this very solar system. I think of building a mega-rocket to at least ship the Sistine Ceiling – that monumental fresco of the Creation – to the outer fringes of the galaxy. It has been envisaged that we could travel to a space station by way of an elevator that could span the earth to the stars. A diamond stringed, crystal tower which would relieve us from the earthly minotaurs of our own making.

I equally see Dante, that pilgrim to the inferno, with Beatrice, his heavenly would-be-lover, on a silver metallic Mount Purgatory, escalating towards a shiny Empyrean).

A wheel. Long metal spokes. A twirling centre. Already from our seat, hanging from the rim, we are close enough to stretch out our hands and touch 'la luna'.

A stone temple.

Connecting the mind of humanity with the mind of the stars.

For the sake of every soul the sun was once captured at the dawn of every summer equinox. A celestial gateway for the dead. Yet, today, as these altars erode I ask myself where now do the dead go? The world has lost its co-ordinates, it floats in the universe, having lost its way. I also considered our earth as lost when I walked across a drawbridge over a moat to the Melk Weg, the façade of this high-storied band place in Amsterdam covered in white neon stars, yet I saw above me a true, starry evening, its glory shaming all of us.

(Lisa owned a very old painting of an Amsterdam house; she also had to find her way, like that depressed, home-sick young woman who came from Margaret River, who I met in the hostel while I was reading Bruce Chatwin's Songlines, I advised her to leave Amsterdam, to go home. She did. Wrote to me to say that I had been an angel, her return had saved her life. Yet, Lisa has to be her own angel).

My spine is stiff.

A lack of energy. The universe within me is still. I must offset my body's balance to bring new life back into my legs.

To allow new mind fields to emerge from the centre of my brain. Yes, I understand the tantric belief that the universe needs to be set off balance from its harmonies to re-begin its creation, up to now the existence of the universe had been a mystery having within it equal amounts of matter and anti-matter particles which obliterate each other into the void yet it seems enough residue survives to cause enough of an imbalance in the amount of matter and anti-matter in the cosmos to allow it to continue to exist, humanity survives as a result of this cosmic remainder material. Yet for now my back lacks harmony, my mind feels eroded, energy fields within me wane, Lisa had spoken to me about the premonition of the universe as a point and though some say it will return as a dot to complete its cycle of expansion then degeneration to begin once more its cycle of growth the only dot I perceive will be when all energy dies when all life is absorbed into its dead crust, what will there be for the cosmos to measure itself against?

An immaterial universe is like an image dissolving from a melting film reel. Shinto hell, the grandest image of them all over an August sky, the laws of the universe could now vaporise human beings into the ether. In Philadelphia a photo of a broken round watch in the middle of a square piece of photographic paper, at 11.02 a.m. time stood still, it continues to stand still in this watch, time is broken, human consciousness has been transfigured, we are beheaded, I see a statue of a saint which has been decapitated by the atom, a Shinto heaven blown away by those creative energies of the cosmos which have been destructively released, the tiniest molecules causing monumental levels of devastation, the source of the universe: its primordial atoms which form it, yet may force its destruction when the ALL of the totality of being is split.

Time stopped at 11.02 a.m.

That Spanish prostitute's melting watches…the persistence of memory…that other Spaniard's unfinished painting of prostitutes…when the world's vision started to fragment. A photograph of me beside the Les Demoilesses d' Avignon in MOMA, New York, I think of a hotel room in Panama City, where I spoke in my lilted Spanish to four prostitutes from the Dominican Republic. I met them in the foyer, led me to their room, said they were in love with me, could I take them to the New World? Yet I saw the New World below me in the smashed houses from the recent invasion, in the American Diners, the American dollars, in the hustlers in front of shops wearing wide brimmed straw hats and vests, twirling canes, in the colourful hustle and bustle of the city night life, in the garish colours of the painted buses, the boogie-woogie of Times Square, Cat's great whore always bringing about so many little whores, was 11.02 a.m. the moment when atomic theory ended Lisa's body, when her atoms stopped revolving as her body froze and started to fall apart?

Democracy is prostituted. Prostitutes.

God bless the little children Melissa.

The sparks of life fly from God's hand to Adam's. There is Eve.
Fragments. Fragments of life.
Los Alamos.
Hiroshima.
Nagasaki.
Chernobyl.
Three Mile Island.
Bhopal.
Woomera.
There are negative nirvanas created by humanity.
Like black holes sucking in all life.
Life falls apart.
Life must become whole.
Breathe in.
Breathe out.
Lisa.
(Your spirit could be liberated, to seek out a hopeful avenue to the stars. Stars of life exist in darkness, that black canvas we call the universe sustains living things. Splashes of colour in the night sky. Your pain could become beauty…).
I wondered at 3.00 A.M. of a humid night, on a balcony of that hotel room, like some lost Ancient Greek, how I would travel north to the border, before the end of my visa.
I am cold.
Death stars in the snow.
A little timer would tick away on Russian television screens to see if the volunteer workers cleaning up the radioactive mess at reactor No. 4 would stay within the time limit safely allowed to them: two hundred and forty-two seconds. A clock in this crippled reactor also stopped.
(Again time stilled, this constant death of time by these untimely releases of the energy of the stars, life's forces maligned by us).
Multi-limbed babies. The 'monsters' of this century.
I dimly recall watching James Dean in Rebel Without A Cause when he watched the beginning of the universe whilst on a school excursion to an observatory, the big bang still counts its said by the authorities, it's the way rebels want to end things these days, James Cagney in White Heat sure did know, I like the scene between Humphrey Bogart and Spencer Tracey – the criminal, the priest – who waited for that rebel the Devil at four o'clock after saving the lives of the leper children who sailed off to safety, when the volcano erupted the island blew apart, and the lives of Bogart and Tracey ended, while in 600 A.D. when Krakatau exploded it caused a dark cloud which ended Europe, in these dark ages the Devil that rebel still disturbs the Garden of Eden, just ask the Baptists, the Devil has his reasons…in this garden there is no sign of the Devil. I walk along the main road of the estate and on the vast grounds is a round temple; from inside this rotunda with its classical columns I look out at the autumn golden leaves of the trees that surround the temple and savour the

gold of the sun's life enhancing rays which filter in between the columns to me. This temple to Apollo - who stands beside me in the middle and who also enjoys the sun – well serves its purpose. A bird twitters. (Yes that bird nestled in the roof of the rotunda in Green Park that Lisa could not keep her eyes off). I eventually walk further along the road and take a smaller path that takes me to a large old, rustic gate that has an overhanging brick arch. On top of it is a centaur; I consider it to be Chiron, that wise surgeon, who was a teacher to Achilles, who once healed a damaged ankle of this famed Greek warrior with the bone from a giant, yet could not rescue Achilles from his ultimate tragic fate. It is a great irony that Chiron would become an archer in the sky, for it was another archer who brought down the great Achilles, with an arrow landing in the ankle spot Thetis did not cover with the immortal waters of the Styx, that river which flows between earth and Hades. (I had seen Michael walk down to the river that I envisaged as the moat the ancients believed surrounded the known world. A RiverCat was plying its way to the harbour and I thought of another immensely brave warrior: Pemulwey. He had impeded the colony's supply routes along this river to prove the point that the land was foreign to the invader. The flagship of that invasion was called the Sirius a naming which is an abomination to the life spirit of this ancient star. This river that flows behind the house had become a waterway to Hades for the first river people; the murky vein to a heart of darkness, the slaughter of the innocents; the screams of ghosts in this tranquil spot.

Lisa's stained veins).

The bitter twists of fate.

(An offended Apollo had rained down arrows on the Achaeans at Troy. The sun that shone brightly on the earth also directed Paris's arrow that would kill Achilles. This tremendous solar flare, a grand source of life, could also be a bearer of bitter death in any apocalypse; a fiery quiver filled with sunrays as burning deadly projectiles).

The Russian autumn sun glistened on the centaur and on my body.

(Wastelands prevail in the aftermath of any apocalypse; we need to look for some new way, to find new life, despite the imminence of her sure death this had been Lisa's need).

I left the estate to suddenly feel like Adam expulsed from paradise, sighting fatalistic twists in an urban wilderness: two policemen arrested a skinhead who had a swastika tattooed on the back of his shaved head; on the train back to St. Petersburg young hawkers announced their wares, a sort of theatre of the poor that I had seen in so many impoverished places. (I was reminded of a cheerful Russian merchant who was travelling from Vladivostok to Italy to organize the purchase of goods that he could sell in Siberia. "I am a target for the mafia, not you!" He laughed. "I am competition!") Back in the city an unnoticed historical irony: smiling German sailors, on a NATO goodwill visit, walking down Nevsky-Prospect, the name of the ship on their caps: the Schlwesig-Holstein - the same name as the ship that had fired the first shots of the Second World War off the coast of Danzig…the relics of history…the strained face of the young, thin, black

mustached, black capped, black leather–coated rally organizer who I had met the previous morning…I watched the large red flags unfurl from below the Hermitage's Matisse Room with it's masterly red hues, the flags fluttered in the breeze over the bridges which spanned the Neva, watching these columns starting off from the Aurora, passing the statue of Mars the God of War, going by the Atlas pillars, to end up in the square of the Winter Palace, I felt as if I had been transported back to October 1917, it seemed I was watching the dead cross a bridge of sighs which would take these ghosts from this world to the next, I was a prodigal in a prodigal country looking for lost worlds which could never be returned too, a universe which has imploded cannot expand over some past void, I searched out Rembrandt's prodigal on this sunny day, it was painted when he had been stripped of his wealth to pay off his debts, his last personal, spiritual work, the returning son kneels before his sorrowful grateful elderly father who has placed his hands in an act of forgiveness on the wilted shoulders of his sad son. I kneeled, crossed myself in the Orthodox way in front of this human work with its figures filled with a spiritual light. I found out that during the war such paintings were taken away, to leave only empty frames. The soldiers who aided in this cultural salvation were taken on a special guided tour, as if the masterpieces were still hanging; they commented, asked questions about these 'little nirvanas.'

Tranquillity.

Sunset. A blood red sky. Large white broken eggs disfigured figures chained to spinning torture wheels Eden itself as Hades. These are the human hells we devise for ourselves without the need of any wrathful God.

I seek solitude.

I consider the lilies of Monet's ponds in the Musee de Orange. These soft impressions of serenity were painted in response to the inferno of the trenches; large arcs of vast harmonious canvases encircle me with their peace.

Nirvana.

The Master's Apprentice

"Give you the eternal lake of fire!" The trident is waved towards the television.

"So you're not a true believer Mat?" Michael grins.

"You can be funny Mick," Matthew smirks. "You danced your head off to Highway to Hell last night."

"AC/DC, the Sunnyboys, Radio Birdman, Masters Apprentice…" A smirk. "Midnight Oil, The Hoodoo Gurus, The Divinyls, Ed Keuper, Cold Chisel, Flowers/Icehouse, Matt Finish, Kevin Borich Express, No Fixed Address, Warumpi Band, Bobby McCleod, the Exploding Ovaries, Jim Conway and the Big Wheel, Skyhooks, Mic Conway, Roddy Raydar, Spy vs Spy, The Angels. Nothing better than some choice old fashioned Aussie music. "

"Short Memory suits you right now! If you're not careful Mick you might come back in the next life as the guy inside the big smiling Coke can at the footie!" Matthew laughs. "El Salvador! Everyone had a great time doing the lambada with your sword." This Poseidon grabs the warrior's weapon and holds it above

the floor.

Movie Marathon

"I have to admit I really liked it when that Ricky Martin Cup of Life song came on as well as that Abba video…" states Michael as he eyes a large pile of videos which include: Those Magnificent Men in their Flying Machines, Nell & I, Creature from the Black Lagoon, The Dirty Dozen, Kelly's Heroes, Attack of the Killer Tomatoes, two Gamera movies and some Godzilla films.

Matthew mentions the films strewn beside the television: "An Italian Hercules film, Jason and the Argonauts, Spartacus, Three Hundred Spartans, Ulysses-"

"He's got two Ulysses tapes…" notes Michael.

"Ulysses' Gaze…starring Harvey Keitel…set in the war-torn Balkans and present-day Sarajevo." Matthew continues to study the cover then grins. "Has a Greek director so it's still a bloody Greek tragedy-"

"There was another video with this huge sunray disc-"

"With all those warriors vaporised into white-hot skeletons…?" One other tape is held up. "Lost Atlantis…Maybe that was it…"

Michael rubs his temple. "So that Paris shot a fire arrow into the river…?"

"Yeah, that's right…" A yawn. "He tripped you from behind while you were having a sword fight with three Trojans. You were rubbing your ankle and really fuming at him." A broad smile. "Luckily before you had a chance to throw a punch that Tina spunk dragged you down to the backyard…Athena, Paris…the only thing missing was a Trojan Horse. Yet there is your old car – still spending heaps on it?"

A shrug of the shoulders. "There's always something that needs fixing…at least it's outlasting this place…" Michael rubs his face. A micro-sleep.

Matthew rubs his chin. "Yeah…it's still hard to believe that it's being torn down to make way for more high rise…"

Gregor arises.

Last Exit

I close my eyes.

'The suburbs are our trenches. Sometimes its best to look at life from the point of view of the Anzacs at Gallipoli who invented the trench periscope. I should be more careful when I leave the house; to have a glance at life before taking it on because the snipers like to get you when you least expect it. Like that night I bumped into Lisa. The chaos of the streets'.

Open my eyes.

Cabramatta. At the rail station. A poet friend. Wearing a furry black coat. Who said to me sunglasses are the veil for the western woman. We had been at the BKK shopping mall to have a laksa after reading Dransfield. Kominos. Bakowski. My car was not working. Ticket inspectors. Friday night. Young down and outs. Gossiping. Scabbing cigarettes. Begging for money off the passers-by.

Selby's Last Exit to Brooklyn comes to mind while feeling like Odysseus trapped between law and chaos. The Trojan War continues. A bulky sour face. On her mobile. Is the meal cooking? Has the housework all been done? Taunting a

young well-heeled Asian woman taking too long to produce her weekly'.

A blade flashes. A Trojan warrior is stabbed.

A blink.

'A well dressed man. On the phone. Also talks about dinner. Caterina tells me about him as she rubs her mangled wrists. At La Pena. Dancing to Papalote. Always life. Death with her. First we had been at Reverse Garbage. In the late afternoon. In a large warehouse amongst the ex-army barracks on the grounds of the Addison Rd. Community Centre. Rummaging for materials. To make decorations for Isabella's birthday fiesta.

Large chipboard off cuts. That factory.

Straining my back. Lifting heavy boards. All day. In the inferno heat. In the suffocating air of that large warehouse. Where the light of those summer days could not penetrate.

A dark hell.

Broken only by the artificial light of the canteen. The lunchtime break. Sitting with the Greeks. Silence. Eating meat rissole sandwiches. Made by my mother. On another table were the Arabs. On another table were the Slavs. On another table were the Asians. On another table were these craggy overweight women with handkerchiefs around their heads mournfully spooning their soup. All of us were too tired to speak in any language other than our own. The early morning starts. The hard work. The filthy conditions simply wore us down. Relief would only come at the end of the week when we would patiently wait on the factory floor for our pay cheques. It was always handed over to us in yellow envelopes in which we would diligently count out our cash to make sure we were not short-changed.

The managers in their short sleeve shirts and ties would only leave their air-conditioned clear glassed office to inspect the premises and to make sure no one was slacking off.

I would go to the toilet to spend a few minutes to read my schlock book about Luke the doctor who sailed the Mediterranean Sea. Hidden in the cubicle I could transport my mind to ancient ships cruising an ancient sea. A world which existed two thousand years ago helped me to forget the misery of the day; from the acid smells, from all the squalor.

While in the Underworld this ancient cool hand Luke was my salvation.

On the day before Christmas the factory was mercifully closed for half a day. A party. A beautiful young Arab woman joyously belly danced. We all enjoyed the Lebanese music, the mixed cuisines. We were comrades during the two hours of this festivity which felt like some primal observation to the equinox. To appease. Above us was Ra, the ancient Sun God who could tingle your skin with warm pleasure if at the beach or on a walk; but on the factory floor Ra's authoritive presence was often unwelcome. I sometimes felt we were feeding the furnace of the sun such was the heat sweating drenching my sore back, my sore arms. The sun would warm the steel canopy of a bleak building which reminded us that we were on the outer rim of a social cosmology which made us handle like slaves its raw materials to extend its comfort.

At our expense.
At our discomfort.
At the end of the world, performing Herculean labours, to bring on, to continue a civilisation'.

'Civilisation'

At the end of civilisation will there be rooms filled with people who will be denied their right to sanctuary? A Christmas party at a Jesuit asylum seekers centre where Gregor gives lessons in silkscreen printing cut-out designs onto t-shirts. As I saw the families enjoy the different foods and music and the old games like Twister, amidst the balloons and Christmas lights, I began to understand the meaning of human frailty. Behind each smile was a secret history of fear, pain and loss. A Cambodian man had sighted his actual Khmer Rouge torturer on a factory floor. An El Salvadorian told me that some paramilitaries of the death squads had come to Australia under the guise of being political refugees. In his human rights work he had received death threats from these criminals. "I know of one of Somoza's henchmen who now lives the quiet suburban life." Resurrection. The El Salvadorian had made a return visit to his country; his comrades from the resistance thought he had 'disappeared' so he was greeted as if he had returned from the land of the dead. I had seen 'lands of the dead' with Gregor such as at an inner-city community centre where he did art therapy with groups of mentally ill people; he had done other similar work with refugee children at a hospital respite and with prisoners at Long Bay and at a police boys club I saw young Aboriginal locals painting dots on old chairs; Lisa in the last days found value to her life by picking up her long neglected paint brushes. Yet, for many of the so called 'living dead' they may find no lasting value in this life, something I surmise while having watched the many former addicts make their regular visitations to the methadone clinic across the road. They may have fortunately found new life but as Cat would say there are still too many who still find spiritual solace through an artificial substance. Yet, isn't that really the case for the vast multitudes within a burgeoning cityscape: this vast electronic land of the dead? As I look at the flesh and blood people around me, many with physical and mental scars, I can only hope that one day less credence will be given to this plastic age, where a sense of humanity is obscenely only skin deep, to allow a life inspiring human spirit to breathe freely within the collective compassionate sanctity of far more sane maturing human minds.'

Memory is a Trojan Horse

Yes, I have been at the end of civilization. At the factory Christmas party we celebrated like the Trojans who danced around the gift of the Wooden Horse in supposed victory over
the Greeks. We were relieved the hard work was done, that we could rest for a couple of weeks, but the factory was our Trojan Horse, for although it provided us with a living I knew that the siege between it and us would see

everyone out as invalids or worse - be spewed away. I foresaw my weary body ground down before time. I left.

Yet, a body can fall apart in other ways, like from the inside: on a bus the withered veteran yelled abuse at the Pacific Islander driver; a haunted wraith who also glared at the passengers as demons. (Apparently, Blue had opened up a little after my visit. Europe was still a hidden chamber but on the cruise home Blue told Lisa that he had seen in Indonesia the British use the Japanese as guards; in Singapore locals had killed two hundred Japanese soldiers after the surrender).

Human decay.

Anarchy.

Chaos.

Revolution.

At Glenfield railway station I saw the masses of people on all platforms reach breaking point due to the cancellation of peak hour trains. Young men started to jump onto the tracks to cross over to another platform as it became impossible to move along the crowded overhead bridge. The mass mocked the lone rail announcer who shrilled that this action was illegal and dangerous. Going home; while waiting for an East Hills connection I realised it had already taken me one and a half hours to reach this junction from the Liverpool line on a trip which normally took twenty minutes. As a Campbelltown train came in I saw that it was impossible for anybody to board due to the hundreds of people already packing out the carriages. A lone pregnant woman standing bewildered. I grew tired of reading Dr. Zhivago. I closed the novel and looked once more at the seething frustrated crowds around me and wondered if this sort of bread-and-butter crisis is what compelled people to refuse once and for all the authority of the state? A human mind is like a city-state. It too can breakdown when the nervous system collapses. The mind no longer relies on a lifetime of conditioned stimuli for sustenance. Cultural memory becomes impotent to guide and uphold the living structure that is a human being.

An angry man. Crying. Standing. In front of the bus. Refusing to move. So the bus could not move. Until his ex-girlfriend got off. Which she eventually did. He grasped her, clinging to a past which he refused to believe was now gone. Memory gives us identity but can eat us away when we refuse to move on; may even impede or inhibit human action and human vision. The Wooden Horse was reminiscent of the siege towers which would lower their ramparts to allow their load of warriors to climb over the high walls of

the city they were attacking. My memories besiege me. Crows Nest. At the top of the parking station I was looking at the same view that a journalist on Jason's television was reporting on the fires that encircled Sydney; which consumed the whole coastline at the time I was visiting Lisa and Melissa, not a repeat of history but an echo.

Echo. Helen's other name. Odysseus knew the voices outside the horse did not belong to Penelope, or to Diomedes's wife or to the loved ones of the other warriors that were cramped, sweating together in their carved chamber. Helen,

with a Siren's voice to entice the Greeks to reveal themselves to doom. Deiphobus, the brother of the now slain Paris, had commanded Helen to speak in many voices for he sensed the gift of the Greeks was not all that it seemed.

Illusions.

On the television are other echoes. A Prussian soldier with a spiked helmet walks on water while hanging down from an upside down biplane. History as comedy.

"This room. This house. This world. This universe. This mind is a Trojan Horse!'

//////////////

ooooooo

with water. “You yelling out how Lionel Rose, Tony Mundine were great Aboriginal champs!”

Michael stops pulling the trigger of the large water pistol which he had spotted on the floor. He curiously studies it. There are six chambers which can individually be filled with water. “We’re with a Russian so let’s play Russian Roulette.”

“Yeah well, we’ll go outside.” states Gregor. “I don’t want the carpet to get wet.”

Cato

A grassy hill slopes down to the house. Along the top of this rising slope is a wooden fence with bushes and trees in front of it and which hide the gate that leads out to the street. An old bearded man with long white hair and a round gold halo around his head is standing by a small outcrop halfway down the hill with several other bushes and a tree beside him. This Moses-like figure with his monumental torso holds a cane; glittering amidst the ever-moving shadows in the twilight of this early morning are four silver stars which are painted on his cheeks and forehead. The old man observes a trident god and two ancient warriors fling open the wire door to sit around an outside table. A pistol. The elderly figure groans as the arrivals look up. The silver-haired man lifts his cane and points it to the hilly terrain around him. “Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me.” The old man suddenly thumps the end of his cane into the ground and stridently leans on it. “Thy rod and Thy staff comfort me! I Cato the Roman Stoic commander who in North Africa died by his own hand rather than fall into the clutches of Imperial Caesar am now the guardian to the purgatorial mount.” A clump of loose earth is picked up. “This soil,” which is thrown away, “of this hill – on this Great Southern Land – represents it, above me is the gate which leads to a Higher Universe. In the hellish scape before me I see three men who may never earn the right to pass by my staff. Human Error is as stable to the Human Condition as Human Mortality. Failure to keep the Commandments will lead to our Eternal Crucifixion. The Law Giver only *saw* the Promised Land! Thus I say unto you: only an Eternal Compassion inherent in the Love of the Creative Imagination can bring us Liberty’s Release.” Cat points his staff at Michael. “Examine Thyself! Confront your Fears! Your Pains! Your Regrets!” A golden net. “Avoid the Entrapments set by Soulless Fate! You need not end when the World, the Universe, ends! Draw yourself to the Fisher of Human Souls! To enter into yet Unimaginable Eternities!”

Silence.

A book is drawn out from a pouch. It is held up to the sky. Meditations by Marcus Aurelius. Michael recognises it as the book that Cat had given to Lisa for her birthday. It is read: *“Many of the anxieties that harass you are superfluous: being but creatures of your own fancy, you can rid yourself and expand into an ampler region, letting your thought sweep over the entire universe, contemplating the illimitable tracts of eternity, marking the sifting of*

change in each created thing, and contrasting the brief span between birth and dissolution with the endless aeons that precede the one and the infinity that follows the other. Marcus Aurelius BOOK NINE. Chapter 32." Cat crazily glances at his audience. "Have Mercy on Thyself!" He lies down to have his body disguised by the shadows of the bushes and the tree.

Matthew takes the large water gun from Michael's hand. Points it at Cat. Squeezes the trigger but it is an empty chamber. "Where did you get this Gregor?"

"A few weeks ago while I was up at Rozelle markets while looking for second hand wooden picture frames I came across it."

"Well, it's pretty nifty!" Matthew twirls the pistol chambers. "Let's play scissors, rock, paper to decide who'll go first."

Russian Roulette

Gregor spins the revolver then places it to his head.

Nothing happens.

"Open your eyes Gregor! Open them!" Matthew grabs the pistol, squeezes the trigger. "I live!"

Michael's hair bristles. CLICK.

Nothing happens.

"Gregor's turn!" exclaims Matthew.

Michael's hand is shaking as he gives the gun to Gregor.

CLICK.

Nothing happens.

"Eat your heart out Deerhunter!" exclaims Matthew who passes the pistol on to Michael.

The trigger hand sweats.

"Pull the trigger Mick – pull it!" exhorts Matthew. "It's only a game!"

CLICK.

Nothing happens.

CLICK.

Nothing happens.

"That's it Gregor! That's showing Michael how to do it! My turn! CLICK. It's freezing! I'm dead!"

Matthew wipes away the water dripping around his ear.

"I'll refill it," states Gregor who calmly picks the water pistol up from the ground where Matthew has dropped it.

"Your turn." Matthew directs Michael.

"Spin the barrel," says Gregor dryly.

Michael twirls the barrel of his gun with the full force of his hand. "the wheel of fortune! Who will live-" CLICK. "I'm still alive!" Michael smiles as he hands the gun over to Gregor.

"Is this what Doestovsky felt when he stood in front of that firing squad?" Gregor is pressing the pistol to his temple. "Mother Russia! Oh brother

Russians! God give His grace to our ever-suffering race! Bring me the vodka from the freezer!"

Matthew obliges. Gregor has his shot. Pulls the trigger. CLICK.

Nothing happens.

Michael also has a shot of vodka. CLICK.

Nothing happens.

"Pull the trigger Gregor!" yells Matthew.

"The stars are divine!" shouts Cat who has been aroused. This half crazed shaman walks down to the others and starts circling them. *"Sunlight is all one,"* he reads, *"even when it is broken up by walls, mountains-"*[1]

CLICK.

Nothing happens.

"Without an understanding of the nature of the universe, a man cannot know what he is."[1]

"Pull it Mick! Pull it!" Michael laughs.

CLICK.

Nothing happens.

"Good on ya Mick! You're still in the land of the living!"

"Be like a headland against which the waves break and break: it stands firm, until presently the watery tumult around it subsides once more to rest-" [3]

"Nirvana *is* resolution!" exclaims Gregor.

" How unlucky I am, that this should have happened to me!' By no means; say rather , 'How lucky I am, that it has left me with no bitterness; unshaken by the resent, and undismayed by the future-"[4]

"Come on Gregor!" remonstrates Matthew. "Firmly hold that gun!"

"In the life of a man, his time is but a moment, his being an incessant flux!"[5]Cat slams his staff against a wall. *"The whole universe is change, and life itself is what you deem it."*[6]

Gregor's finger wavers as he resists the forces of the universe.

"Do not be distressed, do not despond or give up in despair, if now and again practice falls short of precept. Return to the attack after each failure, and be thankful if on the whole you can acquit yourself in the majority of cases as a man should-" [7]

"Strength! Gregor strength!" exclaims Matthew.

CLICK.

"You're *also* still with us!"

"One thing hastens into being, another hastens out of it. Even while a thing is in the act of coming into existence, some part of it has already ceases to be flux and change are for ever renewing the fabric of the universe, just as the ceaseless sweep of time is for ever renewing the face of eternity in such a running river," Cat points his staff towards the backyard, *"where there is no firm foothold, what is there for a man to value among all the many things that are racing past him?"*[8]

Michael sees his childhood.

His early teens.

The twenties.

The early thirties-

"A man's life is no more than an inhalation from the air and an exhalation from the blood!"[9]

He cannot breathe.

"There is no true difference between drawing in a single breath, only to emit it again, as we do every instant, and receiving the power to breathe at all as you did but yesterday at your birth, only to yield I back one day to the source from which you drew it."[10]

He wants to breathe.

CLICK.

Breath.

"An arrow travels in one fashion, but the mind in another, even when the mind is feeling its way cautiously and working round a problem from every angle, it is still moving directly onwards and making for its goal.[11]

Cat comes up to Gregor's face as he steadies his hold on to the trigger.

"Reflect often how all life of today is a repetition of the past and observe that it also presages what is to come!"[12]

Cat flings his staff.

The long stick hits the house.

"Live with the gods to live with the gods is to show them all at times a soul contented with their awards, and wholly fulfilling the will of that inward divinity. That particle of himself, which Zeus has given to every man for ruler and guide – mind and reason."[13]

CLICK.

"You're dead Gregor!" announces Matthew.

'A man's true delight is to do the things he was made for. He was made to show goodwill to his kind, to rise above the promptings of his senses, to distinguish appearances from realities, and to pursue the study of universal Nature and her works."[14]

"*I'm still* ALIVE!" Michael bows his head into his hands.

The American Triumph

Cat walks around his friends swinging his right hand in front of him, attempting to catch the air.

"Look back over the past, with its changing empires that rose and fell, and you can foresee the future too. Its pattern will be the same, down to the last detail; for it cannot break step with the steady march of creation. To view the lives of men for forty years or forty thousand is therefore all one; for what more will there be for you to see?"[15]

More catching of thin air.

"We chase the wind!" Cat stares at the others. "Vanity of vanities! When will we ever learn?" Raises his hand.

A vision.

Ajax swivels in his ergonomic chair to look across the stage at Odysseus to grievously consider how this gifted orator may succeed over him in claiming the arms of Achilles.Between these two opposing brothers-in-arms are the two blood brother kings of Argos and Sparta: Agamemnon and Menelaus who would both adjudicate the debate; (the infidelity of Menelaus's wife had caused the Hellenes to go to war; the loyalty of Agamemnon to his jilted brother had him lead the Greeks as one people to fight Troy). In front of these four legendary figures is an amphitheatre in Gregor's backyard, seating ten thousand it is filled to capacity. As Ajax glares at Odysseus he in turn glances up at the audience to sight such celebrated Hellenes as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Thales, Aristophanes, Phidias, Praxiteles, Mnesicles, Democritus, Epicurus, Hesiod, Pisistratus, Cleisthenes, Pericles, Protagoras, Anaxagoras, Damon, Phidias, Jason, Daedelas, Icarus, Diomedes, Hercules, Heraclitus, Zeno, Patroclus, Pindar, Peleus, Euripides, Empedocles, Herodotus, Xenephon, Hippocrates, Thucydides, Oedipus, Solon, Themistocles, Miltiades, Pythagoras, Archimedes, Ptolymy, Philo, Autolycus, Theseus, Minos, Creon, Mentor, Telemachus as well as Leonadis; this fanatical leader of The Three Hundred - who directly traced his family tree back to the gods - is dubbed by his Ithacan observer as 'that Spartan psychotic.' Odysseus then eyes Menalaus.

Many Near Eastern, Egyptian and Roman guests are also in attendance and these include Aeneas, Priam, Memnon, Lacoon, Gilgamesh, Nebuchanezzer, Darius, Ramases II, Ahkeneton, Xerxes, Cyrus, Phillip II, Alexander the Great, Spartacus, David, Solomon, Saul, Samson, Job, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Romulus, Caesar, Scipio, Augustus, Marcus Aurelius, Hadrian, Ulpian, Justinian, Nero, Caligula, Josephus, Romulus, Remus, Cato, Marcellus, Antony, Pompey, Brutus, Trajan, Tiberius, Pliny the Elder and Pliny the Younger, Vitruvius, Sulla, Petronius, Plutarch, Cicero, Seneca, Lucretus, Cassius, Horace, Claudius and Hannibal.

In the press gallery Homer oversees the likes of Ovid and Virgil. 'Those 'Roman stenographers' quips Odysseus as he watches them diligently typing on their laptops.

By Virgil's side is his dear friend Dante Aghilieri for whom he has obtained a V.I.P press pass. To maintain a veneer of egalitarianism the old chieftain Nestor who - as the main promoter of this 'performance' - has divine beings rubbing shoulders with helots. Amid the crowd are Hermes, Atlas, Apollo, Ares, Hades, Thanatos, Helios, Dionysus, Poseidon, Xanthus, Pan, Pluto, Janus, Prometheus and his brother Epimetheus. On the front bench with the well-known wealthy Roman gladiators - who with their stylish sunglasses typify how they have movie star status - sits Uranus with his Titan son Cronus and his grandson Zeus; alongside this almighty thunder god is Hephaestus the Master-smith (who bears a very strong resemblance to Michael's mechanic), it was this crippled god of fire who had forged Achilles armour.

(Unbeknown to Odysseus or to anyone else Athena is also present, disguised as a cloaked beggar, for no female – not even a goddess – is allowed to be in this stadium; keeping Athena company is Antigone and the woman poet Sappho; they

are both in similar ragged apparel and sit on either side of Athena. Sappho, who has hidden pen and paper inside her cloak, will write down her own view of the debate.

As it is Artemis, Hera, Aphrodite, Circe, Calypso and the Amazon Queen Penthesilea with Queen Cleopatra could be seen in the kitchen spitefully gossiping away).

A sort of ancient Empyrean looks down at the stage that is brightly lit with many banks of television lights. This fiery 'discussion' for the armour of Achilles will be beamed throughout the known world and to a once mythic land of giants, recently confirmed to exist across the ocean that lies beyond the Rock of Gibraltar. It is a vast continent filled with white giants that according to the smaller nations have a desire for human flesh that is insatiable. The sailors of any wayward ship, landing on the fertile shores of this far-away land, would loudly cheer thinking they had stumbled onto paradise. Yet greater still would be the howls of the giants who would suddenly emerge from the forests to sweep down on these puny men, to feast to their delight.[*]

By way of an orbiting web of satellites – those glinting metal stars of the heavens – there would be live coverage to these giants; more fearful than any Cyclops yet suspected to be the descendants of them. As the legend goes, it is believed that after Polyphemus was blinded by 'nobody' the other Cyclops implored some malignant god, perhaps it was Hades, that their children be born with two eyes instead of one; that this would ensure them a better chance to deal with the trickery of 'pygmies'. It came to pass that after a posse of Cyclops nearly captured after a posse of Cyclops nearly captured Aeneas, the Trojan prince who would found Rome, this ghastly tribe was inspired to also take the risk to explore unchartered waters; eventually this 'master race' conquered a new continent.

Although now two-eyed these human shaped beasts were still 'one-eyed' in their views as seen by naming their capital: Polyphemus. To these 'new Cyclops' the whole world existed as fodder for their never-satisfied appetites.

However, it was understood that a great civilisation had developed and which mirrored the best and worst aspects of the ancient empires. (Agamemnon reverentially respected the imperial choice of an eagle as the national insignia). An envoy from this 'Atlantic nation' would host the proceedings; silver-haired, tall, lean, smiling and wearing spectacles he was considered to be a smaller, more compatible

version of his bloodthirsty compatriots.

These 'outsiders' had wanted to vote on whom between Ajax and Odysseus deserved the prize, (opinion polls had shown their leaning was towards Ajax). However, it was firmly explained by Greek emissaries that this privilege would be granted to the original Trojan prisoners captured at the time of the siege; as tried and tested enemies they hated all Greeks and would show no favour to either contender, their assured impartiality would guarantee an objective judgement.

These 'judges' sat in the front rows with Zeus. They could eyeball the two

contestants, not like the many thousands who would regularly review a cyberspace Colosseum displaying hostages held by different groups of mercenaries and ideologues.

The B-52s song Planet Claire plays in the background.

"HELLO WORLD!" yells Jerry Simpson into his microphone. "Let the show begin!"

Ajax stands. "Odysseus was a 'latecomer' to the war; he is sly; a thief and a trickster like Sisyphus; unlike myself who always fights under the noon glare of blazing Apollo, 'clever Odysseus' likes to engage with the enemy using the cover of darkness, with no one other than Diomedes to witness his 'acts of courage'."

As the sarcasm continues Odysseus is calm. Eyes a beggar in the front row. Athena. Admires her stealth, understands the goddess is tempering his 'mental heat'.

The Ithacan stands.

One foot is placed well in front of the other, as if to split the asymmetry between divine intervention and human action.

Heavy eyelids.

Thick furrows.

Mentally tough to overcome all obstacles, even those thrown down from heaven.

Michelangelo's David is on a large screen behind the stage: the intellect can achieve a surgical strike on a colossus. Odysseus's words must have the same effect; he looks at the crowd while pointing at Ajax. "Here is a man who relies on brute strength to get his way; an unthinking killing machine easily deceived like the other Hellenes by Zeus's false dream – that occurred in Agamemnon's sleep – to convince all Achaeans to lift the siege and go home."

Warriors acting like puppets in the hands of the gods.

Except for Odysseus.

As the panic-stricken Greeks flocked to their ships to leave, feeling abandoned by fate, it was Odysseus who steadied them to hold their ground, he then steadied a nervous Agamemnon. The Achaeans rallied to protect their vessels and after the likes of Odysseus, Diomedes and Agamemnon lay wounded it was Ajax who inspired the Achaeans to resist as the Trojans swept upon them.

"As to the great actions Ajax achieved on that day he has me to thank!" A frown. "If I had 'come late' to the war it was not from any negligence to do my duty but because of my wife's love that I did not readily depart, after all, Achilles also was not at Troy from the beginning. I brought him to fight, despite all of his mother's efforts to keep him away from the terrors of battle. I also convinced Agamemnon, the father, to sacrifice his daughter, as the gods cruelly demanded, so the winds would rise to let the fleet to go to war."

Odysseus sights Aeschylus in the crowd; this playwright sees things differently and Odysseus knows his point-of-view is the truth: that Agamemnon ultimately preferred a daughter to be killed than have his powerful army inhibited from fighting.

Aeschylus eyes with everyone else on the screen a re-enactment of the sacrifice.

Below Sirius which is shining in the day sky is Lisa wearing a white jumpsuit; she lies on a large stone altar, her body strapped with thick leather belts; turning her head to look straight into the television camera Lisa is hauntingly calm as the blade comes down; the wind begins to blow and long strands of her golden hair rise with the howling tempest; the ships set sail, taking their human cargo to a hostile shore.

Agamemnon is lost in thought: 'Iphigenia's death was vital to impress upon my men the holy importance of this mortal war by being prepared to kill my own daughter to satisfy that vengeful bitch Artemis – who was staying the wind – it took away all choice from them; except the choice to win; they could not risk the dishonour of losing and remaining alive when a mere woman had lost her life – slaughtered like a goat – to further the cause of victory.' Agamemnon shuffles around in his seat. 'Aeschylus sees her as a victim to my military power, dying for the military expediencies of the day. Yet what is one life compared to the worth of a whole army? To the worth of a whole nation?' The manic king looks for the playwright. 'The survival of army and state is paramount…alas…I tricked my sweet daughter to come to me by making her think that she would be marrying Achilles.' The battle-lust that took over at the time of his daughter's ritual murder returns: 'madness, all is madness…' Agamemnon tightly clutches his chair, '…the pain, the sorrow, the hate must all be kept inside…it is a struggle to not leap up in fury.' A hard glance at the screen. 'Why doesn't that woman scream? For the father? Why isn't she dangling like a lamb for the slaughter? Curse her, curse Artemis, Clymnestra, Helen…sluts the lot of them – damn bitches! No, not my dear Iphigeneia, my virgin daughter.' Aeschylus is finally spotted. 'Yes, yes you bastard – you are right: she was killed so my army could go off to save a whore, war is a whore; our nation is a whore; the innocent pay with their lives while the guilty prosper-'

The father shuts his eyes: at a Cypriot village while on some tranquil vacation in the pre-war days; an Arcadia with old men briskly playing backgammon outside a café, drinking coffee beside a charcoal fire, other men watching cowboy videos; a priest whose black robes are majestically bordered by the avocado green door frame of a grocery door; three young men in a sparse room of a nearby house practicing a dance; their legs way up in the air; as if to herald the arrival of a god. This king of Argos stares at an old shepherd with his herd of goats on a grassy hill with straggly olive trees aglow from the warm sunset light, the cursed king listens attentively to the little bells tinkering from the long thin quivering necks of the goats…

With the sacrifice accomplished everyone knows how despair, and folly, and unbridled bravery will prevail; Odysseus, against the panorama of this bitter human tragedy, continues to meditate on Achilles, once the greatest amongst the armies of the living, now the greatest amongst the many slain.

"I influenced Agamemnon to make sure our army would go to Troy. I convinced Achilles to also come: our gleaming beacon who with the arms I gave him killed Hector. I ask what was once mine to be returned. I alone knew their truth worth and the true cost that Achilles would pay for using them! Is Ajax capable of

rightly reading the markings on Achilles shield?" This regal Ithacan points out each inscription on the shield as he mentions it to confirm that the shield represents the universe. A sound boom is lowered so as to catch every word. As Odysseus reaches the end of his exposition he has the audacity to pick up the shield and hover it above his head.

The giants take note as they lounge and fornicate in their living rooms.

"It is the constellation of Sirius where Achilles now reigns and which is splendidly depicted on this mighty shield." It is lowered. "Achilles looks down at us as the brightest star of the Milky Way – 'he is' – marvel at the multitude of tiny dots of celestial light, which stretches across the night sky, like an immense wheat field, to consider the grandest amongst them – 'Achilles heart.'

A Van Gogh painting of a wheat field awash with golden sunlight comes up on the screen behind the stage and on a side screen is Van Gogh's Starry Night, St. Remy.

"Imagine Sirius ablaze on this night canvas; such a celestial body will not decay; this starry furnace is a corpuscle – a nerve transmitter – of the universe's mind; to be connected to this cosmic membrane is to be in touch with eternity. We should hold closely to the memory of Achilles whose invincible mind and spirit is not encompassed by just a single star but by a whole constellation. The priests certainly agree that our 'best armour' is to have our minds tied to this unwithering spiritual conscience."

A newly discovered nebula emerges on the screen with a vast yellow-purple gas halo encircling it; twinkling like a star from Van Gogh's night work.

Odysseus glances at Ajax. "Does this finely tuned, well disciplined human scythe know how to emulate Achilles destiny?" This Ithacan places the shield down but provocatively continues to stand beside the arms. "Ajax is only capable of following orders, not in handing them out. He only knows to move his arm that habitually holds his sword. It is beyond him to move his mind."

Oceanus borders the rim of the shield; it is the crystal clear water that flows between the world and heaven, a 'celestial moat' that has to be crossed to reach the gods. Odysseus points to the nearby river. "Here is the watery horizon of Oceanus, would you trust Ajax to steer any one of you in a boat across to the unknown? Or is he only better suited to row it? What if it was the Styx? If Charon wanted a rest would he entrust his ferry to Ajax?"

Laughter.

Ajax tightly grips his sword hilt. Several bouncers on the stage move towards this proud warrior.

"However, for you to navigate that 'river of hate' would surely suit your foul temperament…" Odysseus sniggers. "THINK before you act oh 'mighty' Ajax! What 'honour' will you bring to yourself and to this debate if you strike me down for simply speaking my mind! For stopping me mid-way through my argument; you wish to stifle free speech simply because it does not suit you?" Odysseus unsheathes his sword and throws it on the stage. "I allowed you the chance to have your say, to slander, to humiliate and to hurl abuse at me! Now let me continue my opportunity to speak to my heart's content! To the full!"

Ajax stays his ground to save face; however, he declines to unsheathe his sword.

"You accuse me with your stony look that I puff myself up with 'untruths'; yet I ask: do you direct your spirit to honour Zeus? You hollow man! A life filled only with vain excuses to stay in existence! What makes you think you are truly worthy to wear this armour, to fight with these arms? What justifies your life? What intellect do you contain? What enables your bronze skull to discern what is truth – as defined by the gods? Wisdom outs deceit, not seek it! Might is right! Is that it Ajax?" sarcastically queries Polyphemus's 'nobody'. "We know that Achilles found truth on the battlefield, that his death was not brought about as a punishment for seeking self-glory but as a result of his willingness to risk his life for all the Hellenes. Sacrifice is a greater virtue than personal gain – Achilles has tragically proven that!"

Homer is sanguine as the speaker sneaks a quick glance towards him. Yes, after the death of Patroculus, his dearest friend, Achilles was madly inspired to again involve himself in the war; he would fight heroically and would bring about the death of Hector to avenge the mighty Trojan's killing of 'dear Patroculus'; yet Achilles – before this onset of righteous rage – had behaved very selfishly: he had churlishly asked Zeus to grant a victory to the Trojans after Agamemnon had taken away Briseis, a female captive of Achilles.

Only Agamemnon takes note of Odysseus looking at Homer. 'Always I had to deal with mean-spirited gods, incurring their surly wrath. I had to return a newly acquired slave: Chryseis, that lovely girl. I loved her well. That damned father of hers, a priest of Apollo pleading to his god for her release when I wouldn't accept his ransom; I knew his grief, had I not too lost a daughter? Had not I accepted the calamity of war? Why not he? That damn god of the sun shooting his fire arrows at my men, for nine long days, so many good soldiers laid to waste, rubbing salt into my wounded pride with the plague, Apollo cries of his humiliation, of my slight to his honour, debased god, was he not my god too? A god also to my men? I returned his damned pussy but not before saving face by taking another prize…that Briseis, she was just as luscious…that greedy Achilles – was I not worthy of some high offering from him – I his Commander-in-Chief? Why was this slave-girl so much more endeared when his true pleasure should have been in pleasing me? That upstart withdrawing his forces over one mere girl! Always claiming that he fought while I unfairly had all the spoils! Why! He calls me a coward when it is Achilles and Zeus who conspired against me! The spoilt brat inspiring our 'holy father' – our 'divine protector' – to lie to me in my sleep! Shame on you Zeus to side with Achilles – this so-called 'saviour' of the Greeks - who was ready to watch us be slaughtered by the ships just to appease his hurt pride! To see to it that we understood how much we really needed him for the final victory! Damn our sulking 'hero'! This brigand with Zeus, like Apollo and like Artemis also: fought me from behind! These two-faced 'gods' stabbing me in the back! At least King Priam – my enemy – abided by the rules of war (more often than not), and slew us from the front! Not so my 'friends'! Not so my dear wife, her lover – who slyly murdered me on my return!

Using my killing of Iphigeneia as her excuse! A sham! Like Troy – bah! A sham victory!' Agamemnon looks ruefully at Homer. 'Yes, I tried to appeal to Achilles after the near debacle by the ships, to excuse my misjudgements on fickle Zeus. I, a victim…all are victims, in war…the rift between Achilles and I had only brought tragedy, worse so for Achilles: the death of Patroculus. Yes, his complaints were founded, (this demi-god who knew he would die, so lived intensely), I offered him Briseis, untouched, by me, such was my remorse – at the time – yet Achilles wish was now only for revenge, to kill Hector – the Trojan was to ultimately pay for our selfish pride. No food sustained Achilles, only nectar and ambrosia, provided by Athena, kept him alive, yet his savage, bitterly twisted hatred consumed his life force – more so than any immortal sustenance. Aeschylus warns us that wisdom comes from tragedy, insufferably forced upon us from the gods, who cynically give us what we want, they know no mortal can resist. What did Zeus do to Ixion who desired Zeus's wife? He gave Ixion his desire in a cloud shaped as Hera, yes; Ixion seduced a cloud to then be tied to a winged wheel to spin through the Underworld for all time. Ajax wants Achilles shield, yet this fateful wheel is driving him insane. The centaurs, those violent drunkards, were spawned from Ixion's 'adultery' but there is noble Chiron – the exception to the rule – who knows medicine; who healed, taught the young Achilles. Yet Achilles where did such learning go?' Agamemnon views a starry night. 'A ruthless beast, pitying no one; except the King of Troy, led by Hermes he entered our camp on a brutal night to plead to a dark heart for the return of his dead son. Achilles granted the beggar his wish, Achilles wept, not for Priam, but for his own father.

Peleus, Priam - I know your sorrow - the gods bear us children, only to kill them.

Hector had truly fought for his people while Achilles had fought only for himself. Yet, it was Hector's body that was tied to chariot ropes. Achilles pity had overcome his bestiality when he saw the father, but earlier for the son he had dragged the bloodied corpse, there was no honour. Only by the grace of Zeus were the funerary rites for Hector finally observed. Then soon enough it was Achilles turn to die. We fought wild melees to guarantee the return of Achilles body to the ships. Oh Trojans, bravely you fought, but more determined, were the likes of Ajax, who would rather give up their own lives, than have the dead Achilles dishonoured. Trojan and Greek fought hand-to-hand, all were wounded, many were slain, yet as Odysseus carried the lifeless flesh, this once 'mighty bulwark', towards safety, Ajax and his men fought off every new Trojan raid to acquire their 'prey', by the terrible end of this bitter day, the 'majestic shell', which was our 'hero's' body, was washed by weeping Briseis, and the other women, who loved him; kings, princes, circled him, we clipped our hair in honour, his sorrowful mother Thetis emerged from the waters, with other sea-nymphs, to sing sweet dirges-'

"Tragically, the prophecy had been fulfilled, yet a glorious short life, rather than a long cowardly one was Achilles destiny…" Odysseus casts his eyes downwards; he knows Achilles had no desire to fight, not even when Ajax, then

Patroculus, implored him to save the Hellenes – for with Hector in full fury, a Greek defeat was certain – for Achilles knew he was destined to die and, at this moment, his life meant more to him than any honour that would be extolled on him from his race, who he presently despised, only the death of Patroculus, who went out to fight disguised as Achilles, by wearing his armour, to sway the tide of battle the Achaean's way, did guilt, grief and rage motivate Achilles to go…

"Character is destiny stated Heraclitus. As Athens shines as the Southern Cross, we do not forget Achilles sacrifice; as the Southern Cross lies at the hoofs of Centaurus - a vast constellation of mythic healing - I implore each of you to direct your will to Sirius, the harvest star. In this celestial river we call the universe Achilles sparkles like a bonfire, guiding us pass any fatal shore to safely sail to his oasis."

An image of Mantegna's Christ appears on the large screen. The crucified Saviour is viewed lying on a bed with the feet in the foreground; the body is ingeniously foreshortened. Christ looks as if he is sleeping, with his head resting on a large soft pillow (for the artist knows that death has not really achieved the final victory) the image changes to a dead Achilles, in full armour, depicted the same way surrounded by a funeral entourage, then a flashback to the Mantegna Christ, then to Lisa sleeping in her hospital bed seen from the same foreshortened point of view, she is surrounded by her friends, then it is back to Christ, then to Achilles, to Christ, Achilles; Lisa; Christ; Achilles. A constant flicking to and fro between these three archetypes then a lingering shot on Achilles.

Agamemnon looks at the night sky. 'Achilles wanted to kill me over that slave-girl but Athena talked him out of it, he always behaved rashly, only taking for himself, one god or the other would have to lead him along the way, and now the gods beatify him…while I arc as Leo, my brother Menalaus as Scorpio; King Nestor as Auriga; loyal Diomedes as Perseus; Patroculus as Canis Minor…even our enemies are noted: Aeneas blazes as Virgo; Hector shines as Orion, others consider it to be Paris, in any case with every dawn we Greeks see the triumph of Achilles over the 'Trojan'. Odysseus, whose counsel alone I trust, glides as Bootes, a shepherd of the stars as I a shepherd to my men…yes, Odysseus, a shepherd who carried the 'slain calf'…what use these starry memorials? Ascendant, cruel gods callously mock us, we expected personal glory on earth, and we never envisaged that after all our endeavours that further suffering would be our 'wage'…

Greece's under-rated national football team is welcomed back to Athens after miraculously winning the Euro-Cup. Hundreds of thousands of people line the streets and fill the 1896 Olympic stadium, all cheering their giant-killer athletes; television shots of the Parthenon: a nation subconsciously attributes the miracle to Athena guiding the accurately kicked winning goal that came from the one and only corner kick of the whole game. Yet Athena looks on at Greece's ancient heroes who went to Troy, and gave their scraggly, rocky peninsular military glory and world prestige, these joyous, momentous scenes of celebration before them are bittersweet. No such glorious event had heralded their return;

Odysseus had to come home disguised as a beggar to outwit the deadly trap the suitors had set for him; while Agamemnon, this very chief of the troops who sailed to Troy, is murdered on his return by his wife and her lover as the ultimate revenge for the sacrifice of Iphigenia.

On the day of this famous victory Zeus was with Agamemnon in the bowels of the Stanmore Cyprus Club; like two exiles they sat by a table at the back of the dark hall, the only light came from a bar that served coffee and from the football match itself that was being played out on a large video screen. At 4.30 a.m. Michael, Gregor, Master and Cat sat down on the next table. Michael could hear Zeus: "Come on my children, come on…" When the victorious goal was scored and everyone jumped to their feet Zeus was perhaps the most celebratory, for his will was achieved.

(As for Michael he would never forget the words of his mechanic who said a few days later about this against-all-the-odds win: "It is history.")

"Such is our history…" Agamemnon looks at all those with whom he went with on the Troy expedition. 'The 'spoils of war'…for Odysseus it was ten years of bitter wandering, yet at least the day did come when he could enjoy a roasted lamb on a spit, well-sprinkled with lemon juice, drinking red wine in his own house with his beloved family, close friends and loyal servants. Huh! A faithful wife is reward enough! At least many of us saw Troy fall; not Achilles, not Ajax…Odysseus feigned madness in trying to avoid the strife of war, there is wisdom. At least your wily mind Odysseus will not readily diminish…Ajax…you fool…what did I say…of yearning after delusion? Your power is your sword, yet the day comes when the hand that holds it will be frail, your young strength deceives you, your hatred also erodes you, likewise empires rise, only to fall-'

Aeschylus is eyeing back the regal observer.

'At Marathon this playwright fought to save a democratic polis, the Athenians were puny mortals against a grand army. Yet the gods favoured Aeschylus and his race and so Persian blood was spilt in vain; he lost a brother but his personal grief would have found some relief through a memorable victory. These barbarians that Odysseus mocks via Ajax liken their society to the Athens of Aeschylus's time, actually they mirror the Athens of Pericles that 'empire builder' who ruled over the other city-states; they keep their 'democracy' benevolently for themselves; build their Parthenons on top of their Acropolises and royally look down at their 'citizens' like the lofty gods they pretend to extol - as Socrates believed: keep governing to the experts not to the people - yet even they should realise that Pericles this 'democratic tyrant' who wisely cared for the masses that kept him in power also died of the plague; yet like him; like Achilles, we are all born to doom. Although our kneaded bodies are filled with Athena's life breath we are still just clay stained with Prometheus's bitter tears.

Odysseus once confided to me that it was not in Sicily but along the northeast shore of the Black Sea that he dealt with the Cyclops with his rams, under the very shadow of the mountains where Prometheus suffered for giving us fire. If Odysseus had not scurried off to his miserable years on Calypso's 'enchanted island' he could have ventured to see this god of prophesy. Prometheus would

have forewarned Odysseus of the human infernos still to come. It is wondered if our civilisation had begun by the Black Sea; what is certain is Leuke that white island in this 'black water' is the new earthly abode of an immortal Achilles. Yet he would still pine for Patrocolus. The gods warn us that if we share in the arrogance of Achilles we will also share in his ill-fated remorse.'

Virgil would agree: 'The barbarians herald themselves as the inheritors of Roman grandeur, praising Caesar, dismissing Aurelius, living by the sword, believing they are the fittest, respecting warring Mars, vilifying peace. Mt. Etna thundered clouds of black smoke and spewed red lava as the founder of the Eternal City sailed away from their forefathers who hollered for his blood.

Frauds! Hypocrites! Gluttons!

It is no wonder the pilgrim starts his 'travel journal' by being in a dark wood. I think of 'Etna's children'; Etna – that 'giant's jaw' – as Ovid calls it, wanting to devour us.

Achaemenides, a sailor under Ulysses who had been left behind in the escape from Polyphemus's hideous cavern had survived to be rescued by Aeneas. This Greek had prayed for the Cyclops to be cast to some distant land far from humanity. Jupiter granted this wish but the world has shrunk.' Virgil glances at a television camera. 'Along with paradise, Hades is also now close.

Venus had guided the survivors of the Trojan debacle led by her son to a new beginning.' Virgil still looks at the electronic 'one-eye.' 'Always the goddess of love shows for us the way out from desolations caused by brutes who use 'the rhetoric of freedom' as their Trojan horse.'

Agamemnon sees another vision: Achilles the deserter lurks in a trailer watching an old gladiator movie. He smashes his beer bottle onto a flimsy card table. He rips up a postcard as the debate's host turns up with his 'jerrycam' to do a background interview. "The fort commander stole my gal so I didn't want to go and fight anymore in this damn war! Damn it I was known as the best soldier in the whole goddam army! Yet now I learn it's [the war] killed my best friend so I gotta go even if the enemy kills me!"

Soldiers landing on a volcanic island covered with burning sand. Hell. Bloated, dismembered corpses floating in the shallow shoreline waters, charred heads, flamethrower tanks, black jungles, human ash mixing with volcanic ash, battle-weary U.S. Marines look like Titans in the wasteland of Iwo Jima.

A phalanx of other Titans at night, walking by burning buildings, Asian corpses; hollering at the top of their voices the Mickey Mouse teamster song.

'This is their mocking anthem.' Agamemnon frowns. 'The howling sound of Hades arising.'

The final scene from Stanley Kubrick's Full Metal Jacket fades to reveal burning bushes.

Cottus the Furious, the Briareus the Vigorous and Gyges the Big-Limbed: the Three Hecatoncheires come into view which each have a hundred hands and fifty heads. Zeus looks over at his grandfather. Uranus who is Heaven slept with his mother Gaea the goddess of Earth to form these horrific offspring, after producing the twelve Titans and another unholy trinity: the three Cyclops.

(Gaea in this way 'vindicated' herself as a daughter of Chaos). Uranus was disgusted by the Hecatoncheires, Titans and Cyclops and had them cast into the deepest caves under the earth, in that lowest realm of the Underworld known as Tartarus.

Cronus would release the Titans after usurping his father, the other hideous children of Uranus were freed by Zeus when, in his turn, he rebelled against his father.

The Titans, the Cyclops and the Hecatoncheires are nature's furies; all three Hecatoncheires are in control of invisible energies that bring only further chaos. The thunder god views television for the first time in many of the pupils of his monstrous relatives; dumbfounded, he feels irrelevant.

Amidst the ever-changing montage of three hundred images is a depiction of the suffering of Prometheus. It was this Titan who had warned Zeus that marriage to Thetis would produce an immortal who would overthrow him. Zeus forced Thetis to sleep with his human grandson so her offspring would be a mortal. Achilles was meant to be ruler of the universe, yet all that became of him was to be a bastard child of his mother's rape. The divine order will stand as Zeus as master, and in compensation to the mortal Achilles he will have immortal glory that will come at the price of his death on the battlefield. (At the expense of Achilles demise Zeus's hegemony would remain assured). Thetis preferred a living son than to a dead hero so vainly she attempted to save Achilles from his lethal destiny. Prometheus, whose prophecy secured for Zeus his authority, had – as the rumours go - only revealed it as a consequence of his torture by Zeus. (This Titan had originally preferred a universe ruled by Achilles. Nevertheless, it has been presumed by some that Prometheus's revelation of his secret knowledge to Zeus led to his rescue by Hercules.

Thunderbird 3 with Virgil hoists Hercules to Zeus's victim).

Zeus had cynically watched in ancient times humanity revere him, he who cared so little for the human race; eventually he allowed a broken Prometheus to be unbound, he had allowed a flawed Achilles to be remembered, yet as the thunder god sees himself forgotten in this present 'surreal age', he rages; (nevertheless a divine snigger as Apollo 11 – "The Eagle has landed." comes the voice over – fades out to reveal a lame Apollo 13 drifting by Artemis; the gods still test the human will with unknown extremes when it wishes to be divine). There is vengeful recompense when it is seen how humanity has misused its 'undeserved gift': a V-2 rocket; Kurt Vonnegut is interviewed about the unjustified Allied firebombing of Dresden which he lived through as an American P.O.W; U-2 spy planes; Jupiter missiles in Turkey aimed on the Soviet Union; Major Kong waving his ten-gallon hat while riding a falling nuclear bomb. An atomic mushroom cloud rises towards the still open bomb bay doors. Zeus thinks of the first woman and her fateful box that contained furies that no mortal warrior could defeat; even Ajax, whose powerful torso is marvelled at as he stands rigidly on stage, would be impotent.

Happy.

Days.

Ajax pops out of one of two garbage bins in a Beckett play at the Sydney Park Brickworks. ("Dustbins of history." quips Cat to Michael who are in the audience; they fear Lisa will emerge from the other).

Xiahe. Tibetan New Year. A Tibetan village in a dustbowl where all is quiet as Chinese soldiers march down an empty street with white carnations in their lapels to honour the death of Deng (while coincidentally Tibetan monks wearing death masks danced in rhythmic unison with the heartbeat of the universe for five hours); at Muktinath in a Himalayan temple a small curtain is pulled back by a monk to reveal to a pilgrim a flame emerging from a small pool; in the Indian Ocean is a drowned newborn babe floating in the water with her mother with the umbilical cord still attached to both of them; Derrida - as an aside in an interview about him deconstructing Western philosophy - mentions that in his childhood homeland of Algeria it was a rule of the desert to welcome in the stranger; Batman and Robin on the Jim Lehrer News Hour talking soberly about civic responsibility while the Penguin offers 'bread and circuses' to get elected as Mayor of Gotham City; a Werner Herzog documentary of a simmering Caribbean volcano - on this evacuated island is at least one old man who calmly waits with his dog for the inevitable. "Why go anywhere? You can't run away from death…" A laugh. "He'll catch up with you wherever you go!" It's A Wonderful Life starring Jimmy Stewart; a dead Mantegna Che in Bolivia; Beethoven's Ode to Joy performed by the Vienna Philharmonic with Leonard Bernstein; a late night music show with Bob Dylan inferring 'the times they are a changin' followed by The Call singing about the fall of Jericho's walls with reference to 'corporal criminals in corporate tanks'; U2 ironically singing how many have lost but who has won? In other eyes of the Hecatoncheires is a silver sculpture of U.S. Marines raising the flag at Iwo Jima set in a café selling hot dogs; a soldier with two devil horns stuck to his helmet; a scene from an American daytime soap with a fire fighter named Hector who saves people from burning buildings; a misshapen bronze sphere which lies amidst twisted beams; to Odysseus it is reminiscent of a blinded Cyclops eye; to Michael - who flicks the t.v. channels once more - it is a dented copper cosmos tossed aside in a smouldering hell; while to Agamemnon it is the Helmet of Death; he watches an atomic explosion – this 'fire of the universe' – light up Odysseus's startled face and considers how Hades has chosen to take his headgear off to reveal his desolate spirit; (for he who wears this helmet is always invisible). 'Things invisible will be our downfall, what the Hundred Handed show us proves that - huh! Yes, we live in a universe filled with consciousnesses that supersede our own…(warriors must become philosophers)…Odysseus, at least, fights fate, he may also dare to fight the shadow energies of the universe which the likes of Democritus and Lucretus say form its very nature; he may attempt to also fight those who use Helios's light to abominable use: millions of ranks of tiny particles – these 'atoms' - are split to release the blazing power of life into a dark power of death; yet what impossible new labour is this that even a maddened King Eurstheus did not demand Herakles to achieve: to not chase the wind but slice it in two? What sword could Hephaestus forge to cut apart

heaven's light?' Mushroom clouds over an Australian desert dismay Agamemnon. 'Was it not enough that Odysseus went with Achilles son Neoptolemus to the deserted isle of Lemnos, where the wailing bowman Philocretes – disabled by a dragon's poison, abandoned by the Greeks – was coaxed to go to Troy to assure our victory? Only this disfigured mortal could pull the mighty bow that Herakles gave to him and whose arrows Philocretes used to slay Paris. Our victory was spurred on by a cripple who held sway of an immortal power, was this not miracle enough to assure our survival? Yet, Zeus has us survive so we may suffer a worse fate. Along with unbinding the Titan, Zeus has also 'generously' unbound the full power of fire for our 'benefit'. Agamemnon sadly eyes the prize. 'We marvel at Achilles glinting armour as it captures some of the glory of heaven.' A May dawn light shines on a Soviet T-34 KV tank as it rumbles through the fiery ruins of Berlin. Agamemnon grimaces. 'Yet Achilles leaned too much on the gods to steer his choices. What Sophocles had that miserable Philocretes say is true: '...we praise the gods only to find them evil towards us.' A sorrowful look. 'We mortals are evil enough. This Ajax is Achilles cousin: two like-minded thugs who bantered together with fate on their backgammon board until the Furies ruefully threw the dice with which they claimed Achilles. Look at this 'counter' wonder if fate will serve him better odds; he faithfully holds Hector's sword which Achilles gave to him – has he learnt nothing from the bitter ends of both mighty sword holders? Does he really think the gods will not callously claim him too? Ajax you stand like a lowly helot on parade! Have you still not realised that those calculating rabble-rousers on Mt. Olympus have us dream so as to trap us in their nightmares? What is 'divine inspiration' but human delusion? Divine manipulation finds it's openings by way of our fearful human ignorance! Have you Ajax forgotten our Zeus-inspired panic by the ships? The divine odds are always stacked against any human odd!' The King of Argos bows his head, clasps his hands together until the knuckles turn white. When Agamemnon looks up there is a Leonardo drawing of a naked man with spreadeagled arms and legs to highlight how this human architecture is in mathematical proportion to that cosmic vault called the universe. A foetus that is like a musical instrument in tune with this cosmic womb, this Renaissance genius inferring that the neck muscles are like violin strings. The Earth - in its turn - is a human body for the ground is the skin, the mountains its bones and the water its blood; the body and planet made to be in harmony with the stars.

Odysseus, who had been looking for meaning amidst the modern chaos, eyes Achilles shield then looks at the patterns in the night sky. "We are the measure of everything; the human body is in scale with the universe and the universe and us are the same; we are the evidence of what the stars – that are the gods – can achieve by way of us; for these reasons the gods have honoured Achilles with his own star. Look at the 'eternal sea' above us for we see that Achilles has claimed it to express his glory. Achilles has also defeated Poseidon's son Cygnus thus he may also claim this earthly sea!" Odysseus smacks his chest. "Honour gained is honour deserved!"

'There is honour for you Odysseus but what real honour is there for Achilles

who had Patrocolus to be his fisher of men?' queries Agamemnon. 'Yet Patrocolus's victims were merely bait to draw him to Troy's walls. Patrocolus was caught on Hector's 'fishhook'; his carcass the bait to arouse his master to join the battle.' Agamemnon fumes. 'Achilles you expected cheap glory through the labours of your servant but all that was achieved was his useless death; this is the suffering caused to appease the vanity of such masters! Our 'contrite Achilles' who was so magnanimous during the funerary games he had remorsefully established for his dear Patrocolus; whereupon the apologists for Achilles have so 'astutely' observed that he wisely resolved the disputes that arose between the competitors, exhorting these warriors to behave sportingly as gentlemen; who encouragingly handed out a special prize to the charioteer who had raced last; who put an end to the one-on-one armed contest between Ajax and Diomedes before either was seriously hurt - giving them both a prize; who publicly acknowledged our 'revered elder' Nestor for his wise counsel on the affairs of this war. Achilles! You pathetic creature who did not stop at any moral bounds when it came to proudly restoring your heroic self-image after a truly heroic life had been squandered…sly brute -'

A large eye with three long eyelashes on its left side stares from the screen. It is attached to a dark vertical line that cuts down to cross-hatching patterns and grey shades that cover the stage. This Braque Heraclitan eye then gives way to Picasso's Guernica.

Screaming.

Woman.

Gregor's voice scratches over the loudspeakers: "Our bodies were pressed almost against the cracked windscreen of the bus. I pressed one hand against the roof to avoid falling on top of the bus driver. His steering wheel occasionally rubbed against my body. The driver had to shout at those who were impatiently wriggling on and off the bus at each stop. A woman with a baby squeezed in between the human beings who were fused together in the aisles. The bodies pushed against each other whenever the bus turned a corner. I had to strain to avoid careering into the gearstick. We felt the weight of the passengers on our backs. People tried to remain good-humoured and patient, but occasionally someone yelled out a plea in frustration as the tangled bodies pressed even closer. I smelt the sweat and breath of the other passengers and watched sunlight streak in through the only section of window that I could see. The bus passed a cemetery. Whenever the bus stopped I checked my money belt with my free hand. Finally we reached our stop. I surged off the bus and breathed in the open air. I turned around to view the raised arms, torsos and frowning faces on the bus as it continued its hard journey.

We walked up to a busy intersection and crossed the road. We had come to an outside eating spot where a group of women were cooking meat on a long barbeque grill. Seats and tables were spread out on a wide footpath and a large canvas piece – held up with several poles – covered the whole area. Families were eating at the other tables and we were sharing our table with an old man. Beside the 'restaurant' several boys competed with each other to wipe the

windscreens of the cars that had stopped at a set of red lights. The boys were six to twelve years of age and were stripped down to their shorts. Several boys stood in the middle of the road to take advantage of the traffic coming from both directions. These boys jumped onto the hoods of trucks to wipe their windscreens. A truck pulled up – its back was filled with people crushed together. A six-year-old boy scrambled onto the bonnet but the driver yelled at him to get off.

I looked at a woman in her late fifties who was organising the other women to collect plates, serve people, fill up the jugs of water, wash and cook. The elderly woman smiled at us and brought over our meals. I looked over to the grill where the woman who was turning the meat had her back to us: on the other side were three other women who stood very still and blocked the light that had filtered beneath the canopy. They were young but with strong lines etched along their foreheads and alongside their eyes. They had ordered meals to take home to their families. One woman stood with her hand holding her chin, her frowning face turned sideways and her eyes looking towards the ground. Her other hand was on her hip, as if resting the full weight of her body onto her palm. The next woman had folded her arms and was glancing at the cooking meat. However, her eyes seemed to be looking beyond to some point in her mind. The third woman seemed weighed down by the bag she held in her hand but there was an obvious strength in her shoulders that counter-pointed her slightly pensive stance. The matter-of-fact nature of their patient postures combined to bond the three women in a shared sense of their daily struggle. Their stillness and their silence did not suggest any submissiveness, but rather a solid inner strength that had allowed them to bear their present hardships.

I instinctively lifted my SLR camera and peered through the eyepiece, and then I decided to lower it. I thought of the Mexican Indians in Chiapas who believed that taking a picture of them was akin to stealing their souls. Similarly, I felt that photographing these women would betray their dignity. They were human beings, not objects. I turned my attention away from the women, and when I looked back again towards the grill they were gone."

Screaming.

Horse.

A North American Indian chief with an eye plucked out by his white foe. A military helicopter with white tipped blades is flying over a rainforest. Four Aztecs with ropes attached to a pole tied to their feet slowly twirl downwards from a symbolic heaven to earth. A sacred heart is ripped out of a chest to feed the sun.

'Who can appease the appetites of empires?' inquires Agamemnon. 'All is hollow…Achilles is pitiless. His deathly spirit debases all love. As I waited by an ill-fated Thracian shore for the winds to taper off so my fleet could safely go home (an ironic, bitter twist to the closure of my time in Troy), Achilles ghost arose from the cracked desolate ground to accuse me with his sword that all Achaeans were now abandoning him; so much for the 'bygones-be-bygones' to me to resolve our differences after the wasteful end of Patrocolus; 'never mind'

Achilles previous abandonment of us at our moment of most dire need; yet this shade demanded that if Priam had his son, he would have his daughter; this was the measure of his 'love': that an innocent maiden die for his lust. I acceded to his wish, for I was still too grateful for having Priam's other daughter – 'dear Cassandra' – ah, the years weary me, the years condemn me…so 'it' was done…Odysseus convinced the Achaeans who questioned this barbarity, who wanted to veto this 'sacrifice' by saying the victors had to show their 'gratitude' to 'honourable Achilles'. In life Achilles was willing to have peace with Troy so as to marry her; yet in death he would have her still. How did Polyxena take it? Hector's sister shamed us with her courage, it was almost unearthly, she did not allow our force to turn her into another mere object of our wrath; we the 'victors' were shown to be morally bankrupt, all we did with the city we revered was to destroy it and slaughter its citizens for no reason, we came for riches but left with dust, better if we had gone to the Carpathians, where it is said Jason had ventured, and all fossicked for gold with Georgian peasants, capturing gold in fleeces left in mountain streams. Bah! We sliced the windpipes of virgins and let Helen live! Trojan whore!'

Thus Spoke Zarathrusa is playing over the loudspeakers as the main screen shows a re-enactment of Polyxena's end with Lisa again playing the sacrificial role. This lone woman stands by Achilles burial mound and around her is the whole Greek host; at the fore are the likes of Odysseus, Agamemnon, Menalaus, and Theseus's two sons. At the altar is Achilles son Neoptolemus who will act as priest and cut the victim's throat.

'Look at how serene she remains compared to the madness that will overtake Ajax who will slaughter sheep and goats after being deceived by Athena that they are his fellow Greeks who had rejected him; his military pride will lead him to thrust his blade into his tight gut, it is the only response he knows, and the gods know it, his entrails will be found hanging out, mixed with the guts of his butchered 'victims'. Ajax will prove to be unworthy of Achilles arms, while wise Odysseus is a better choice this woman, with her stoicism, certainly deserves them.'

Above the sacrificial victim glows the planet Jupiter and angled below on either side in equidistance from this celestial apex are two points of gravitational pull that hold in Jupiter's orbit masses of asteroids known as 'the Trojans'. Thus Achilles and Patrocolus follow the path of Jupiter while lesser 'warriors' hurtle into this giant.

'The shield of Zeus protects us from Apollo's arrows.' thinks Agamemnon. Nevertheless, every Pharaoh present sees in this 'eternal triangle' reference to the first pyramid that emerged when the watery chaos subsided; like themselves - who travelled to the two starry Invincibles after burial in their pyramid receptacles - this woman will also head to an immortal tomb.

A black slab on Artemis.

A black rock in the Central Australian desert.

A space antennae titled L.I.S.A.^{2} passes by the shield of Zeus, heading to deep space to measure the gravitational pull of black holes; in a search to understand

the fundamentals of the universe; to help resolve the mystery of dark matter, a black cosmic energy which helps the universe to grow.

'Heaven is strange. To attempt to measure the gods who cause us chaos. To learn how fate controls us…to control fate…' The Mycenean frowns. 'Yet Zeus had us go to war so Achilles death could be made possible. No half-cast god would threaten to overthrow the Lord of Mt. Olympus. We are all a stain in Zeus's mind and Apollo and Poseidon would wash away the Achaean wall to cleanse the earth of our violent presence.

Naked.

Human.

Pyramids.

'The slaughter of the Trojan prisoners at the funerary pyre of Patrocolus.' surmises Agamemnon. 'Achilles, you have spurred on our divine retribution with such evil acts. A ransom had to be given to you in return for Hector's mutilated corpse. Plato is right: it was wrong of you to follow with such mercenary zeal the advice of your tutor Phoenix who told you not to fight unless you were rewarded by me in kind with gifts.

To think I gave you back Briseis! We give you Polyxena!'

'Zeus's shield' is still in full view, outshining all the stars including Sirius.

'Our destinies can so uneasily turn on a god's whim.' Agamemnon is unnerved. 'This shield can so easily descend! How I am still thankful to Hera who distracted a lustful Zeus, led him to Mt. Ida, to give my war weary troops some breathing space as we rallied against Hector. 'Our supreme god' - to be our enemy - for fickly agreeing with Achilles that us Greeks deserved to bitterly learn how 'grateful' we should be to 'our hero'.

As dusk prevails Aphrodite's planet twinkles in the clear orange-purple sky.

'The Cyprus goddess, when that bitch forgets all her envies she can magnificently comfort us. All fear - and loneliness - leaves. This woman will not squeal like a hog, like my daughter.'

Love.

'Helios slowly goes down towards Thessaly; from there Ascelpius -Apollo's son - the god of healing – with snake ravelled around his rod - will reveal his compassion on this hostage.' A sigh. 'We are certainly punished for our disrespect to the gods, yet we die anyway, it is better to live staring at death daily in the face, to not hide from death like Calypso tried to do with Odysseus; for a heroic life is to know one is mortal, and to then live life to the full in devotion to what is just, this will make you fully human, and then – at 'the end' - to die unafraid, this may at least gain you some divine respect. Certainly Polyxena will die as a free woman, as no one's slave-'

(Haitian drum beating. A wild Sargossa Sea. Yes, there is a sad destiny for this beauty.

Agwe, voudon's Lord of the Sea and Lasiren his Mermaid Queen weep as Lisa's soul readies to board a sailing boat to take her 'home'; Apo Lisa the sun-god).

A light drizzle falls from a passing cloud. Lisa prepares for her destiny by unzipping her white jumpsuit to reveal the upper half of her body. It is fully

shaped, that is to say there
is no sign of her disease, a full bosom, a full face filled with the vigour of life, a perfect being of beauty that makes the Greeks shudder, a flower that must be scythed down, her shining long hair drapes this shapely body as the winds die, Lisa's torrid eyes look ahead at her murderers. "I stand before you Greeks, upright and unafraid, I pity your inhumanity, your moral degradation, your blind willingness to do the will of your 'great hero' – you are all like sheep who have lost their right way, who look to follow a ghost to soothe the quickening tremor of your quivering hearts, are you savages who believe by human sacrifice the power of nature will not also take you? Do you think with my death the winds will gracefully take you all to the homes you have yearned for these long ten years? Odysseus, do not avert your eyes from mine by casting them to the stony ground, do you think you will soon be with your wife? Do you Agamemnon think you will be glided off to find joy in your 'dear Clytemnestra's' arms? The gods will surely give you the fates you all deserve! As you will not defy your 'god' I will defy you. I dismiss your banal cruelty, this foul evil that you will perpetrate on my sinless body. Your power has no hold over my royal heart. You have not stripped me bare; yes, you will kill thy flesh, but not thy spirit – let my embittered, black-cloaked mother know I met my death freely, I do not resist, I will face 'the other shore' as bravely as my brother unfairly faced your 'master'…oh Greeks! Stay as slaves to Achilles, if you wish – but Achilles will not rule me! I go to the son of Peleus's place to replace his 'starry heart' – not like ill-fated Patrocolus who resides beneath Achilles. I won't endure his rape of my spirit, for love - my love of life – will conquer his malice, usurp his tyranny! Neoptolemus, do not order your thugs to grab me! No unclean Achaean hand will touch me! Here is my breast, here is my neck, both I freely offer to your gleaming blade, my pure blood to flow on your impure altar, this you Greeks - who torched fair Troy, who butchered Priam, who enslave the Trojan race – is your ultimate atrocity."

'These harsh words are like sharpened sticks beating on our hard chests but we applaud her nevertheless. Her bravery deserves full honour. Thus we cheer as if praising one who has led us to some mighty victory; where there was no human cost to ourselves. Yes, we pity Polyxena for some warmth has come from her to our cold hearts.'

Lisa drops to her knees, yet lifts her head to look coldly into the tearful eyes of her executioner. "Weak man, do you not have the courage to look into this face of death, which brims with life?" The question is whispered with a quick sucking breath.

Agamemnon sights in his mind Lisa wearing Achilles armour - a hurtling blade. 'A candescent life snuffed out, look at the blood spurting from that gaping throat wound, a rich red stream is flowing quickly over this earth, she will be planted like a seed in a hollow by Achilles raised tomb – our bitter 'high moral ground'. We who overlord Polyxena see that this 'free spirit' has the noble character that we delude ourselves to possess. At least we will grievously leave, in this shallow grave, alms beside her supple body, lovingly oiled, then stained

by our violence, for her defiance, her love will bless the ground with new growth, while all we finally offer this earth with our might - is ash.'

"I 'see' Ajax's purple hyacinths – which sprout in loving memory to his 'folly' – cover the whole yard!"

A Few Minutes of Fame

INTERVIEWER: "Is it your first time to Sydney?"
LISA: "We used to live here but I wanted to get away from the big smoke..."
INTERVIEWER: "So Sydney's become a nice place to visit but you don't want to live back here…"
LISA: "Something like that!" [Lisa laughs].
INTERVIEWER: "Well I should let you go on your way. I imagine Melissa will really like the gardens. It certainly is a perfect day to visit them."
LISA: "It sure is, thanks. Been good to talking to you…"
INTERVIEWER: "Bye."
MICHAEL: "Bye mate."
LISA: "Bye…say goodbye Melissa…" [Melissa smiles but says nothing].

Michael turns to Melissa who is sitting beside Margaret on a sofa. "Did you enjoy that Melissa?" You and mum on the tele!" A sigh. A glance at a sympathy card.

"It's a pity…" A camera shot of Luna Park. "A real pity."

Lost in Thought

'We were at Roselands. Yes…the rainbow fountain is now gone. I still wonder if there is a chance I will see her. I will go tomorrow on my own and maybe the next…(…there was that other woman who I mistook for-)…yes the day will come…I will sit in the cafeteria…'

Hecabe

'I am a lone old Greek woman dressed in black …'

Athena

'Now that my husband has died, now that my children have grown up, married…I sometimes think of you. I still value the day we met. I still value our friendship…'

Blue

'I'm sitting in the middle of the living room in my own urine…(I can't get up)…I'm too drunk…the cricket rolls on…it is humid…the Calcutta masses are cheering on an unlikely victory…history is in the making…I hear the resurrection…of the dead on the radio…it's been a great comeback…hope…(I'm crying)…yes…one can still hope…in this life…'

'Zeus'

'I am weary…I sit on my chair (…as my wife sits in her chair opposite me…)…with thy wooden staff in hand…after the toil…and the strain, after the hard ploughing of the fertile fields of this new (promised) land…for our family…we now only wait, for the final sunset…(we are still)…

Lost World

'At Michael's aunt's place I looked at the photos on the mantelpiece hoping I would see you.'

"You in your own world again Margaret?" inquires Michael.

"We should look at the photos…I've seen too few…"

An old maroon vinyl Qantas bag filled with yellow photo envelopes; an old instamatic.

"Your mum got me to take a lot of photos for you Melissa." Michael views the reverse side of a photo of Lisa with Gregor at the same poetry reading as when he had shown his Super 8 film of his Central Australia visit. "Lisa has scribbled a number on the back of each photo so Melissa can keep them in order." Another photo of Lisa with Caterina at Marrickville Town Hall. Hundreds of people mingling around Rigoberta. "A Guatemalan Beatrice," quips Michael. "Like it was some Second Coming…" A smile. Rummaging inside the Qantas bag. "There's also all these tapes." One is placed in the cassette player: the rustling of paper. Gregor softly reads:

MEXICO[1]

The flames shimmered in the reflection of the dull duco
The flames spewed from his parched mouth
The head was hidden by a column of fire
Only in the tight muscles of the hand which held the canister did there remain a visible sign to his desperation
The blackness spewed down a star while the morning light sucked up the dew
Their bowed faces were hidden by their broad brims while they swept before the iron mouth
He was from Guadalajara and held up his hand to refuse the offer of reimbursement
In another time another man from the same city boarded a bus in Dallas and looked for my support in Brownsville
I walked through the ruins and rummaged through other memories
In the afternoon heat she silently waited in the long queue holding her black umbrella as a shield
She watched the towering machine which pulled down the dough to manufacture the tortillas she would purchase
He diligently cleaned the machine saw he used to cut the meat he had left outside on hooks for the flies to vomit on
The boy took the ten cent coin and eyed the lyre bird while speaking in slow Spanish, listening patiently to the slow voice

His elderly mother and his elderly father and himself farewelled me when the dusk train arrived
There was no light and an old woman's voice could be heard in the dark carriageway
There were the silhouettes of bodies who paced the night aisle selling their wares and in unison were calling as if in an Ancient Greek Chorus
There was a station where in another time two of us had waited till midnight huddled with the poor as if all together we were refugees escaping from some war
Men are sleeping and other men sing while the man opposite holds his machete and in the morning there are the village huts where people are scantily dressed and the children look unhealthy
The women and their employer speak inside the market and from their stall offer a cool liquid and there is tranquillity and there is a Spanish wall near the sea and there is a tranquil breeze
The train arrives at midnight where the sweeping roof of the station is a reminder to Paris Norde
There are two old female indigenous who no one will help carry their heavy pots from the platform to the station and so the three of us sleep together
Where there had been another time when two of us had slept the first night in the zocola
There are the sleeping shivering homeless men at this tourist destination
Yes
Lets sit in the zocola
Where its fun sitting in these chairs where we can face each other where we can talk to each other where everyone is trying to sell us hammocks, gold chains, panama hats
Those sunglasses
Suit you
Very trendy
Very fifties
I like the pointy bits
At
The end
S
You look so hip
With your short
blonde hair
And your shorts
What sort of country is this where people must cover their faces in demonstrations?
We walk the length of the beach passing an Australian woman wearing a Burning Bridges t-shirt
You have read in Le Monde of Aboriginal deaths in custody?
So you think it is a disgrace?
Of course!
It's a shame
It is raining
Lightly
We notice in the restaurant garden of a fishing village that there is above the tables plastic bags of water tied to the posts that hold up the lightweight roof. The women say

they keep the flies away. I say in Australia people place plastic bottles filled with water on their front lawns to keep the dogs off them.
We walk past
The busy noisy wooden drinking bars
A bus comes every half hour?
You think the video on this bus is racist?
They use chicano actors who live in L.A?
You think it makes all Columbians
Look like peddlers?
Yes, you wonder
Why there is a market
For
Films
Like
These
In
Latin
American
Countries
Lets
Go
See
Pretty flowers and trees
For the people of South and Central America
Mexico
Guatemala
Belize
El Salvador
Honduras
Nicaragua
Costa Rica
Panama
Columbia
Venezuela
Guyana
Surinam
French Guiana
Brazil
Ecuador
Peru
Bolivia
Paraguay
Uruguay
Chile
Argentina
Do you know
Of
Any
Cheap places
To eat?

MASS

When you think of ‘mass’ what do you think?
Church mass
Mass graves
the human mass
the dark mass within the universe or of the dark mass in our minds
or
perhaps there’s
the masses of particles
of physical existence
which makes our huge populations able to wonder about God while looking at
the stars and also wonder about God after looking
at
a
massacre
consider the
increase
in
mass
of
a
falling
object
when
that
falling object
is
a
human
being
who
has
become
a
victim
of
a
falling morality

PAUSE

“That’s from the poetry night; when I showed the film of my trip to Central Australia.”

Optic Painting

The nurse pulls the curtains back for bright sunbeams to pass through the open window, revealing millions of wafting dust particles; with bed raised, looking at hundreds of photos collecting dust; that document a large portion of this last phase. A collector of milliseconds; to validate this life the images are positive; none of this vulnerability or depressive nature to be refracted onto film for Melissa to see *'…look at this peeling skin…this frail frame…this tedious…body…'* what is to be left is a legacy of hope to the beloved daughter…yes, like optic painting each image is a dot of captured eternity…'*join the dots. To get the whole picture…'* Hundreds of thousands of dots. Patterns. To leave rhythms of lines and curves on the optic nerve. In these photos are the forensic evidence to a genealogy of the mind. To view a life with Aristotelian vision for Cat had once remarked that Aristotle said it was the sign of a genius to see the similarity in things that appeared dissimilar to each other; to envisage a unity to all things, that what may be random is not so at all, as the body weakens there is a doubling of effort to exercise the mind, to intimate through these photos the potential to what could have been achieved; like studying the fragments of an ancient mural: the wall is mainly blank due to the ravages of time yet it is still possible to discern a full picture from what remains; grasping for a little immortality.

In front of a large white replica of Michelangelo's unfinished Atlas. It stands in front of a collectable shop in Surry Hills. Posing in the same way as all these damned naked figures from Michelangelo's Last Judgement. The mural is on the outside wall of a café close to the Sandringham Hotel. It is the same face where Michael had met that single mother…(the last shall be first)…at the Annandale Gallery with Gregor; beside a small fluorescent blue replica of Michelangelo's Slave by Yves Klein. Arm-in-arm with Michael outside PEREY'S OLD BOOKS in Crown Street Wollongong. He is holding a poster of Michelangelo which he had just bought.

At Gerringong at an outside café table looking out over Werri Beach.

The ovulation of the sea. New life will emerge. Worlds pass away.

Remembrance of things past. On the back porch at Gregor's place; shiny fruit tingle on tongue, leaning over the wooden balcony as if on the deck of a ferry. Looking at the river. Nepalese prayer flags are strung along the top. Having what Gregor called 'an Asian Day' when to do just one thing was enough.* Lisa had spent so much time at Gregor's place. A liking for being by water. Gregor had intended to teach Lisa how to etch after it was pretty clear she had lost all interest in painting; nothing had come of it. At least the effort had been made to put up many of his travel photos and prints on the hospital wall; to give these images a primal spiritual significance; it was the closest thing to a personal religion that Lisa would ever have.

Time ridges.

To capture.

Yet the ripples of time expand far beyond the expanse of any lifetime. The universe is not old enough. We are vapour. The universe is vapour. Thus as the past cannot be physically reproduced, it is slowly realised that as the low summit

of this life has been reached there can only now be the resolve to mentally look back with some tranquillity.
Memory is peace.

Africa

A glossy photo of a huge mud-brick mosque in Mali cut out from a travel magazine. It is stapled to a Paris postcard of the Champys Elyees with an attached letter from Karin. *'…I'm off to Mali. From Paris there are direct flights…I mention this as you wrote about that day at the Quay…in ancient times the Dugong of Mali worshipped the Dog Star Sirius. The tribes of Mali have a belief that God spat out the world in the shape of a human being. They have villages outlined like a person; it's an interesting idea: the universe shaped as a person…'*

The Day the Earth Stood Still

Hundreds of photos. The chemical mass of one life. Of one individual history.
At this large glass shed in the Botanical Gardens used as exhibition space. The South Coast. Pigeonhouse Mountain near Milton.
"It's climbed very often." remarks Michael.
In front of a photo of an extinct capped volcano that's on this far-away shore at Jervis Bay.
Prehistory.
What is the real difference between the death of a single human being yesterday and the extinction of a whole world several million years ago? Life is myth.

Gondwanaland

"There's some similar types of Australian plants that can be found in South America. Master told us that's because the earth's landmass was once one continent. Gondwanaland. There's even ancient forests in South-East Australia that can trace their beginnings to Gondwanaland."

Dog Day Afternoon

At the Australia Day Dog Race outside the Hopetoun Hotel. Melissa is in the cheering crowd – on top of Cat's shoulders – looking at several dogs running down Fouveax Street.

Invasion Day

The Survival Day Concert at La Perouse. Melissa and Isabella with painted faces.

Terry Lamb. Lisa. Mythology.

Sitting down on a table in a Lebanese bakery in Belmore. Eating thin pizzas. On the table behind is a Sudanese family.
"I had ended up taking Lisa to Canterbury Leagues Club to see this black and white SCG photo of Terry Lamb under the posts in a semi-final with Canberra.

The score was 18-18 at the time and whoever won the game would go straight to the Grand Final. Canterbury was the underdog but under Terry Lamb's captaincy the team held its nerve to win the game by a field goal. I remember how on The Sunday Roast it was even said in passing that Terry Lamb ought to be made a rugby league Immortal."

"Michael had watched the end of the match in the Courthouse Hotel. We'd just bumped into each other...that's some mythology for you…I'm an underdog Mick; while there's life. There's fight."

Norwegian Wood

A faded photo. Next to a huge painting of a cliff with sea waves smashing against the rocks. The photo has been taken in a brightly lit room with a high ceiling. A large eucalyptus tree can be seen through a window. There is also a loft and a ladder. A foot placed on the first rung.

"Norwegian Wood…the painting was done by a young Norwegian carpenter. It is his place. I lived in the little flat next to him. It's where I went to after moving out of Dan's…"

A large terrace that was divvied up. In Toxteth Street. Glebe.*

Don't Worry Be Happy

With Caterina and Gregor at a Guatemalan afternoon in the courtyard of the old Children's Court in Albion Street. Surry Hills. Caterina. A Latino female vocalist and musicians. Stalls. A talk.

"I bought these Guatemalan worry dolls on that day. You stick them under your pillow when you are asleep and your worries go away. I sleep with them here in the hospital…Melissa will end up using them…"

S/HELL

S/HELL: holding up a petrol can blocking the camera's view of the S of a SHELL sign on the Hume Highway.

HELL is put away.

"In my opinion Mick we ought to give East Timor all the profits from the Timor Sea." A laugh. "That's what I said when we got back into the car. We had been running low on petrol but Mick wouldn't pull into this SHELL station. It was explained to me that he had boycotted this oil company ever since a Nigerian poet and eight others had been hanged for exposing the malpractices of Nigeria SHELL. Everyone has to be true to themselves…that's the gospel truth…" (Eyes go watery. A smirk). "I like it at the start of Cool Hand Luke when Paul Newman smashes open parking meters spilling out all the coins. That's defiance.'

(Alone. Playing solitaire as the tape whirs).

The Wedding of Cana

"Michael I'll make us a pot of tea. Russian Caravan."

'I peruse the envelopes realising that it is like looking at the forensic evidence of a ghost. The past is a ghost made up of our former selves. Yet Lisa, like a dead film star, will be viewed as eternally young. Lisa is to never continually reconfigure herself into the differing phases of a typical life span. No 'little deaths'. I sense the metamorphosis of my own life as I grow from the latter years of my youth into middle age as I had sensed the same process when I had grown out of my teens into young adulthood.'

A sense of danger.

'There is always an ongoing awareness not to lapse forever into the past, but to build upon it. In the new reincarnations within this one life there must occur an ever ongoing, deepening resonance of life experience akin to maturing wine. The miracle of water turning into wine.'

A smile.

'Yes, that's it. We are born as water but the earth's minerals that one feels, that one tastes, that one smells, in which we will be buried, like Lisa who is buried in the sea, will layer our bodies – our crust of this earth – to transform us – into 'new creatures' – as we age. After all, blood – the liquid of life – is the colour of red wine. We shall be ripened for death. To die yet be a seed. Melissa is Lisa's physical seed. The relics of her life: these photos, her art, the memories of her existence which remain alive within those who know her, until they too die, are perhaps: 'spiritual seeds'.

Afterwards, whatever 'residue' survives may go on to influence some semblance of life forever. In relics, in family, in friendship is the evidence of the level of the maturation of a living being. The energy of life, which it is said survives the disintegration of the body, can pertain to 'fertilise' the earth, to invigorate good soil to overcome a wasteland that we ascribe to death. We form a 'bridge' in our maturation not between life and death – for the latter is 'nothing' or at best an 'unknown' – but to sustain and invigorate what is already alive; to reincarnate what lives with a greater depth of the life spirit. Like roots going deeper into the earth so a tree may soar to the sky. To all that open air. To provide the freedom to give further liberty to an enhanced humanity.'

A memory.

"Plants are a bit like people, for no apparent reason some live to be a hundred years, some die after twenty. Yet, we can only take care of ourselves and plants the best we can. Like that Latin American woman who works at the community nursery said to us: we have to hose the base of the tree. Otherwise you're just wasting the water. The main root – the tap root – has to be encouraged to go deeper into the ground so it'll be a sturdy support for the tree. It'll grow healthier, get bigger and live longer. If you just spray the water everywhere the lateral roots will be drawn to this surface water and you're left with shallower roots that won't hook into the ground properly to help out the main root. I once had a fig tree that just fell over one day. Like it had been struck down."

'We have to be single-minded. Master complained that day I always had a million things on my mind yet never seemed to be achieving anything substantial.

"You got to give your life purpose."

"At least I have the sense of purpose to pick up all the beer bottles from this backyard that sometimes resembles a pigsty…" A glance over at Lisa. "Helping out is useful enough for now..."

A nonchalant far away look.

"See the tin can I've stuck in the ground beside this eucalypt?"

"Yeah. You've opened it both sides."

"It catches rainwater so it will flow onto the main root. All this mulch we shove on at the base also helps to retain moisture."

Like the purifying properties in a full bodied wine.

"It's going to thrive. There'll be some handy shade here in a few years. Will become a good spot for a blanket or fold-up chair. This Pennyworth I'm also putting in is for Lis. It's beneficial against arthritis. You chop it up and make a tea."

As a distraction a look at what cassette is in the tape deck.

'Weddings, Parties, Everything. Master is always playing Mick Thomas.'

Michael smirks.

'The Wedding of Cana. It was obvious water would be transformed into wine at a wedding for it was a celebration of two lives that would come together to produce new life. New wine.'

A new thought: *'A wine-dark sea.' It was what Homer said Odysseus sailed upon in his odyssey.*

(The blood of the earth).

(There had been that wonderful day at Kuringai National Park putting around the coves off Church Point in that hired boat. Going for a swim in Jerusalem Bay. Those other regular swims at Maroubra Beach and at Gordons Bay during that walk from Bronte to Coogee).

It now seemed an appropriate description to describe the ocean Lisa so much loved, that watery universe in which she hoped to spend eternity. Despite her young death Lisa had achieved an accelerated wisdom beyond what would seem possible in her short life and

there remained the opportunity – in her submerged resting place – for her soul to be energised with a further spiritual resonance.

The sound of cicadas.

(Life's spirit emerging from discarded shells tended in soil).

The human body as a garden that will produce a vineyard, human experience enriched by the earth. Lisa loved the sun shining on the skin or the possibility of sitting in the cool shade in the backyard. A Garden of Earthly Delights is what each human being may aspire too. To avoid stony ground. A hard ground leaves nothing to grow like a hard heart slows the blood flow. To wither life.

Michael suddenly thinks of that night at the Hopetoun when 'the Weddos' had played. At first he had felt trapped. Like in a dark forest. Without light. Without space.

'Discomfort.

(Lisa's anguish).

"I am the Anti-Christ!" Dan had sung.

"I just met Johnny Leopard." Dan had said.

Dave Warner comes to mind.: his song about Anzac Day where it was claimed it was the one day of the year when *we* marched and drank beer.

'Michael speaks under his breath as Margaret returns from the kitchen with tea and carrot cake. "They shall not grow old as we grow old. Age will not weary them. With the going down of the sun, we will remember them."

"This cake will be good for our eyesight." jokes Margaret. "Like we should look at Lisa with new eyes."

Another envelope is opened. The photos are taken out.

"Yeah."

A matt-finish rebirth.

The Mundane Shell

'The sky is the first womb to which a human soul travels to after the death of the body. The sky is a womb at night while in the day the sky serves as a thin blue concave between a finite Earth and infinite Universe. The lining to that ultimate mysterious sac which is referred to as Eternity. Humanity resides within the mortal limits of time and space as if inside an an egg. The human spirit incubates. Hatches at the moment of the body's death to enter into immortality. Breakout. That prisoner we call The Soul escapes…'

Cat hands over to Lisa his dictionary on William Blake's symbols and imagery.

'As it is intimated this world which is limited by three dimensions is the Mundane Egg. The sky is the Mundane Shell to this 'mortal rotunda'. Our skull is also a mundane shell. Inside this 'bone womb' is our brain. An organ of perception confined by time and space. Our memory forms its mental crust."

Cat pauses.

'The earth. It's layered crust. Rock stratas. Fossils. Recording its evolution and the evolution of life.'

The prophet fondles the skin ridges on the back of his hand.

'Gases. PreCambrian. Paleozoic. Old life. Mesozoic. Middle life. Cenozoic. Present life. The ages of amoebia. Fishes. Amphibians. Dinosaurs. Mammals. Life. Extinction. New life. Extinction. Again new life. Extinction. More life in all it's inestimable variety. We cannot comprehend the billions of years that have brought us to today. Our minds are too limited.'

A pinch of the arc between forefinger and thumb.

'The layers of each individual life. Embryo. Birth. Childhood. Youth. Middle age. Old age. Death. Human dust to mix with the dust of the earth. All of us exist for a time and within the span of each epoch each stage of our growth becomes

'extinct' to give way to the next level. Until the zenith we call maturity is reached. Afterwards, there is for many of us only decay.

Obliteration.

Yet, the tree of life regenerates through new seed. The tree of every life to mix with the earth. Enriches it. Memory does not age. Our memories as tree rings marking the many lives within the one life we pass through. The invisibility of our minds. The spiritual survives the physical extinctions the body passes through, which provide a record' of our whole life. Reminiscences. Lisa has taken all these photos afraid that what is invisible will disappear for Melissa in waters of forgetting.'

A glance at the sky.

'The universe is our river. A thriving source to the Tree of Life to which we may travel too.

The sky. An exterior which disguises underneath the real face of the earth. Our face. The human persona is an affectation of the social perceptions upon it and the interior psychic forces that also work upon it. Yet Lisa is at a nether region between life and death which takes her beyond all that. The final frontier. The only evolutionary zone that Lisa will now enter into is the eternal one. Endless progression. To every death there is a new star. We may liken each layer of our persona to the orbits of an ancient solar system which places the Earth at the centre of all things for the ego perceives reality as something which abounds only around it.'

A lingering look at Lisa.

'To Lose One's Life to Save it. What cruel fate offers is to disorientate the ego. To no longer to be in the centre leads to dislocation. To be lost. Displacement. The ancients knew that what was left was to defy such a helpless circumstance. To save one's life by finding it.'

Cat looks at his hand. "Journey to the Centre of the Earth."

'To journey back to the essence of what shapes the self. A journey of rediscovery on the way to the core. To pass seething furnaces. All consuming to the being. Yet, where there also existed a compression whereby mere carbon can also crystalize into diamonds. Underneath the temporal layers is the eternal. Deep inside us. Intuition. Memory. Experience. Lead the way. Echoes. Encapsulate a fleeting life. The Mortal Coil. Our Alpha and Omega. Inherit within. The Human Soul. Eternity.

We can be heroes…to be like Ulysses: to have the character tested, to overcome all misfortune. To arrive safely home.

To recognise that the same gods who fling out their retributions may also be our saviours.

The divine exists in the cosmos and finds connection to us through our minds. Every human being is a hero who must go via their sheer will to beyond time and space. Beyond the crust of the skull which contains within it the varied layers of our individual evolutionary history. To open the mind. To be balanced in the centre from which to perfectly bore into boundless realms.'

Orientation.

Perhaps the past can provide us with that. For layers built upon layers maybe extinct but which form the foundation supporting our present life.

Identity-

A frown.

'Who are we? Who were we? Who will we become? Perhaps questions for those who have the luxury of a normal life span. For Lisa there is only the intensity of succouring the value of being alive from each day's existence. The past is never dead in her Eternal Present. To overcome the anger of how death makes us all anonymous.'

The Great Leap Forward

Memory montage. Of life. On a microscopic level. Exploring the thin layers. Of an interior mundane shell.

Cat considers the possible sub-atomic mental processes going on so intensely in his dying friend's mind.

'It is surmised that human consciousness is as boundless as time and space and mass which makes up the cosmos. What only seems assured is that death is the end of only an earthly consciousness. Yet, the soul, which may be a residue, hopefully lives on.'

Eyes light up.

'Ghosts. We will become ghosts in a ghost universe. Nevertheless, our awareness of being alive is ghost like. It is said that as the physical universe suddenly came into existence so also did our self-awareness. No evolution. Although within the realm of time and space the particles of the universe which we call planets, stars and constellations have evolved to make up a physical continuum, our experiences, memories and emotions which help our living consciousnesses also evolve within a mental continuum we call the mind. Flux within stability.

Unfathomable space. Between stars. Between neurons. The cosmic aeons corresponding with the miniature emptiness between each brain cell. A trillion trillion pinpoints of fleeting thought which conveys the building up of an optic image, a feeling, a reminiscence to help construct an unbroken passage of awareness, of what is deemed to be reality. A seamless universe made of innumerable seams.

An absent look.

'Where does our consciousness lie? Within a chasm between two ephemeral but ever lasting contours.

Immaterial on immaterial.'

Cat rubs some of the sweat on his hand between his thumb and forefinger.

'Life. Substance. A material world made of invisible atoms, which join together to reach a point where visibility arises.'

Cat stares through the window.

Life as non-physical. Pure Beautified.The beat of life. A white light.

Cat's eyes seem to dilate. His mortal reason is at near meltdown. Irrationality pervades.

'Light travelling from a superposition particle to a black hole at the furthest point of the universe.

Our sight counts on a slice of the spectrum in between. We have only access to a miniscule fraction of the cosmic vision.'

Cat taps a glass of water. "It maybe true what has been said: that the universe is a sea of energy. All matter simply the ripples we see or measure."

The water is drunk.

A whisper. "The human spirit at the point of bodily death to be enveloped by thriving cosmic energies to sustain it."

Microtubules

"See this paint." The paint discount man opens the lid on the four-litre can. "I'll just mix in some more white to tone it down to what you want; even though the white paint gets mixed through it still stays together, I could even spin it all out so its separates from the original colour."

Cat puts down the near empty glass of water.

'To change the tone of the universe at death, even though we are all consumed our spirits will help transform it.'

Videos.

COMPASS: STONEHENGE. THE MIND/NEAR DEATH.

"This is it." The video is inserted into the portable television. "Watch along with the stories of spiritual enlightenment in the nether region between life and death a wizened goat–bearded anaesthetist in Tucson, Arizona talk about the microcosm of the mind."

'It is intimated that deep within the quantum workings of the brain, on this microscopic level, that the mind is produced in a forest of organic cylinders…microtubules…the conveyer belts of consciousness…speaking to each other…helping to form the shape of every cell, information which originated from the furnaces of the stars passed within each one, organising it to operate and to communicate with other cells…quantum computers working out the cellular activity of the whole brain…to also be in connection with the quantum fabric of the universe. Vibrations. All is vibrations. How many billions of sub-atomic 'stars' are in that organic cosmos that is a human brain? The mind, a continental shelf; our thoughts are like volcanic islands that suddenly emerge from that mental sea we call the subconscious; It is in the sea that Herman Melville says there are submerged 'sweet mysteries' and 'hidden souls'. To keep an open mind, an unconquerable 'mental slingshot'. Eternal pendelums. The eyes of God. Looking over everything. I shall not fear the shadows, around which I shall negotiate a life passage. It was the brave Spartan Dieneces at Themopylae who as he saw the shadows formed by a sun that was hidden behind the swarms of Persian arrows falling on this fateful pass, assured his compatriots how comfortable it would be to go into battle with such shade provided for them…where there is shadow is also light. It is well known that the near equivalent ratio that exists between matter and anti-matter is vital for maintaining that tightrope walker we call reality on the infinite stretches of

string which bind together everything. Within the warmth of the womb billions of neurons are born to generate a never ending number of electrical impulses that make contact with those very subatomic particles of the universe captured in forming microtubules. Meshing together. Giving rise to our first thought. Our first motor signal. Our first breath. A mental combination of the cosmos with the physical body. The mystery of life.'

"Cellular births for our birth." murmurs Cat.

Alchemy

"New symmetries always arise, to break old ones, much like ice breaking on a frozen river, forming flowing patterns from an initial single sheen…static ice eventually becoming running water."

It occurs to Cat as he runs his finger along the rim of a glass of ice cold water that the sun generates this molecular change. That life is warm yet there is also a subconscious relationship that the earth has with the moon to help guide its fertility.

The night is important to the mind. There exists a counterbalance between day and night; between sun and moon; body and soul; life and death.

"…be still and know that I am God…"

'When our marauding ancestors became still during the last great ice age they established their cairns to the gods. Temples. Tombs. Totems. To recognise a unity with day and night in which all living things exist just as there is a unity with man and woman to produce life the sun as male and the moon as female both need each other as we both need them for life to continue…it is known that large neolithic monuments such as Newgrange and Stonehenge were not only aligned to the summer solstice but also to the winter solstice which heralded the longest night…there at Newgrange…that vast circular tomb…the sun's light on the shortest winter day enters through a stone window box to travel deep inside to an empty chamber covered on either side with swirling abstract curvings…it is intimated that the lunar cycle was also respected for as the sun guides our lives here on earth the moon organises our lives in the heavens…a white divine light which can guide us through each earthly night…in which we may productively hunt or be led safely home…the moon a symbol of fertility…the reproduction of life…the celestial bodies above us reflecting our anatomy, The night sky, a dark blood. Yet, what is only now being realised is that this reality which is perceived as being of 'firm substance' when studied close up is all apparition…'

Cat is seized by dread: an 'anti-matter to life' is human cruelty.

'If there ever were crystal spheres on which the planets and stars revolved they would have been shattered by the piercing screams of history's victims. Sword thrusts. Spinning bullets. V2s. War. Power. Pride. Reducing all beauty and humanity to dust. Achilles dragging the corpse of Hector around the walls of Troy. A dead man's eyes staring up to a cosmic sky which is of no use to him. The violation of a soul underneath a whole universe.'

A downcast glance at Lisa.

'A fearful divine indifference to our fate brought on by our sacrilege of the natural order. Waste. Terror. Expulsion from the garden. Naked. Abandoned. Human consciousness. Our self-awareness emerging as we fell back on ourselves in a malelovent wilderness. Heeding inner voices. Belonging to us. Yet we also heed divine hallucinations. Clutch to signs from the heavens. In the end we more often than not cannabilize each other. Brutalise this world. Human fear. To be overcome. "To know thyself." Tight fists. The seizure passes. Cat peers through the clear glass in his hand.

'The secret alchemist Newton intimated that an object on the other side of the universe could bear some influence on a particle at the furthest opposite point to it billions of miles away.'

Clear water. To understand that only an alchemy of the mind is worth truly considering.

God's Cowboy

Cat sits on a chair with his chin cupped in his hand like Rodin's Thinker. He thinks of the television show Dobie Gillis. Considers how this statue was first placed on top of Rodin's Gates of Hell. Here was Dante looking down at the Inferno. Amongst the horrors he could see was a bound, starving tyrant eating his children. Rodin's The Kiss.

'Paoulo and Fransesca in beautiful embrace. This tender adultery discovered. Love damned…yet for myself I found my way on the road to Damascus, taking me to the Harold Park Hotel. I saw the prophets of the LORD up on stage. Three cowboy preachers defying the empty spirit of the age…I have tried to live by the holy truths revealed to me on that pre-destined night. Yet we all fall short of the glory of the LORD. Only by His Grace will we reach the Promised Land. How long LORD? How long? Must I put up with this wasteland?'

Divine Imagination

'The Divine Imagination is the true gold. Miracles in our thoughts. It has to be understood that what we observe around us may only be a fleeting idea of some divinity. Biamae only envisaged this continent when he was asleep. We may still only be in that dream; a 'pre-creation' state that will be acted upon when this 'dream the universe' evaporates…when Baiame too wakes up then a 'real world' may then be formed. In the mother's womb, in that first formative pre-birth epoch, when an embryonic brain eventually brings on an electrical field akin to the electromagnetic field of a whole universe that human consciousness arises. The brain is eighty-five per cent water and within it surge billions of signals covering in milli-seconds the equivalent of cosmic light years which are each nine and a half trillion kilometres long. Light. Our brain a mental retina to visions.'

Cat puts on his cowboy hat.

'This superconductivity of the mind to proceeed after death when, at last, that solid – the body – is totally dispensed. Thus, our souls in their coolest gaseous

state may travel to the stars, to embrace the kinetic energy of the universe, that ultimate womb carrying within it every form of life. When the universe dies we leave this womb too, to arrive at the sweetest eternity. The final conductive step of our spiritual transformation. It was Ovid who saw himself serenely circling with the stars after his own death…'

An exhibition catalogue photo comes to mind of two rows of doors propped up in the desert. The *Yuendemu* Doors by the Warlpili People of the Tanami Desert who painted thirty doors of the *Yuendemu* school. Each door with crisp hard edges. Like the rectangle monolith in 2001: A Space Odyssey. Dots. Crosshatchings. Circles. Swirling. Streams. Visualisations of a spiritual spectrum. Signs. For the mind. Of passageways. To another world. Patterns like the lattices of colour that the astronaut David Bowman saw as he was changed in every way to accommodate him to exist on some higher plane.

A kaleidoscope mind; unreal; consciousness.

'*The influence of our experiences to transform terrains of the mind like earthquakes changing the lie of the land. Undulating signals which is said build up connections in our membranes like the build up and gathering of galaxies.'*

"A new being." whispers Cat. A tingle runs up the spine reliving the moment Mat Bowen of the North Queensland Cowboys scores a try dashing off from his own try-line. Mesmerising the defence. An exhilarating run of a hundred metres to put the ball down under the posts.

"We call 'im bow and arrow!" exclaims the young Aboriginal man sitting on the pub stool next to Cat.

David Bowman. A hunter in the sky; slingshot in hand. This star child floating like a Chagall lover who has this Earth in his grasp.

Mind. Earth. Cosmos.

'The Three Sisters are all what remains of the seven stone towers that once arose above the grand valley at Katoomba, the seven stone sisters were a geographical feature mirroring the Seven Sisters that still hover in the night sky, a link that can only be imagined by the human mind.

The Paragon Café.

"Funnily enough the Ancient Greeks and the Aboriginals share a similar theme when it comes to the legends associated with the Seven Sisters Dreaming. We call this star cluster the Pleiades while in Australia they have been labelled the Meamai. To the Greeks they are the daughters of Atlas and nymphs to Artemis. They were also Nysiades or nursemaids and teachers to a young Dionysus. In Aboriginal culture many identities also exist around them such as being female attendants to an eagle who is now Sirius after being taken away by a crow who is now the star Canopus. Yet, what is common with both sets of sisters – Ancient and Aboriginal – is that they are often chased by a young man who lusts after them, but fortunately for these maidens, are turned into birds and fly to the constellations – as they do not desire him - he never catches up. He is represented by Orion the hunter."

Lisa finishes swallowing her piece of sticky date cake. "That reminds me of this story about a woman who was turned into a nightingale by the gods to escape a man who was trying to kill her. He's an eagle and never catches her either."

Death chasing. Yet, not succeeding. This is Lisa's final hope. Melissa's spirit to also follow her mother's path to a deeper eternity to the waters of Oceanus that swirl around this disc we know as Earth, that at their wheeling edge, there is amidst the threat of plunging into a nether world where sea and sky meet there are also beautiful islands where the gods dwell, of which the pure in spirit can join them-'

Mind Negatives

Leading up to the last days Lisa spends endless moments conjuring up many memories to consider mentioning on her tape recorder; yet a movie camera would be more appropriate for all this 'life recall' is as if looking at film reels through a veil. Making incremental adjustments in the mind in the manner a photographer slightly revolves a camera lens to the right and left to measuredly obtain a final well-focused image. Presently a look back in the mind at recent times since the return to Sydney; to sift through the very top of a personal Cenozoic Era.

PLEISTOCENE PERIOD

here is The Angel Gregor says its one of the figures of a famous Russian icon called The Trinity at the Hermitage he saw a young woman cross herself & pray in front of it she went into a mystical trance sometimes I like to stare at this print & meditate the one next to it is called Pennies from Heaven in Indonesia are large ferries that sail between the islands at one port boys in canoes dive for coins they ask ferry passengers to drop into the water Melissa & I would go to this shallow pool down the back of Hyde Park & cool our feet in the water we would spot coins on the mosaic floor & Melissa would say from the sky Tree of Life at the end of Indonesian shadow puppet plays this fan would be placed to let the audience know that the show was over Cat says life is a shadow play this puppet hopes there will be a tree of life at the end of her act Anu Krakatau is Angry Its the child of Krakatau which blew up & caused a tsunami which killed over thirty thousand people Gregor's guidebook reckoned you could have heard the eruption in Alice Springs Gregor went out to this volcano island on a small boat & you can see the foredeck in the foreground the volcano was erupting large plumes of black dust into the sky every ten minutes & so a boy on the boat who could speak some English told Gregor that Anu Krakatau was angry when he was on the island & touched the warm black sandy soil Gregor reckoned it was like connecting with the very centre of the earth itself a smiling stone face of a Khmer Buddha in Bayon with two pillars from the the Luna Park façade on either side this one's called Luna Park it's what this buddha reminded Gregor of when he saw it no mouth of hell here Gregor's also got this beautiful black & white photo of an old man sweeping a stone floor in the ruins of Ankor Wat as if he is sweeping time Manjustri Bodhivista of Transcendental Wisdom this bodhivista is holding a flaming sword to cut through human illusion in Manjustris right hand is a stem that leads to a blooming lotus of wisdom He's depicted as a young man to point out how wisdom doesn't necessarily come from living many years but from seeing right through to the foundations of reality Shiva the Cricketer at the SCG Gregor was really happy when India won the cricket series seeing it was the underdog I think those four dervishes dancing & blowing their flutes behind the stands are really great Apostles of the Universe I love the halos around these two Twelve Apostles it reminds me of the little halo party Gregor had at his place the halos we wore were made from package board sprayed with gold paint Sydney Voodoo Kings Cross Festival one of the two women was wearing this flower dress & wrinkled hat with frangipani flowers sticking from it this woman with the big glasses & frilly dress looked more like an acrobat than another bag lady I bought one of their magic dancing dolls for Melissa I found out you use a very thin fishing line weaved through a needle eye on the back the cut-out wiggles when you pull it tight here's a sepia photo of an aerial coffin in Siberia yeah they hang the coffin high up on a pole he is a shaman beneath it Kangzilla Centrepoint Tower looks tiny next to that oversized souvenir it reminds me of the kangaroo at the end of Channel 7s transmission when it would pull a curtain down over Sydney it helps me get to sleep Michael was telling me about a Godzilla movie where these monsters had mangled the Sydney Harbour Bridge & smashed the Opera House I really like this big etching of the brick factory chimney stacks over that large hill at Sydney Park see those two small figurines of an adult & child flying a kite? I can easily imagine they are Melissa & me all that open space I can just feel it go beyond the frame A cat with bird's wings a fish tail & webbed feet I love this woodcut Gregor got it off a friend she also does prints its called Metamorphosis an ice crater a leafless tree birds flying across a grey-blue sky the birds flew out of the tree as Gregor pressed the shutter he was on the way to a temple that had a flame that emerged from water a thin wisp bearded thinly dressed pilgrim approaching this Himalayan holy site I identify with this old man the back of the heads of two men in a car the old dashboard can be clearly viewed these two guys are pilgrims of a sort Gregor met these two Indian magicians in Byron Bay they noticed him taking photos with his big Agfa & asked him to go with them to Brunswick Heads he drove up in their sixties black Valiant where he took photos of their performance Gregor has showed Michael & I photos of two Indian magicians doing rope tricks balls coming out of their mouths etcetera they were from Newcastle huh I always think of the Star Hotel while he was up north I rang Gregor & had him go & see Blue they talked about Ian Feaweather Gregor stayed overnight in Bangalow he also met this artist in his shop-come-café in Brunswick Heads that I had introduced to Michael Brunswick Heads is a really nice sleepy old town we all hope it stays that way I also wanted Gregor to go to this pie shop in Lennox Head it sells the best pies on the North Coast Ulysses & a Siren at Bronte. Gordons Bay holiday snaps two female street performers outside the Northern Hotel on the main footpath dressed in pink leotards one is sprawled out in mid-air with her stomach resting on the feet of the two raised legs of another woman lying on the ground the flying woman has her arms & legs all sticking out like a star an Age of Aquarius shopfront with a Pegasus horse flying amongst the stars Gregor took that in Nimbin a guy nearby called out click-click in a sarcastic way not very friendly he wandered if people were sick of tourists this cosmic looking café Gregor walked into had an edgy violent feel to it didn't bother to stay a laugh he still buys Nimbin cheese a colour photocopy of a postcard of a nude Mr Universe standing on a stone podium in a park in a north German town called Bielefeld Bernie rides around without any clothes on his bicycle apparently he likes the sense of freedom riding naked gives him many of the locals love him Gregor spotted Bernie on his bike at the railway

station after hitching from Cologne to meet friends whom he'd met in Indonesia. An etching of a primal statuette of a nature forest flute player Eurydice Mourns I like this one of a Grecian woman playing the lute Sleeping Beauty a carving of a sleeping long haired woman on a wooden totem her hair & clothes flow gracefully down the pole which has small pointy wings on each side a three-point top struts skywards above her peaceful bowed head this is my favourite Gregor based it on a photo he took while passing through a place called Vilnius after being in Russia here are three more prints the Creation of the World Mt. Merapi Nicaraguan Boy garage sales markets op shops second-hand furniture stores factory outlets street festivals all big favourites Melissa you will have a lot of stuff due to your mother being a magpie like that white seashell toilet seat that red plastic carton holder you always use Margaret to pour the milk was bought by me at Surry Hills markets yes you remember them from twenty years ago & still don't know why such a useful thing ever went out of fashion if you remember Margaret a lot of nights after you first arrived & could regularly baby sit Melissa there was the chance for me when the body was willing to see a lot of music mainly at the Excelsior Sandringham Lansdowne & Evening Star also going down to the Caringbah Inn for Dave Warner he was really wild & threw a beer glass on stage one Saturday night Michael & I even went as far as the Mona Vale Hotel to see the Angels Michael shaking his head saying I was always so frantic no static life yes I am a collector of milliseconds IRREGULAR JEANS ODYSSEY JEANTOWN enjoying the ambience & majestically sitting on the sofa of the Hippo Lounge at Devonshire St Central Railway admiring the black & white photo of Zulu woman in an African frame with pointy brightly coloured triangles & then eyeing the rest of the stylish African décor those stylish photos of African women in the African eatery in Newtown being with Gregor buying a second-hand Russian samovar for only $20 at Rozelle markets going to Sideways Café at the back of Dulwich Hill at another café in Stanmore having cheap pasta in a friendly Newtown Italian restaurant on the second floor on a humid night amidst the simple décor looking down at the goings on in King Street at the Fifties Fair at Rose Seidlers House in Wahroonga the Winter Solstice Festival at Katoomba feeding the ducks at Burwood Park going to the Tivoli to the see the Hoodoo Gurus seeing sci-fi films at the Annandale Hotel where we also went to a memorial concert for Alan Ginsberg as well as listen to Damien Lovelock one night rave on about his off-beat suburban upbringing laughing as Ron Qantock comically opens his sisters exhibition Sticks at the Addison Road Gallery Hopetoun Hotel hat party for Melbourne Cup going Japanese restaurant saying not happy don't pay slow service but good food Chinese herbalist will find out what is wrong no need to tell him the Seymour Centre to see Jonathon Harris the Dr. Smith of Lost In Space & shaking hands with the robot watching from the porch of the Haberfield Rowers Club a blistering sun turning the white hulls of the boats-in the river below all golden always willing to frequent the waterways & parks around Drummoyne Haberfield Balmain & Rozelle fish & chips at Bronte at the cliff in Wattamolla n Royal National Park where G Gittoes is putting on a light instillation OCEAN FOODS Drummoyne best fishnchips in the universe by the memorial for the New South Welshmen who went to fight in the Boer War on top of Observatory Hill a spot where it had been family friendly to see the fireworks over the Harbour Bridge on a previous New Years Eve watching on pay TV with Master the West Indies slog the Aussie bowlers for six & listening to the 702 ABC Radio commentary exploring the undulating ridges around Mt. Bowen a Spring walk to the Carrimoor Cliffs in Royal National Park Little Marley Big Marley on one Remembrance Day going out to regional galleries such as at Campbelltown Hazelhurst in Gymea to si in the big garden & to the Fairfield regional gallery viewing these Uruguayan drums Gregory doing prints at the WIlloughby Art Centre driving back to BJs in Glebe for dinner looking at Armando Buitrons indigenous Ecuadorian images of poor peasants in Newtown looking at art from Western Sydney at Olympic Park liking a painting of a railway seat at Fairfield station going for a quiet drink at the Harold Park Hotel on a rainy evening to surprisingly come across a fully packed COMEDY NIGHT of NIGHTS! starring many big name comedy acts going to the Side-On Café to see third world solidarity films at the ROOMIES ARTSPACE exhibition in Hut 43 Addison Road to see the many paintings & drawings done by the so called street people of the city who through no fault of their own have been pushed towards the margins of society acutely recognising how they have regained a common sense of human dignity & self-respect duly deserved through their own self-expression listening to Bernie Hayes & Perry Keyes at the Rose of Australia in Erskineville on a Wednesday night watching him again at the Laughing Clowns Record Shop gig at the Petersham Bowling Club helping Melissa feed the joeys & koalas at Featherdale Wildlife Centre at the Murri Art shop on Addison Road buying hand painted Aboriginal hand cards watching the old Arab outside a pizza place in Harris Park before going on a bus tour of historical indigenous resistance from the Riverside Theatre to Liverpool to then see an Aboriginal urban play also having visited Macquaries House reminiscing about a primary school excursion to the same place returning to the South Coast to see Michael Gows AWAY! At the Jamberoo hall at the Basement marvelling at the jazz fusion guitar work of Michaels cousin & reminiscing when it was a cheap venue to go on Sunday nights in its pre-renovated days thinking of the time Deborah Conway had played when there had only been a small crowd of about thirty people for a late show going to the exhibition opening at the studios in Lennox Street at Newtown perception & reality at the Mexican Day of the Dead party at the South American Hut in Addison Road with all the large skeleton figurines & coloured paper cut-outs of skulls walking through Hyde Park when there were poster-size photos of Sydneysiders hanging on banners looking with Melissa at an evening shot of Turkish football fans in Auburn cheering at an outdoor screen as a Turkish player scores a World Cup goal never keeping still one Saturday night to be at some retro fifties dance at Redfern R.S.L to only end up at 1AM at the Seabreeze disco by Tom Uglys Bridge at Sylvania at Franks pizza place in Clovelly seeing The Hippos at the Bridge Hotel Brazilian samba at Darling Harbour at an a Capella refugee benefit night at this old stone-brick church at Darlington thus remarking about the Café at the Gates of Salvation & Voices of the Vacant Lot dancing to the cover band with those two Afro women the anonymity of death thus to be living intensely Michael could often feel the fear the phone calls at midnight I miss going to the Hernandez it was always open I could leave Cats place & go to that café I could be just like Marilyn Monroe in the Café of Broken Dreams annoying nowhere around here I can walk off my insomnia I would love a miso soup at IKU right now in Glebe drive me to Aba Pastry in Dulwich Hill or that late night Pakistani eatery in Enmore or even to Victoria Yeeros NO! Lisa the phone was slammed down as if to exist outside time & space the world stayed still through these eyes it was without time because it seemed each day was the same time passing in a still world timeless using hills hoist old poles to hold up a shadecloth Waiting for Godot Michael saw this play Max Cullen was very comic helped to make play like pantomime that worked well with the incidental music I also saw him in The Tempest was Caliban magical I went to an exhibition opening of his paintings in Paddington the same days stay in Michael we saw the Bangarra Dance Company a program was sent to Karin she always liked going to Belvoir Street looking over the wide stretch of water from the Abbotsford boat club while having a sunset dinner calling it Swan Lake in front of the Archibald Fountain Theseus pulling back the head of the Minotaur y the horns beside a winged Waverly Cemetery white angel looking over the sea black minotaurs on the cliffs a large carved wooden totem next to a row of six foot high angel wings made from corrugated iron in a park overlooking the ocean a large wooden horse a wooden wall Troy at Balmoral Beach by the rotunda watching Shakespeare-by-the-Sea sprawled on the grass as a drowning Lady Ophelia Fenwick loks like Bob Hope DANNY AND THE DEEP BLUE SEA a comically screwed up face with a fist aimed at DANNY on this Darlinghurst Theatre poster at an outside table of the Oyster Bar situated on the walkway to the Opera House enjoying the harbour view I walked off with a French friend of Caterinas who had returned from the Thai-Burma border she worked with some French medical group in refugee camps after a year of living alone this street party felt too big for her also Caterina & I had met her at that big bookshop on George Street that sold thousands of cheap books & came back to this party on the bus so I already got to know her a bit the Assyrian students Michael translated for where they learnt English out in western Sydney had lived in Athens for a few years before coming here I got on well with them they thought the Athenians were much friendlier than the Australians LANDED at SIDETRACK THEATRE it was about the way refugee kids feel went with a casual teacher from work agreed the classroom scenes with the students struggling to learn English were perfect the overhead projector sheets looked like ones we had used sounds good you would have liked this teacher at the moment she is working in an orphanage in the Balkans another gypsy like Karin a pause in hindsight I should have taken you up to the family dinner of where I did a stint as a teachers aide again for a couple of months in Marrickville a big dinner is put on by the teachers of the intensive language unit all sorts of food from all over the world is brought along by the kids lots of music & dancing afterwards there are lots of Sierre Leone students learning English there at the moment & they're really good dancers as you can imagine however this wizened fifty-something Thai aide really writhe & elegant would just move smoothly & superbly around the dance floor a really amazing woman a great sense of humour as well as very compassionate a stand out she understands how these students feel having to live so far away from their first homes we got on well collecting free mulch with Master at the Marrickville Community Nursery inside the Addison Centre with all its old army barracks we

bought a Darwin frangipani to put beside the outside toilet we found out that in the old days frangipanis were planted next to the outhouse to provide a fragrant aroma for the guy who had to clear it out it was a bit of practical suburban trivia that really impressed us Michaels father & his tomatoes cucumbers & lettuce ODIs that Latin American plaza at Central Railway knees bent so the head is at the same level as Juan Azurduy de Padivio (1780-1862) a Bolivian female guerrilla fighter Michael shaking the hand of the Mexican Benito Juaz (1860-1872) he said there should have been a bust of Macandel who led a rebellion in Haiti the Cuban writer Alejo Carpenter had turned him into a butterfly Cat is standing next to Simon Bolivar (1783-1830) according to Cat he was called the George Washington of South America Gregor looks very serious as he stands beside Jose Marti (1853-1895) revered in Cuba like Augusto Sandino in Nicaragua hey BUST-er! A giggle that's what I yelled out after these photos were taken after going to the monthly markets at Shannon Reserve we intended to go to the AMA building at the Quay to see Legs on the Wall only a few days later was my final coming to the hospital I am with Caterina at MARRICKVILLE TOWN HALL Caterina was all excited talking about how the companeros heralding their now acclaimed Guatemalan peacemaker! In her words Lisa it is like Beatrice displaying the full glory of the Christian heaven! Yes! A Second Coming! I used to hear her say how many comings to this hospital bed? too many too many I whisper going to the Kings Cross Festival Master suggested we go fishing what he meant was we see Eva Trout who performed on the day they nearly made it big in the States but at the final step were overlooked by the promoters Edmund Steph all brilliant unknown performers the most vulnerable & disadvantaged people in our society were crucified with us at the Department of Security six weeks I Cat my fellow employees & the poor were stood down historical amnesia has redeemed the federal government instigators of such a shameful state crime yet such is the luck of those with power & such is the misfortune of the valueless Cat still hopes the meek will not be forgotten BANGARRA SHIP OF FOOLS THREE PENNY OPERA MOTHER COURAGE the Fifties Fair at Rose Siedlers House in Wahroonga the Winter Solstice Festival in Katoomba feeding the ducks at Burwood Park at a buffet at the NOVOTEL holding up the discount offer that is on the back of a supermarket receipt getting one of the two dollar discount lunches off a cheerful take-away lady at Marrickville Metro at the end of the day watching Paris Green at the Sandringham on Monday nights chatting to Penny the trumpet player who works behind the Sando bar on other Mondays shopping for health foods at Russells on Glebe Pt. Road seeing the Mighty Reapers the accapella group Voices of the Vacant Lot then Spurs for Jesus with Cat outside the Sydney Wilderness Society Shop in the city donating money into the bucket of one of their volunteers in the koala outfit listening to a free band outside a Surry Hills record shop at Elizabeths Bookshop in Newtown looking at the weekly DRUM MEDIA to see what musics on Graces camera shop on Victoria Road in Kings Cross at the end of the street is a good spot to see the New Year fireworks over the Harbour Bridge driving by the misspelt Tempple of Beauty Salon at Marrickville stretched out at Maundrell Park in Petersham after a Portuguese lunch at Gloria's Café the Vanguard a beer at the White Cockatoo Hotel Pigeon Ground Records & Clothing at Camperdown buying old records at the small book & music shop next to the Warren View Hotel at several swimming pools parks cinemas beaches shops pubs cafes festivals etcetera the Turkish Room of the Muse Café in Summer Hill the old pub in Como near the Georges River always wanting to go to so many different places so many day trips the koala park at Pennant Hills the lion park near Warragamba Dam Old Sydney Town the Hunter Valley vineyards Mt. Bowen & surrounds the Hawkesbury River having a milkshake at the Oak on the Pacific Highway watching the A-League with Master at Avoca Beach Theatre to see An Officer & a Gentleman at Gerringongs Town Hall to see the remake of Herbie the Love Bug Mudgee Berry Berrima Jenolan Caves Bundeena the large rainforest garden at Meadow Cottage the Hindu temple at Helensburgh Parramatta Park in the nearby shopping centre at a street lined with Asian restaurants in the spacious gardens of Hazelhurst art gallery at Gymea in the Japanese Gardens after visiting another regional art gallery in Campbelltown to look at Aboriginal works Casulas Reverse Garbage skipping around with Melissa in the large exhibition space of this converted powerhouse to dash around all the little parks neighbouring the waterways at Drummoyne Balmain Rozelle & Haberfield never keeping still one Saturday night to be at some fifties retro dance at Redfern R.S.L ending up at 1. A.M. at the Seabreeze disco by Tom Uglys Bridge at Sylvania popping over to see The Hippos at the Bridge Hotel the Tasmanian Wilderness photo in the outhouse on the top floor of the multi-storey Marrickville car park used in Strictly Ballroom Melissa cheerfully dancing in between Michael's twin nephew & niece all three children pretending they are running on the spot in the living room swaying their arms to & fro together moon walking like I had once seen at a nightclub with these black & white film clips from the twenties of these American negro dancers who seemed to be running on thin air above tables the dead can also dance here is Melissa playing on a Fred Flintstone car made of junk parts outside the Addison gallery a Junk Art exhibition was on with Melissa in between life size replicas of a silver emu & a silver pelican both made up from pieces of household utensils such as knives & forks bopping with the rap dancers in a lane at the Bankstown Bites Festival watching a Turkistan strummer Chinese dancers in traditional dress Bosnian folk singers people reading recipes written on skirts & t-shirts hanging on a clothesline an artist making a landscape out of food on the footpath WESTERN UNION MONEY TRANSFER to Vietnam the Middle East South America book clubs Kaleidoscope an exhibition by the homeless in the church at the Paddington markets buying a home-made cup with a spaceship design viewing a sitcom on the ABC about a radio station with a guy walking around with one of those mobile phones from the eighties as big as a brick in Surry Hills with Cat looking at COUNTRY & WESTERN paintings by Frank Gohier IN THE END a canvas with a comic book cover with a cowboy on the ground shooting at a herd of cattle with a hamburger as well as french fries & a can of coke on either side of him SUPER-SIZE FOR AN EXTRA 5c two pistols in the top left hand corner WESTERN no. 625 20 cents outside a collectors shop in Petersham in the shopfront is a large Bruce Lee mannequin inside are glass cases from the floor to the ceiling filled with assorted comic book memorabilia wind up toys battery operated robots it is all cluttered like Cats mind that little park nearby an oasis the afternoon sun on our bodies while we lay on the grass like that other small park in Erskineville across the road from that building covered in murals a sanctuary saved by green bans that warehouse nearby where all the props are kept for Mardi Gras in Erskineville with one of the motorcyclists who had leapt on stage with Harley-Davidsons in a P.A.C.T play of The Merry Wives of Windsor a birthday brunch for Caterina in the back garden of the Bar Italia that is when a bird flew out from under the coat Michael was wearing another miracle according to Cat said it may have something to do with travel maybe the travel of the soul I quip it was impressive listening to four violinists enthralling commuters in Wynyard Station with the Four Seasons buying cheap movie tickets at the UTS union bookstore two bottles of wine for the price of one at a Summer Hill bottle shop at Liqourland Fairfield for more discount wine at Gairie & Wattamolla in Royal National Park boys diving off the cliffs into the water below a whale spotted offshore deers at Garie walking to Burning Palms then in Wolli Creek walking around from Nanny Goat Hill to those jutting boulders which Michael had known since childhood as the Dinosaurs an overhanging cave which used to be used as shelter by homeless people in the Great Depression by the rock pool throwing Melissa up in the air with a blanket held up by a few punters in Master's backyard Lawrence Hargrave Drive around the cliff face by the sea watch out for falling rocks the Firefly Café in Austinmer fish & chips on Coledale beach the owner an acquaintance from the past beam me up Scottie sitting on the back porch of the Scarborough Hotel viewing the sea the OCEANIC CAFÉ at Central Railway by the rodeo rider on the horse the logo of Odyssey Jeans with Michael having two steaks for the price of one at Black Stumps in the UGG BOOTS shop on the way up to the Blue Mountains passing a weatherboard haunted house in Lawson with an old thirties Dodge outside Michael telling me how his young cousin with school friends set up a haunted house to scare another school mate at an exhibition at the TAP Gallery where a female painter does a performance piece seeing an amateur play there graffiti school murals buskers inside the walkway under Central Railway a wind tunnel we called a time tunnel I think all my photos are snapshots of millionth of a second time frames of my life a woman playing a harp in the tunnel the big discount books store going up Cleveland Street Odd Hours Smash Repairs CAR PROBLEMS? Pink Slip Drive-In Service Rust Repairs passing by the Kirk Gallery an ex-church in Surry Hills watching Michael dance wildly shaking his head at a typical suburban party going to Beverly Hills Cinema where there are always tickets for $6.50 with Michael in Fletchers Photographics in the city where an old school mate is a manager therefore he can get mates rates on developing film First Draft Gallery near Devonshire Street Australian Council for the Arts St. Lawrence St. Stephens St. Johns with Cat & Michael seeing Perry Keyes & band playing at a cowboy band night at the Annandale Hotel ASHFIELD BUNNINGS we would go there all the time with Master especially to the nursery after the local one in Mimosa Street closed that checkout woman is named Helen has a very dry wit as Michael would say a regular suburban Helen of Troy at the Cricketers Arms in Fouveaux Street looking at old beanie clad Aboriginal women on the television Melissa being hugged by an Australian Wilderness Society koala collecting donations Michael pointing to FREE THE YAGOONA 3 spray painted underneath a rail bridge on the Bankstown line at a yoga class in a large studio space on the first floor of a building on a corner in Wilson

Street Newtown where the wooden beams & old wooden floorboards can make a person feel they are in Nepal at the Walkabout Gallery in Newtown going to see a Mexican movie with Caterina at a theatre by FOX STUDIOS the Columbian Hotel a meal at EMADS TOM MANN THEATRE PEOPLE FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT NADAS Authentic Lebanese Restaurant in Elizabeth Street Cat at HOBBYCO buying AIRFIX models & at Napoleons Military Bookshop to look at cardboard war games at his place with his collection of Coca-Cola bottles from all over the world Melissa with faeries elves medieval singers & handmaidens at a Middle Ages winter festival at UNSW the Renaissance Players at Sydney University a large ring of sails in the park next to Central bands playing for the winter solstice at Marrickville METRO watching David Bowie sing he is afraid of Americans on a screen at the Riverside Theatre at Parramatta to go on a bus where an Aboriginal elder tells everyone on the bus of the local Aboriginal resistance & see a play in a suburban backyard at Blacktown dealing with the racial & domestic issues of four young black youths at Cornstalk Bookshop going to see a play where Michael used to work with refugee children in a demountable to see Kamikaze Kate about a schoolgirl who has the ghost of a Japanese soldier under her bed walking through Wolli Creek yes Melissa see these acacias they will die in a few years but for the moment they provide some cool shade for that eucalyptus sapling which will eventually tower over the wattles & outlive them many times over yet for now they protect the young tree I am weak but I can still protect you to give you the chance to outlive me many times over see this woman at the Addison nursery Melissa she is planting new trees giving new life to this exhausted ground Michael talking for a long time to the Latino nursery woman yes life is complex & which always has many sides you have to look long term at the roots the way things in life develop different strands intertwine you have to rise above slogans sound bites the nursery was a great practical example of THINK GLOBALLY ACT LOCALLY hope can always rise up from barren soil that was the day we saw those Chinese paintings in the gallery Gregor telling me how he refused to be ripped off with his bus fare in a small town in Ghansu province there he was fearlessly demanding some justice off the dodgy rep of the bus company while surrounded by a crowd of local people who thought he was a Russian Gregor was an Australian that day NAIDOC WEEK LANDMINE ACTION WEEK that Greens no free trade postcard with the Beijing man not the human fossil but the Chinese guy with the shopping bags standing in front of a column of Chinese tanks FREE? printed in the corner that home-made pocket book of Sydney's sub-stations a Greens election poster covered with a residents sticker saying the elections over all political groups should now pull their signs down on Enmore Road seeing Perry Keyes at Petersham Bowling Club saying in the taxi business that putting my finger up in front of Melissas amused face Master laughs Wally Lewis the Queensland captain signing tongue-in-cheek his $1 cheque to the Queensland State-of-Origin ref Barry Gomersall turning down the television volume & listening to the ABC cricket commentary to Roy & H.G. comment on the Melbourne Cup the Grand Final the State-of-Origin the Dream the Dream Machine swimming team Oarsome Foursome Iron Man Lance Armstrong defeats cancer to win the Tour de France seven times the seven hills of Rome shouts Cat you can overcome them all he says to me he says that Marcus Aurelius considered time to be a river head poked through a hole in the large cardboard that Master uses for his pass-the-ball competitions BALLGIRL! It's what I shouted when Michael took this snap at that barbeque talking about hot summer nights when he would stay up all evening to well past midnight with his cousins & sister dancing to rockn roll in the living room I think of Hot August Night by Neil Diamond Michael was also was telling people how Speedie would yell out FRESH B-B-Q CHICKENS! from the front of the shop & go down to the Earlwood Hotel to sell hamburgers Michael pulled out a charcoal chicken from under his jacket DOWN the GUTS! You stupid silly thing! CHAMPION! that's what his uncle would say to people playing the pinnies apparently he would put red crosses on twenty cent coins he personally used to play the pinball machines with so they'd be returned to him by the pinball man but he would then put red crosses on every coin hoping to get them all back hey Margaret here is something else a quirky photo at Pancake on the Rocks pointing to large black & white fake photos of spaghetti growing on trees yes if you dip the roots of a native plant in Seasol before planting it will help overcome the shock m.a.d. make a difference sustainable art & design centre Gregors etching of people flying kites at Sydney Park towering in the background silhouettes of three of the high stacks of the brick factory all looming on top of the big slope playing that party game where you stick a name on your forehead & from the hints of everyone else has to figure out who you are I guessed I was Madonna life is a mystery you know my name Bette Midler or Rita Hayworth so was very surprised to be Erin Brokovitch who is also a very sassy woman what did Cat say? an outcast honest-to-god Mary Magdalene able to think outside the square to expose the insidious moral bankruptcy of an apparently respectable corporate Goliath Cat claiming the so called respectable Swiss in a referendum decided to keep gold gained through crimes against humanity that was in their banks to secure the national money standard rather than release it to finance humanitarian causes in the third world what did Thomas Manne write in the Magic Mountain? The Philistine middle-classes is what Manne said barked Cat it was his favourite novel at the time constantly quoting from it while walking around his house philosophising as usual while on the television are very muscly Afghan body builders on SBS Russian News Cat says our minds are like computers data which is the raw facts enters into the computer system which is our minds & input from the stimuli around us put into the system & our brains process the information I put on headphones & listen to Maisy Star as he rambles on about the human contradiction of taping the Footy Show while going off to see a Motherwell exhibition in Annandale I like in his book of quotes comments like what one does is what counts not what one has the intention of doing by Pablo Picasso & the most wasted day of all is that on which we have not laughed by Sebastine Chamfort I laughed a lot when we went to the roller skating rink in Petersham having a karaoke night with some of Caterina's friends at this Asian restaurant in Dulwich Hill Michael said I should go with him to this big Chinese karaoke restaurant in Fairfield listening to Miles Davis that hall in the back of Newtown where I went to a benefit that thin woman in black clothes with short blonde hair dancing & singing so harmoniously on a brightly lit stage in a dark hall going to see the Beasts of Bourbon at the Gaelic Club in Surry Hills one time walking past Parliament House the litter of a recent protest it is encouraging to hear that there's been a successful protest rally to stop parking meters being put in at many Eastern Suburb beaches walking along the Australian War Memorial in Hyde Park looking at sacrificial sculpture of crucified soldier the naval gun pointed up Oxford Street Go Venus! I like how she came from a set down to win Wimbledon Melissa eating bright yellow lolly bananas while looking at a female accordion player outside Newtown station being told by Michael how a little tough gang leader at a Marrickville half-way went to bed with a teddy bear & sucking his thumb while looking at video of The Wild Ones with Marlon Brando bikies laughing in street with those large old fashioned hair dryers on their heads ATLANTIC RECORDING STUDIO Bayview Avenue Earlwood on this street the spaceship house on the hill Cat saying when he saw Apocalypse Now it was during a conscription scare when China had invaded Vietnam a woman turned to him at the end of the movie & said good luck he once told me that Oscar Wilde looking at the flowers on the walls from his death bed said either that wallpaper goes or I do the Mahatolla Queens from Africa at Balmain R.S.L Alan Ginsberg Memorial Evening at the Annandale Hotel Gregor told me on one anniversary of Ginsberg's momentous San Fransisco 1955 reading of Howl he was at a demonstration outside the Hermitage organising a trip to Cappadocia the van staled & Gregor could feel the eyes of the other backpackers staring at him however the van finally drove off here I am outside a Middle Eastern corner shop in Arncliffe that place makes the best falafel roll in Sydney at Coreli's Café in Newtown SPEED'S MILK BAR. 1960s – 1980s a glazed tile with a milkshake maker Michael's older cousin did that there's rows of tiles next to the Newtown Neighbourhood Centre a community artist invited the public to drop into the hall & decorate them he was Greek & wore these long flowing black robes this mate of Gregors is a social worker for Marrickville Council looks like a punk rocker he has been able to get a small grant to have young artists paint murals on the signal boxes in King Street in Surry Hills murals on some of the phone booths Melissa & I by a signal box in Earlwood painted all over with kites flying in a park also in Chippendale by two large silver mailboxes both shaped as rocket ships the Olympia Café in Stanmore with all the confectionery from the sixties the same Greek guy behind the counter like a living ghost Mao & More a Bollywood movie on SBS about Indian villagers beating their cruel English colonial masters at their own game of cricket so no longer having to pay a harsh land tax for three years then leaving all together from the humiliation of defeat yes Shiva the cricketer another Bollywood movie with well dressed cheerful gangsters singing: very very good very very bad! A Vanunu exhibit at an art college exhibition at the Fishermans Wharf Aboriginal burial poles also on display now its all office space & apartments viewing the sharks at the Sydney Aquarium at Flemington Markets early Saturday morning to buy flowers & vegetables always water directly onto a fern not just on the ground around it buying cloth from the Borneo stall at Paddys Markets Melissa playing with Gregor's Chilean rainmaker listening to the grains falling inside this sealed wooden tube Michael wearing Gregor's chocolate brown woollen Peruvian poncho filling up with soil the old fifties pots with kangaroo & wattle imprints in Master's backyard many zebra finches amongst the grevilleas Melissa picking up a kitten just born one of Master's cats the proud mother

of the litter at an exhibition of masks from places like Africa New Guinea Mexico death masks checking out discount records & CDs paper plane throwing contest at a multicultural day buying an Acapulco jumper at a South American shop at the top of Glebe Point Road passing T.J.Andrews Funeral Parlour on Enmore Road on the way to Newtown Station I had heard it had a good reputation & was inexpensive need to consider I get a card with Michael at a large rally in Martin Place with thousands of Cypriots for the freedom of Cyprus going to a RACLA talk on a Tuesday night at LA PENA Gregor telling us how he was once in the back of a Nicaraguan army truck & he & the troops kept looking up at this cliff they had stopped under thinking it was a perfect spot for a contra to drop down a grenade listening to Bob Dylans The Master of War Gregory goes to Fremantle he sees the Art Centre Pinnacles those Jenolan Cave concerts the blind Mexican cavefish weekend trip down to Bundanoon staying at the youth hostel showing Melissa the glow worms in the caves & cherry blossoms that wombat on the track in the dark bright colour painting of the city GOWINGS sign that is by a Kiwi artist Michael knows who lives at a flat at the back of a church in Newtown we visited him on one of our many Newtown excursions he used to live in a boarding house in Surry Hills Gregor saying some boarders are encouraged to do an art exhibition happening soon Michael had a Queen album before they were famous police use capsicum spray on Michaels neighbour to arrest him over a domestic on Christmas Eve the police laugh welcome to Howards police state The Night of the Black Fez! an intimate poetry gathering with candlelight at the Curiosity Café in Balmain have you ever noticed how the media get to disaster areas ahead of any relief or relief again millions may die in another world flu outbreak at a birthday party with everyone wearing large Argentinean folk hats made of foam from Reverse Garbage a small stone sculpture of an angel by a local Argentinean sculptor in Gregors garden a few of us trying to repeat with Melissa this mind over matter experiment from the school yard lifting someone up with a group of class friends only using our fingertips Michael & I wearing our sunglasses in the backyard having afternoon tea around that old garden table yeah we are looking very much like the stereotypical Aussie suburbanites Michael telling me how his uncle was waylaid in Cairo for ten days on the way to Australia because the Italian ex-destroyer he was on needed to fix its propeller his aunt was described as having fair hair in her British passport I've never had a passport I told Michael neither has he migrants stayed in barracks in the countryside for up to two years when they first arrived to some of them the large gum trees seemed like dead mens fingers Michael tells me one of his lifts up to my place on the north coast was with this westie family in this old black Falcon which had orange flames painted on the hood he was told by the driver there was an axe in the boot if there was any funny business another guy offered him a block of hash I remarked how I had been with Cat once at a café up at the Cross & we saw the owner remove some gear hidden behind a removable piece of skirting board wearing these home-made bangles made from decorative safety pins which I used to sell with another friend years ago looking at an exhibition called Saltwater Dreaming at the Post Office Café in Marrickville the painter saying how there is a great spirit who looks over all us from the Milky Way drawing on her spirit guides for inspiration I would have liked to have seen King Lear at the Seymour Centre with Cat saw Billy Bragg at the Roxteth pub in Glebe with Master & Michael going to the Kiama blowhole Paris paintings & drawings at Addison Road a birdbath at Masters made from a drainpipe with bowl on top amidst the star gardenias Master saying how Peter Sterling had said that Jack Gibson was more than a coach but also taught him what sort of person he should be lots of backyard philosophy raving on about how 95% of people seem to live in the mainstream that it only takes 3% of any group in the community to be psychologically considered as influential watching a doco on Auschwitz which had four inmates who escaped disguised as SS guards to Maoris doing the haka in the trenches scaring the Germans pets in New York City committing suicides from high rises Gregor remarks that Henry Moore was amazed at how Michelangelo made his masterful sculpting seem so effortless seeing Fellini doing a film with elegant extras at Roma rail station so much useless information Bush aid changed climate reports Michael tells me El Masri beats Darryl Halligans points record in a game against Canberra Michael with his nephew & niece who play with Melissa in the backyard they spot Frank the possum who comes down to snatch bread from the barbeque table when no one is looking I'm told by Michael that his nephew is fed meat by his grandfather a secret they both keep from his vegetarian brother-in-law in the car with Michael pretending to be different animals driving the car amusing Melissa using an imaginary ray gun to vaporise cars in front of us to get a clear run if only that was really possible listening to lots of eighties music Evie Let Your Hair Hang Down I talk about female lead singers the Divinyls the Eurythmics sweet dreams sailing the seven seas reminiscing about overseas big acts such as the B-52s Black Sabbath Freddie Mercury Status Quo David Bowie backed up by the Angels at the Showground as well as Alice Cooper Welcome to My Nightmare we play & sing really loudly Angels songs Sante Fe will I ever see your face again? tears down my face I remember when I was still in primary school being in the crowd at Kingsford Smith Airport to see the Monkees come to Sydney Danny Partridge also reminiscing how Michael would take me to listen with headphones to LPs in the open music room on the first level of Sydney University Fischer Library he had gone there all the time to study Michael a pioneer of text messages before mobile phones with his pager doing something right that his friends & family thought was clever he said while stoking the charcoals laughter otherwise he may have to change his name by deed poll to can't ever win! as he notes it does not seem to take much to put people offside Masters says Michael could have perfected the Arsenal offside trap talking about a Marx Brothers movie marathon on one New Year's Eve Master says heavy metal helps plants grow also best to plant in winter so the roots can secure a firm foothold for that first warm onrush of life in the coming spring there is a paradox watching Korean kettle drummers at that park at the Quay seeing Bus Stop at the Genesian Theatre Chris Isaaks on The Footy Show singing Blue Spanish Sky supporting Michael's nephew while playing junior soccer for the Earlwood Wanderers on a Saturday morning at Earlwood Oval where there are two opposing teams of five year olds running around in a big bunch together diamonds are a girls best friend Master tells us planets are wanderers he is inside the house watching the Saturday afternoon rugby league on the ABC I was in a champion school hockey team one of my proudest moments was scoring the winning goal in the final winning a colour competition in primary school with this drawing of a finch a study says if we hang out with our friends rather than with family there is a good chance we will live longer there is still hope for me I laugh watching Isabella with her proud mother & Melissa at a primary school assembly musical with fifty or so girls dressed in brightly coloured home made fashion outfits singing how you can never have enough gloves shoes or hats watching Creature Feature also The Golden Years of Hollywood with Bill Collins we saw Michael's younger cousin play the lead role in a dinner play of Dimboola looking at the rubbish man put back people's emptied rubbish bins in most of the street he was one of Master's neighbours beside ALAKEZAM THE MAGIC VAN parked near the house this big sign in Dulwich Hill carnivorous plants for sale with Melissa playfully placing our fingers in & out of a Venus trap the Lion King & Cirque Le Voyageuse in Arncliffe which a newspaper clipping said was about a gypsy boy's exotic time-travelling journey through India Egypt Europe the unreality of Turtles can Fly something meant to be like in this movie a young refugee girl gang raped by Iraqi soldiers eventually kills the child produced from this horrible union then throws herself off a cliff the horror the horror it makes one realise that it is as if people on this earth live on different planets such is the unreal extremes in living conditions Cat telling us that the Cypriot National Bank wants its people to stop doodling over all the notes including putting moustaches on a national hero but to Cat this is Duchampian as Duchamp put a moustache on the Mona Lisa in a country where people had no choice to vote other than for the leader they would put moustaches on the face of the dictator & put it in the ballot box Nick Caves The Proposition Gregors Byzantine icon painting of Master as the Messiah listening to an old romantic song long sacred nights oh what a wonderful world a Cadillac with two big Looney Tune eyes on the number plate Cat looking through the second hand books at the Apostrophe's Café in Crown Street next to the Dolphin Hotel the young Greek woman who is the owner is very fair with her prices she will often give a further discount from what's pencilled in the book I like the apostrophe that looks like a kite in between the e & the s on her business cards you can see there's lots of art Gregor even had some of his prints on sale I would like to have opened up a similar shop but also sell clothes last time we went there the cafe-owner had a benefit film night to help raise money for the Salvos also looking at a Rolling Stone celebrity photo lots of shots of Marilyn Monroe Keith Richards when he was young & relatively smooth skinned Marlon Brando in a wheat field wearing a dress John Lennon in the army book on one of the smaller coffee tables then that one night exhibition of Gregor's print a magical evening filled with a common touch of humanity a street guy there gave me a poem written on a napkin & said incarnated in a world of suffering & pain at this earth time we come to help & heal open your hearts to unconditional love & the secret to evolve Cat talking about the chemical nature of dreams Gregor saying he did some of his etchings because he had had his daypack stolen in Bogota with all his film by a man dressed as a bus driver like a sort of magic realism stealing his soul telling Caterina about an exhibition for Guatemala organised at a private girls school in London across the road a bookshop at the leafy end of Victoria Street Cat buying books on Dada & Duchamp a multiple black & white exposure of him going down stairs imitating his

descending nude yes Cat at school you had to learn the poems of Wilfred Owen & Siegfried Sassoon it's too bad you also didn't look at the experimental poetry of Zurich Dada said Gregor it is all too bad the intellect gives way to sorrow showing me that excerpt of Neil Cassadys writing meeting all the drunks with his derelict father in his childhood a unique upbringing Cassady writing to Ginsberg to say he could never leave a word out & constructing new sentences just for that word Neal Cassady sharing the same birthday as James Dean the eighth of February the day Pushkin died that mans Petersham house with the cartoon murals on the walls from the 1800s yes we had a good time at the Wombarra Sculpture Garden a lovely sunny day a clear blue sky a grey stone pillar a plaster Xian entombed warrior in the backyard beside a small white Navajo sculpture of a mother embracing a child doing those malachite stone sculptures in school a night shot of the thin tower on top of the Western Suburbs Leagues Club with its pulsating bright coloured lights plastic ropes of coloured dots of light wrapped around the trees on the footpath outside suburban kitsch having lunch with some of Masters friends who would regularly meet at different leagues clubs a muso taxi driver telling us of alternatively feeling like a young disturbed Robert de Niro in Taxidriver then as an amused Seinfeld as he enters into a half serious-comical conversation with a fifty-something businessman from Dubai who asks for information about the upper echelon brothels in Sydney can only think of Kings Court driving Frank Hydes son home chuffed that he is still valued quoting word-by-word Harvey Keitel in the role of pimp his view of some expensive brothel with his passenger not comprehending the surreal irony of the whole film-like situation an eight dollar fare cab in distance worth a hundred dollars in experience sitting also with a waiter who has worked in high class nightclubs in New York noting both the generosity & stinginess of movie & music celebrities after viewing the league memorabilia a 3-D cut-out painting of Ian Schubert talking about money & the underhanded commercialisation of former community loyalties walking through the canyons of pokies for the five dollar coffee & cake special as if in a melancholy circle of the inferno as Cat would put it Betsafe promote responsible gambling promote responsible service of alcohol stuck in a cycle of coffee & welfare going to a benefit night on the grounds of Breakout Printing in Glebe looking over the harbour at night inside a cavernous room with actual sand rock jutting out along the back wall listening to Perry Keyes his band bathed in red light among the ex-prisoners a man with red singlet dancing wildly that Michael recognised from the night Tim Anderson lost his court case a large monochrome collage on the wall of the policemen shooting that mentally ill French tourist on Bondi Beach JUST US newsletter a request to write to Zambian prisoners on death row I am on my own personal death row in this hospital walking away at the end of the night with a group of women behind us singing aCapella like a small host of angels reminding me of the woman who sings in the Cranberries Perry Keyes with Edmond on his accordion supporting Bernie Hayes at the Rose in Erskineville on Christopher Columbus Day a photo advertising Perry Keyes & the Stolen Holdens at the Broadway Hotel with Steph Miler & Bernie & Julia in support All Fridays in August from 8 PM to 11. 30 PM stars around Perry's name a sign in the top right hand corner of the large pub window that says THE FLESH IS WEAK AND THE GLASS IS TALL ONE WITH THE LORD UNTIL THE FLOWERS FALL by Arthur who always came up with a come back sign to the evangelical remarks on the noticeboard of the Anglican church across the road Heymaker singing holding my hand I am a leper to love a photo of Master smiling sardonically holding up a magazine SPEAKING IN TONGUES waving his free hand on one of his trips to England to see the Ashes Gregor pointing out a painting of a Latin woman bought off these two twin women who had done community art with women in Bluefields Gregor had gone over with paintbrushes for them which he had been supplied with from the two twins going to see a ZULU movie called YESTERDAY about a woman dying of AIDS who wants to live long enough to see her precious daughter start school at the Moon Festival in Fairfield Bowl Baby Bowl! is what Cat Michael & I sing as we watch a documentary about these Melbourne cricketers touring India seeing Dutch Tilders going to the Hip Hop Club Oxford Street Cat ranting again saying the Ancient Greeks could never quite get around the idea that they would be dead forever talking about a philosopher who cornered the market in olive presses & sold them at a profit after a big olive harvest to prove that these wandering philosophers in their rags did know about business but preferred the pursuits of the mind over making a profit he admires how in Athens stolen goods are given to the poor Cat quoting Oscar Wilde who said that the only person who knows the real value of a work of art is an auctioneer reading out some bizarre incidents mentioned in the newspapers a man catching fire due to the amount of static electricity in his coat the Cypriot bank demanding that Cypriots stop doodling over their notes including putting moustaches on a national hero that secret files on the U.S. military stating a hamster could be killed by staring at it reading out looking at a Guinness Books of Records video which has an Afro-American woman with five centimetre long finger & toe nails talking about King Lear who said the voice of his favourite daughter was so ever soft & low an excellent thing in a woman George Monbiots Guardian articles on evolution versus intelligent design that life really has no ultimate purpose verifying Masters point that we best serve the world as mulch Cat also mentions Monbiots critique on what he considers to be Bob Geldorfs flawed attempts to alleviate poverty in Africa yet the ambition is noble & should be applauded listening to Phil Kastolides on the morning edition of Newsradio pointing out the theatre of the absurd in the newspapers Lex Marinos on a weekend Newsradio shift I have learnt such useful sport information that seems to matter to Cat Michael & Master that the likes of Warren Ryan has coached Newtown Balmain Canterbury-Bankstown & Western Suburbs that Greg Chappell told his brother to bowl underarm to the Kiwis that Alan McGilvray was a legendary cricket commentator going with Master to watch a state Shield match at Bankstown Oval learning of the intricacies of a no ball Michael recalling going with Master to see Carlton play whoever at the SCG before there was any regular AFL in Sydney watching on late night television the English cricket crowd put up umbrellas & the Australian fans taking off their shirts as rain could be a positive outcome for England to winning the Ashes which they did anyway a yurt that's in this Oriental shop in Ultimo on Harris Street it's a life-size replica of a yurt from Mongolia or Krystigan there were also heaps of big rugs from the Silk Road at an exhibition opening at the gallery next door to the Sanctuary Café which is like a long garage in the hallway of Cats friend whose whole house is filled up from floor to ceiling with fashion & design magazines reading the Good Weekend waiting to see a pantomime for Melissa at the Footbridge Theatre the Sydney Entertainment Centre that flamenco dance school at Stanmore Robert the Bruce was Brave heart bumping into Michaels friend in Macleystreet to go to that Kings Cross party dropping a coin into the Queen Victoria Building Wishing Well with dog with tape-recorded human voice at another wishing well with water hog outside Sydney Hospital at R.P.A. St. Vincents hospitals ART EXPRESS at AGNSW looking at turn of the century photos of Antarctica at the Mitchell Library Felix the Cat World Press Photos Gregor telling us how he used a hitchhiking service in Cologne to go to Bielfeld telling the woman driver who he gave petrol money to of how to travel around Indonesia seeing Billy Bragg speak at the Roxton with Master the Cococabana floor show at the Imperial Hotel in Newtown followed by Priscilla Queen of the Desert the Ashfield Carnival seeing the Kiama blowhole a beer at the Cricketers Arms in Fouveax Street at Corelli's Café in Newtown Gregor & Michael talk about watching Everyman series followed by the Twilight Zone on Thursdays nights on Everyman seeing Rios Montt staring at parading Guatemalan troops with mad wide-eyes 87 the Devils number in cricket the mini-sculptures exhibition at the Defiance Gallery Suzi Quatro at Hurlstone park RSL that band with guys dressed in pink suits at Bankstown RSL buying Perry Keyes music at the Laughing Outlaw record shop in Petersham seeing David Delves at Haberfield Rowers Gregors photos stolen in Bogota like his soul stolen Speeds family find it strange living in a house a box after living in the shop for twenty years in a French Café eating croissants near Sydney Town Hall with Teresa Michaels teacher friend she is with a niece six years old dressed in a navy blue sailors outfit her parents are trying to find out about some lost luggage after arriving in Australia from Frankfurt where they live Katerina befriends Melissa Michael & Teresa talk about a chance meeting they once had on this same street on a big anniversary of VP Day Michael wearing a Blue Junior black woollen coat given to him by another teacher friend who visited me once with him in hospital the coat had belonged to her deceased father who'd worked at the docks Teresa mentions meeting an old Russian sailor on her way to St. Petersburg who as a Red Army soldier served in a tank battalion on the Mongolian-Chinese border in the 1950s at the M.C.A Perfect Strangers seeing a multi-screen installation of people from Instanbul ghetto life Kuba by Kutlug Ataman Cat talked of installing a bank of television screens in his place remarks even having a video link-up to surrounding street life he saw a video of stunt cars making abstract patterns on the ground at the Ivan Dougherty Gallery I simply liked looking at the accelerating wormhole of stars coming towards me on his computer screen while listening to this haunting Russian choral singing on the media player Rachmaninov Vespers: Virgin Mother of God that video by a friend of Michael's of mutant aliens as plastic bags invading Central Australia Sydney Aerial Theatre Addison Road by a large poster of an Aboriginal elder ALWAYS WAS ALWAYS WILL BE ABORIGINAL LAND the goldfish in the fish tanks embedded in the walls of the basement level of the Hopetoun Hotel visiting a friend of Michaels in Wylde Street a frock party in Willoughby Michael looking like a bag lady a timber yard on Harris Street where Master thinks it maybe possible to get old rail sleepers for the backyard garden lying in the grass at the

park near Turrella Station like Andrew Wyeths blind Christina also in her own world recalling those varnished pieces of driftwood that were done in primary school yes a candle lit dinner at Masters where we all wore Georgian wigs sombrero the face on the oven glove who can do a two finger dance with Michaels mobile phone ring tone on Mexican cha-cha sombrero so always parents think he is under the shade Michael's nostalgia looking at photos of his uncle's milk bar a big engagement party in the shop his uncle standing outside it another milk bar just up the road called the Billabong the Earlwood Chelsea Theatre Michael saying if it wasn't for these photos of the milk bars you would never know they existed Michael went to this Wolli Creek protest rally & there was this booklet about the local history of Earlwood for sale at a cake stall there were old photos of Homer Street & the like a petrol station a store but no mention of the Greek milk bars there's also Galimis fruit shop this Italian business expanded into a big fruit market while the milk bars receded into history it was like the Roman Empire conquering & overtaking the Greeks a final resuscitation of the Romans after their best three legions were ambushed by the Germans in their forests Michael said how one time his uncle felt he was unjustly banned from the TAB for noisily complaining about the very rude way he had been treated by one woman at a betting counter he asked Michael to write a letter for his defence Michael also told me how his uncle once got a box of chocolates as a present from some visitors & he promptly put it up on a shelf to sell going to the Sydney University book fair with Cat who spoke very politely to all the old ladies working there making black cat masks for Melissa & myself with coloured feathers stapled to them Michael with a clown face with kids like Melissa at a sports carnival for them at Redfern Oval say hello to Gregor who is off to put up art by kids from an intensive language centre at a refugee seminar at Marrickville Town Hall at the centre was a concert by them where a Iranian girl danced incredibly in a modern style & two Filipino girls who did this mysterious candle dance twirling their bodies with candles in their palms the whole time African students doing hip hop we met their teacher a woman who was English but of Mauritian background whose liveliness reminded Gregor of another ESL teacher who was an Italian lively woman also filled with a witty lively expressiveness & of course there was this Thai aide who is an exuberant dancer & would always have the kids to prepare for the end of term IEC Graduation Ceremony performance that professional Iranian couple forced to move to Canada their daughter liked Australia due to bureaucratic immigration malice Melissa beside the stone dolphin sculpture outside the Addison Road child care centre with Michael talking to this old Lebanese guy in his parent's street he says imagine if your whole family & their houses were wiped out Cat had that blow up clown in his flat always punching it down & coming straight back up he said I had to be like that Cat is such a news tragic to be lying down on a Sunday afternoon feeling fatigued & have to listen to Cat answer out loud in the living room questions on the ABC Grandstands rugby league quiz Cat slamming the newspaper down on the kitchen table Lisa we both know what a sly bastard the PM is but Alan Ramsey is correct to say that what is also bad is how the factionalism of the ALP is destroying the party incompetents as ministers while brilliant minds sit on the backbenches those Labor career powerbrokers take their traditional constituency too much for granted they are treated with contempt no wonder so many battlers opt to support the other side looking at the groupthink of the Labor faithful at the German club in Tempe made him maliciously nickname the place Nuremberg those defenceless women missionaries butchered by Japanese soldiers should never be forgotten nor the public outcry of a war veteran who knows his mates did not die for the present callous political climate in Australia today pleasing to see Barnaby Joyce upsetting the Liberals remember when you could make a free phone call to Telstra to find a phone number always the industrial relations package to negate a hundred years of social progression ranting the Terrigal mafia of the Labor Party sordidly setting up its own candidates in New South Wales the Liberal Clayton pretend industrial laws Cat would then switch on the radio lots of tapes at Cat's here's The Greatest Story Ever Told taped at Easter Cat flicks through his tattered leaflet on Francis Schaeffers Swiss Lbrai Wiggles tapes Eurovision Song Contest clips Bold & the Beautiful episodes of Taylors return from her supposed murder Harvey Keitel worked as a court reporter the two Costello brothers one a reverend the other a Treasurer Geoffrey Robertson Hypotheticals there is one I saw at Cats place Geoffrey Robertson had suggested how a hijacked plane could be used as a missile everyone laughed Cat told me few people now remember how an AIR FRANCE airliner was overtaken by four terrorists in Algiers who wanted to use it as a firebomb over the Eiffel Tower or the Champs Elyeese thankfully the plane was recaptured during a fuel stop in Marseilles there was an old Hercules movie clip where he holds up a tomato with Aunty Jack dubbing him saying fresh tomatoes on special! just like Con the Fruiter that was when you showed me those old ads like Mr Sheen Louis the Fly those catchy jingles to buy Toranas Daihatsus the P76 the car for Australian conditions those Charger cars Graham Kennedy comedy skits with Bert Newton Ken Sutcliffe John Mangos you told me Cat that Graham Kennedy dubbed the Logies after the inventor of the television we watched those Dr Who episodes which had the original Matrix idea that bare-headed bean-counter with bushy eyebrows with his offsider yelling out ALL PRAISE TO THE COMPANY! in an underworld a Dr Who episode where it is supposed that the perfect being is one although apparently human is a machine without the disadvantages of flesh time I suffer in flesh time sitting on a bean bag at Master's place going into Glebe for budget Tuesday Thai meal in that hotel on the corner a string quartet at Angel Place the Renaissance Players at Sydney University at the Annandale Hotel with Master listening to Damien Lovelock who talked about his suburban soccer days Michael's seen him in the Celibate Rifles at the Strawberry Hills Hotel in it's pre-renovated days a ghostly photo of Cat in the St. Stephen graveyard at night after going to hear from the American Anglican progressive preacher Dr. Spong going to the Angel Bar late one Saturday night on the ground level at Burwoods Westfields a cheap healthy meal at the Metro Vegetarian Restaurant Oxford Street chile is good for sleep & capsicum is good for weight loss Sorry Day the many plastic coloured Sea of Hands for Reconciliation on Bondi Beach Tibetan Children's Refugee Art Tibet Gallery Woollahra Cat's watching docos famed Aboriginal actor David Gulpilil lives on traditional land ABORIGINAL TENT EMBASSY at the park outside Sydney Uni not just that big one in Canberra also saw that one on the wetlands by the coast around by Shell Harbour Aboriginal circle sentencing effective going to the Arch to pay the pinnies down in Stanley Street Cat says he dreams of flying around the city with a jetpack bushwalk through back of Leura at Golf Links lookout very windy viewing the magnificence of the Blue Mountains down by the rocky scenery of Saloam Pool on the way to Gordon Falls lookout a rainbow over the whole of the bush to a rock face that time after walking through Wentworth Falls to see a folk guitarist at night in the Conservation Hut that wide expansive horizon at sunset a ball floating in mid-air the Aztecs may have laterally developed technology a different way to levitate objects so much sitting around I wish I could levitate onto some flying carpet like the one in I Dream of Jeannie an illusion by Hollywood Michael tells me is done by using a blue screen to project the background Andrew Johns at World vs Australia in cricket travelling up to the Hawkesbury river to see large sculptural pieces donated to the community by sculptors seeing photos of priests in New York levitating people from whom they have exorcised bad spirits a schoolboy walking on a footpath practising his tuba Cats ravings David Marr says the Australia Council only wants $40000000 a few miles of freeway to really lift the Australian arts plays on refugees denied funding Cat remarks that government uses execution crisis in Singapore to slip through draconian industrial laws unnoticed without debate Cleopatra was Greek there were vending machines in ancient Alexandria that released holy water when a coin was dropped 1050 the Chinese printed blocks of type that could be moved around on a press no guarantee brushing your teeth stops tooth decay & so on all these many incidental moments conversations trivia hed remark that intertwine to make up the fabric of our lives Billy Thorpe & the Aztecs going to a Revesby café for a musical night in front of a big mural in Erskineville which has a woman smashing through a television set with a pistol theres Komninos at the Harold Park Hotel with Caterina at Poets Union reading at the Gallery Café Annandale the LILAC CAFÉ dancing with Melissa at the auto teller machine the Cookie Monster in Sesame Street always prefer a cookie to a world of prizes pasta at NO NAMES Darlinghurst a $5 steak in the beer garden at the Forrester Inn in Surry Hills City Convenience Store at Johnnys Café next door to the Hopetoun at the convenience store across the road owned by a Greek for what seems like centuries laconic experienced Hills Hoists man knows their sentimental value to many people listening to Under the Milky Way by the Church seeing smurfs killed in anti-war ad for UNICEF Michael says he a soccer crowd bouncing a large blow-up ball around lurch into a chorus when it is taken off them by security guards who refuse to return it but the crowd cheers when players warming up kick soccer balls into the crowd so the crowd passes them around Cat & I seeing a Korean film called T that says memories are like islands in a sea & that we row to each one of them one by one birds from a rainbow in one Aboriginal legend Cat says simplest solution is often right one so thinks the Mythbusters which says only truth is youll be electrocuted if you pick up a phone in an electrical storm Cat should be in brain signature research a swim in Yarra Bay La Perouse Hyde Park photo of covered Muslim woman with shopping trolley walking by redbrick house with black Aboriginal spearman statue in front yard Turkish delicacies at Pashas Newtown for Gregors birthday Michaels aunt had it better off these bikies who once stopped the traffic in Homer Street so she could cross the road with her kids although my cousin tells me

a few members from some other bikie gang once walked into the milk bar & threatened my uncle he pointed a huge bread knife at them & said if you hurt me I will also bring a couple of you down with me apparently they just turned around & walked out sounds like folklore Mick laughs Gregor I ought to let you know that the first Greek who came to Brisbane back in the 1830s was from Ithaca same place as your mate Odysseus the Greeks & the Italians worked in the cane fields along with the Murris so when they opened up boarding houses in Brisbane they were fair to the Aborigines because they knew about their special treatment at this Glebe dinner party in this great old rundown house which you would have loved I met an Italian-Australian documentary maker who told me about these 2 Italian reds who were originally internees from the war they complained about the work conditions on the cane fields they were so unpopular with the Italians who were fascists that one of them was killed Gregor is sullen it is the sort of history footnote you dont hear much about like the American Negro soldiers billeted on the South Bank because white soldiers would shoot at them never mind the Battle of Brisbane between the Yanks & the Aussies as they say out of sight out of mind I quip a frown I would not mind having my faith in our democracy restored silence it is not bad enough that Australian governments helped to train the Indonesian military but I hear now we are helping to cover up the worst massacres so we can smoothly normalise our relationship with Jakarta we fondle China it is the way of the world I am finding Gregors analysis of the politically obvious a little tedious talking about how whatever is good for business rules how the Murris in Brisbane are holding out against the apartment yuppies through holding onto their identity by way of their art just like in Sydney the real estate values & rents in Brisbane & Melbourne are going up people being forced out giant apartment blocks & mega-shopping malls is the way global culcha is going concludes Gregor whatever is unique is being swamped by monochrome development people not realising how much history & identity is being lost Gregor looking at the road long white strips freeways L.A. a crucified American Indian outside a ruined Mayan temple an American Eagle at the top this mural by a Mexican was whitewashed a cover-up of a bloody history shining apartment blocks rising over skid row in Cronulla they are going to knock down that big pub by the sea The Workers Club is also going I remark all those new people moving into the area wont know what they are missing Malacca a new shopping mall dominating this old colonial port diminishing the feeling of heritage shining glass everywhere blinding out many pasts see the world Mick before it is covered in concrete playing forcings back at Erskineville Oval the organics market outside Reverse Garbage on a Sunday checking out the medicinal native plants wandering up to the ROOMIES ARTSPACE exhibition in Hut 43 seeing the many paintings & drawings done by the boarding house artists Aboriginal paintings in the main Addison Gallery Cat says he wants to be buried standing up like the horses of the Great Indian Chiefs like the racing horse Mummify John Aloisis raising his shirt up into the air like the fellow in the Raft of the Medusa after getting Australia into the World Cup after his penalty shot Gregor depicting him as an African warrior inspired by John Safron riding the Australian soccer team of a 32 year African curse watching the Kramer episode where we wears a garlic necklace to fend off a host of female admirers a short movie of people playing utensils as musical instruments junk food ads lead to more obese children swinging an old wooden ruler over the head tied to string to be a bullroarer I joke it could scare away evil spirits take it back to exorcise Cats place from my bad karma I even use it at Masters sometimes I think the gods have pointed the bone at me towlie from South Park says in his high pitched voice to the boys that if you go anywhere new you should always bring a towel a can of TAB drink BEATNIX NEXT ON STAGE the band playing early Beatles songs dressed in sixties suits those square haircuts this free performance at Enmore Park I like to sing Yesterday all my troubles seemed so far away Let it Be Hey Jude Norwegian Wood fireworks at night other cedar shed for etching seeing Perry Keyes at places like the Botany Bay Hotel on King Street which was crowded but intimate & in the backroom of the Carlisle Hotel in Amermbale Street off Australia Street in Newtown coloured dots on the black screen behind them as if lost in space Ica gives Perry $20 for a song I can still hear Perry Keyes sing Johnny Sattler broke his arm if its long enough straight enough right between the posts Edmond with his accordion Beks great voice Gregor did an etching of them at the SCG with the hill Greg Bretnall in the background doing that high kick for Steve Gearin to score in the 1980 Grand Final Palestinian bakers want to make the largest sandwich in the world a Whistler postcard Cat showed me of a young naked girl personifying Spring but with a blue cloak half wrapped around her a premonition of death a big concert at Birchgrove Park a stall of a group helping asylum seekers to restart their lives in a strange country after their detention release I was with Caterina & Gregor I loved the gypsy band as well as Mic Conway his brother Jim with MS playing this fantastic blues from his wheelchair inspirational for me that punk guy all decked out in a long cloak & pants made of fake animal fur skins with the two pointy bits of hair like a devil outside the RPA upsetting to see Satan stalking me the two middle aged labourers pretending to shoot him from behind at the pedestrian lights people laughing talk about the old days when we went to Teddys Bear Picnic at the Bexley North Hotel & saw Cold Chisel with Jimmy Barnes get smashed on a bottle of whiskey Michael telling me how this worldly wise thin middle aged Greek guy with a cigarette & pencil thin moustache told him in a car that you should always instruct people to turn at least two telegraph poles ahead seeing the band FRONT END LOADER still playing after all these years considered by some as an institution but Michael says hes never seen them to be photographed beside a yellow PEG band poster going to Bondi Junction to see a mystery thriller film about American terrorists who dont know they are dead trapped in an abandoned building it is produced by a young Serb guy who is determined to make his own way in the movie industry against all the odds especially against the snobbery Michaels father fighting off death at Canterbury Hospital like the Lacoon fighting off the serpents & in his case defeating death for now Cat going on about Killer Karl Kox Mister KKK of world championship wrestling with his brain buster hold from Dallas Texas the land of the white man where a liberal of the likes of JFK had been killed seeing Shaggin Waggin at the Annandale Hotel WENTYS Leagues Club that strong man on Crown St bare-chested holding up the FOR SALE sign above his head yelling out he is cheap the lovely woman selling the Australian native wood jewellery at Paddington markets the other woman with the second hand books that Columbian friend telling how her friend was killed shot through the head by the Columbian local mafia for not paying protection money she had bravely refused to be scared by them but it had cost her her life its a real world that people here have no inkling of yes the good pay with their lives who even kill a beggar woman who did not pay her percentage no pity no conscience I want to live where art Thou? Labor leaders killed in third world countries trying to defend the poor going down to the Scarborough Hotel to look out to sea the child within for the mother Blank Space Gallery Crown St where there was an exhibition of painted ping pong bats as part of the half-dozen community art project that womans chalky ochre paintings of the outback desert with her sketchbook on display in the Tally-Ho it says that Australias first police force was made up of the most well behaved convicts believe it or not other quirky facts like Ripleys Believe it or not like Mt. Isa is technically worlds largest city in area I Dream of Jeannie poster stuck up in hospital seeing that play with the Prime Ministers head stuck on the Jeannies body it was a very clever spoof of so many inhumane policies from that Reconciliation woodcut Reverse Garbage smoking Champion Ruby being able to buy the cheaper 30 gram packet more affordable the Smiths singing about being on your own at night oh well enough said Yul Brynner says do not smoke Father Bob says the spirituality of a near death experience correlates with present level of persons spirituality those anti-smoke ads dont realise that ciggies a mental lifesaver for me to overcome this slow death spiral that I am in that the others watch me slowly succumb too oh God where are You? What does Perry Keyes so poignantly sing when the world starts slowing down & the world goes wrong visiting Michaels Greek teacher friend who also wasnt so Greek with the Australian poet husband light a cigarette but cigarettes make me sick the Newtown Jets Bluebags Berries Michael talking where are You? In the valley of the poer in death's valley Neil Murray goes the distance just like a steam train on a broken track Bek a true siren with that magnificent soulful voice Edmond an accomplished musician sanguinely listening to Perry Keyes double CD meter album of the week on RN spraying on Hamilton sunscreen watching the Australian Open with Michael who is a big cult supporter of the Greek Cypriot tennis giant killer Macos Baghdaditis already beating Roddick Jayasuras century against Australia Gregors photo of Rembrandts large etching press taken without the attendants in Rembrandts House watching giving money to a person on the footpath who has a red ribbon on their shirt the donations are to raise money or AIDS research it was the Mexican artist Gabriel Orozco who said that ping pong is a game about the universe playing or is a game about how the universe is so arbitrary & how its constant Michael always associates the game with the migrant Asian students who always loved to play it a news item about a man who lost ten children & his wife & now has a new wife & ten new children ask the doctors about cancer & help to do preventative treatment & not just rely on the odds that may go against you anyway be proactive in front of a poster of a tyrannosaurus rex dinosaur eating a passenger for not buying a ticket with the statement for there being penalties Cat showing me his framed collection in row after row of U.S. postage stamps using stamps from all fifty U.S. states looked really good Michael always counting how many punters are walking on top of the Sydney Harbour Bridge to see how much money is being made by the

organisers & wishing he had come up with this great idea what is it with Greeks & money? I ask him Cat says that the Aboriginals used in all those Australia Day re-enactments of Arthur Philips landing without any convicts were from the country as the local Aborigines refused to perform he said this holding up his Newtown foam cover mug with the crowd number of 8457 saying it was the standard joke to state this number over the Henson Park speakers to the small crowd as it was common knowledge that clubs exaggerated the attendance figures Michael & his own whinging there is all this multi-skilling to save money on employing more staff while any student in a large class who needs extra help in their education is often overlooked by the overworked many teachers are driven to a niggling despair while many of the young & inexperienced of these educators are often thrown the most difficult classes those from the silent majority who do protest about the cost-cutting or the empire-building often have to do so on their own any casual especially who speaks out trying to expose all this corruption is the first to be the victim of the predators who all would have made perfect employees for the likes of the Stasi I stood up for a work friend only to end up forfeiting my own job now people in permanent positions have to worry about quality control in their work practices as a legal backdoor way of dispensing them sometimes I still think it has been more certain to be a casual although casual rights have been whittled as the sacrifice for better pay watching a cricket match at Coogee Oval with Master relaxing away from the busy beach having an Aporto chicken burger & Magnum ice cream at zoo learnt that seals & human hands are similar watching a late night doco on Mies van der Rohe by Richard Hughes had devised his glass skyscrapers influenced by windows of medieval churches glass floating above stone all that light entering into the building the spiritual quality of light Master telling us a drunken Jimmy Barnes from Cold Chisel had head butted a member from Spurs for Jesus on stage for no reason Jimmy Barnes on the community TV channel saying we should help UNICEF in its fight against child exploitation the street kids of Moscow I liked that night when we went out for a pizza at Leichhardt & dropped into the Harold Park Hotel for a beer & it turned out to be a big Comics-in-the Park night it rained so badly with the streets flooded helping Michaels friend who had her place all flooded out by a broken pipe a great night sitting inside the Marrickville Vietnamese take away place looking at the peaceful scene of the elderly man sitting on a seat with the overhanging trees further up was a corner café where we would been at an outside table buying rice rolls filled with seafood at the Vietnamese deli at Bronte Beach where there is that big council sign saying no pets allowed no playing of ball games & families happily ignoring it at the Asian shop at Marrickville Metro & buying fish balls also at Petersham Turkish Pide & Kebabs with a cheese & spinach baruk Cat always praising the Boeing strikers up Newcastle way who have been on the picket lines for months the factory migrant women striking for wages as well the Friday night markets at Chinatown as you know Margaret I really liked eating out-of-doors I could slouch about not slouching towards Bethlehem as Joan Didion would say but slouching towards Chinatown Cat rambles he is really losing it this time smiles Michael Lisa laughs standing beside a poster pole in Newtown with a sculpture of a dog on top a tile of Speeds Milk Bar in a community space at Australia St with many tiles independent science fiction festival at the FACTORY in Enmore Bob Hawke went to see Perry Keyes & the Whitlams did not say Ica yelled out to him while Hawke got into a taxi how about a band called the Hawkes that made Hawke laugh with Cat talking about the Big Fat Loser akin to the epsoloms of Huxley lore but in the same breath saying Tropfest has become Yuppie ROOF Hopes for a New Land next to Gregor beside a painting at an exhibition for refugees at a regional museum in Hurstville a girl wearing a red dress whose back is to the viewer waits pensively beside an old suitcase the journey to somewhere to a fresh start a goddess remembered at Marrickville Woolworths car park pointing at a large black curly wig on top of a dark blue Torana there is a Canterbury rugby league player who has that hairstyle explains Michael Lisa really liked getting you to go this supermarket well things at Woollies do tend to be cheaper than the Coles at Earlwood & the service in the fast line is a lot better with three checkouts in that Greek deli come coffee shop across the road we could pretend to be by the Aegean here is another car park shot in Marrickville itself we took turns to dancing with Melissa it is where they filmed some of Strictly Ballroom Michael smiles there was once a push to rename Marrickville: Little Athens although as Lisa would say it ought to now be called Little Saigon I still like it when we go to that Cypriot cake shop in Earlwood remarks Margaret dreamily brings back memories raving how fifty species per day face mass extinction due to the human race when it should be one every five years going to the State Mitchell Library after looking at all that natural light coming into it viewing photos of the homeless by Dareren Moyle who also lived on the streets I also enjoyed going to the opening of a Rozelle shop selling only Ethiopian goods & to a refugee benefit a cappella night at this stone-brick church in Darlington a church noticeboard WHOSE JUSTICE IS FAIRER: GOD OR THE BROWN BOMBERS? whatever happened to our anti-authoritarian spirit? our convict streak? we live in fear we have become a country of moral cowards the Addison Road Centre entrance A.R.C written in Coca Cola script on a large noticeboard SHAME AUSTRALIA: 45% OF ABORIGINAL MALES DIE BY THE AGE OF 45 NIRVANA a house on Homer Street with a large porch & surrounded by lush tropical vegetation & a large white-flowered frangipani CATCH-22. also in Earlwood a house with bird attracting grevilleas in the front yard a tall lemon scented tea tree wattles this house name sums up life really a laconic smile a coffin I insisted with Michael that I go with him to the funeral of an old school friend he had suffered from schizophrenia his brain fried from a cocktail of illicit drugs once dux a gifted sportsman & musician Michael had since dubbed him Little John as his body bloated Little John was still a brilliant pianist when he once performed at Masters we were overawed by what seemed to be miraculous I will never forget his rendition of Nick Caves The Mercy Seat with his body also wracked with liver cancer Little Johns obese frame finally succumbed to a heart attack a pianist who according to the visible music sheet played Bach at the end of the service as balloons soared high over a distant Botany Bay looking curiously up at the sky Michelangelo said about one of his painted figures no one will remember his face in hundreds of years Dodgem cars we were walking through the uni campus to have a drink at Manning bar for old times sake saw a lot of bands there like Flowers during Orientation Week what a bloody circus! I reminisced a lot to Michael that day we had met working together as information officers at Central for the Department of Education it was holiday work there were about twenty of us in a big office where we had to answer peoples questions about courses they wanted to do I was on my summer break from doing a painting course at East Sydney Tech I could have gone to Alexander Mackie but did not bother trying to apply Michael had just finished his first year of uni & was debating in his head about going on in our job we also had to take Vietnamese new arrivals to a room where they were timed on how long they could do an English test we actually had stopwatches it is so many years ago now but I think all those who finished within a certain time limit were given preferential access to an E.S.L. course whatever it was it was all just about money & Michael another guy & I thought it was unfair that anyone should miss out I could not get it out of my head that these people who had survived pirates & boat sinkings should still be denied a fair go in the lucky country we recorded quick times for everybody the three of us were finally queried about the test results by management not that we cared as the job only lasted six weeks they kept us on but we knew not to try & go back there next year I got to know Michael pretty well the rest is history you three did the right thing a smirk actually Margaret it was Michaels idea Margaret in primary school he was accused of cheating after doing really well in the annual exams he had to see the Principal who asked him questions like who invented the locomotive George Stephenson that is right the Principal was convinced he was not as dumb as he looked so for the following year he jumped from 4D to 5B a laugh Michael told me how at uni he failed an essay on Australian art for being too capitalist he did not even know what the word meant the only books he used were those on the official reading list so he started to write Marxist essays to pass the course I also showed him a way to forge the Registrars signature when he needed some backdated official letter dealing with his decision to postpone doing the rest of his degree trace the name with a blank piece of paper with the right letterhead underneath to leave an indent you can write in we nearly worked together a couple of other times but soon discovered there are a lots of work-scams out there in the big bad world to sell paintings mass produced by three artists door-to-door but had to say the paintings were ours we opted out I see these works occasionally in cafes in houses then came the chance to be hired on a commission-only-basis by a sales group to collect donations yet also turned down a long pause I was with Michael once at his mechanics when this young guy turned up off-loading batches of razor blades for about a fifth of the price you could buy them at the supermarket I could never do that but I guess if you are desperate for money there is the temptation to bend your own rules just like the government who goes on about criminal people smuggler gangs but apparently if you have enough money the government is happy to take it if you want a quick exit out of the refugee camps Michael says they are called 202s but you can only wish those humiliated people the best of luck the way this government acts it reminds you there is corruption everywhere at least the homeless who sell those Big Issue magazines in the city keep themselves honest it is a hand-up for them not a handout yep that is what they say Animal Farm a bank ad on the portable television beside the barbeque mood music for the branches still left open Saturday Night Fever for the suburban campesinos! announces Master This country is

becoming a miserable place filling up with accountants! Low interest rates but higher mortgages! Dont people see that along with all this increasing employment insecurity theyre still under the thumb? This house is now worth a million dollars but what could I buy if I still wanted to live in Sydney? Master points to the shed laughs another Nauru! Canterburys Sonny Boy Williams flicks away the ball as he is tackled Willie Mason scores a try as good as Napoleon! Bring it on! WHO LET THE DOGS OUT! Addison Road Gallery to see paintings of Enmore & Newtown all these dark windswept empty streets were curved as if to look at them through a wide-angle lens David Bob Hope look-a-like at Adoras Café beside Cooks River after walking along the bicycle path at the Glebe Rowers Club at the waters edge the food & beer was cheap there used to be this renovated warehouse at the end of Glebe Point Road that had these interesting shops Gregor said there was a store that sold icons a café on a second level had great views of the bay in Balmain Gregor had a studio in a large shed that also looked onto the water another artist friend had a studio underneath a church as for the warehouse it was torn down to make way for more apartments Manlys Ocean World there was a big swell that day the ferry was swaying so much Melissa had to be held she was so frightened I was reminded of the same childhood memory space scientists reckon there might be life on the moons Titan & Europa coyly remarks Michael when you look at all the strife on this planet the only other bit of dirt in our solar system that could claim that would have to be Mars where that war god is very much alive & well some of these space scientists reckon life first came to Earth from molecules on Martian meteors that would explain our war lust LAKSA NORTH CHINA Norman Gunston Aunty Jack The Sandman Vince Sorrenti John Saffron Reg Reagn Austen Taychus Sam Ketovich Bazza Mackenzie Rodney Rude Ron Quintock John Clark Roy & H.G. Mavis Branston Strop Luigi the Unbelievable Kath & Kim our comedian revolutionaries Graham Kennedy always for the underdog undermining television I will tear your arms off Network its one of Cats all time favourite films luckily the poster was in the shopfront & we took the photo for him Cat constantly reruns that famous scene when Peter Finch gets people to scream out their windows that they are as mad as hell REALITY TELEVISION THERES YOUR REALITY VISION! keep your voice down! Margaret laughs you will scare Melissa then in the next breath theres your death of a salesman! your modern day crucible! I am waiting for the day when Cat starts shouting from his balcony hold the line in your head like the ten thousand Romans did against two hundred & fifty thousand Ancient Britons! laughter Master loves Breaker Morant I can see him on the footpath mate what only matters is Law 303! for the bean counters the only choice they will be have is to pick the colours of their blindfolds! Rorschach Convict Streak Burning Bridges what are you singing? asks Margaret oh its just from Kellys Heroes replies Michael Ned Kelly? NO! a laugh its the title of a war movie! see the poster in the window? it has Telly Savalas Clint Eastwood a WWII black comedy its like The Dirty Dozen Lisa Melissa Cat & I once went with Gregor to this gallery called Artspace down by the Fishermans Wharf it used to be called The Gunnery we saw on these large screens different videos of Ned Kelly & this Sydney underworld crim named Neddy the scenes kept changing every few minutes & would loop from the end back to the beginning all day when theyre was gunfire we felt like we were in a shooting gallery on one large screen you would see two mirror halves of Ned Kelly in mid-air it was like looking at one of those asymmetrical ink blots psychologists use but with Ned wearing his helmet I guess its true to say you would have liked it seeing youve got Ned Kelly on your mind tell me an Australian who hasnt? remarks Margaret defensively such is life Nobbys Head in Gregors small Peugeot on the Sydney Harbour Bridge a traffic jam the bicycles of Critical Mass were blocking all the lanes to think it really did feel like an initiation when driving across the Bridge for the first time Im looking up trying to see any bridge walkers on the arch we were on our way to stay overnight with a friend of Gregors who was minding her parents place at Palm Beach Lisa sent a photo of the lighthouse to Blue Gregor told us of his recent trip up your way to pass the time to a wedding at Belongil I had him drop in on Jason & Madeleine to pick up a couple of my things he had a good afternoon with them Lisa had Gregor visit Blue to return a bundle of books they talked about Ian Fairweather stayed overnight in Bangalow also met this artist in his shop-come-café in Brunswick Heads that Lisa introduced to me it was my first time there a really nice sleepy old town hope it stays that way I would have had Gregor place in an order to this pie shop in Lennox Head the people there make the best pies I have ever had yet I dont think even they would have survived the whole trip one of Gregors holiday snaps two female street performers outside the Northern Hotel on the main footpath dressed in pink leotards one is sprawled out in mid-air with her stomach resting on the feet of the two raised legs of another woman lying on the ground the flying woman has her arms & legs all sticking out to be a star I met these two Indian magicians in Byron Bay they noticed me taking photos with my big Agfa & asked me to go to with them to Brunswick Heads we drove up in their sixties black Valiant where I took photos of their performance Gregor showed Lisa & I photos of two Indian magicians doing rope tricks balls coming out of their mouths etcetera the whole experience was all very different from when I stopped at Nimbin where I took this shot of this cosmic looking Age of Aquarius shopfront with a Pegasus horse flying amongst the stars & a crescent moon & everything a guy nearby called out click click he wasnt friendly don't know if people there are sick of tourists but this café I walked into had a edgy violent feel to it I didn't bother to stay Gregor laughs however I still buy my Nimbin cheese they lived in Newcastle & he promised to mail the photos to them a smile we drove up from Palm Beach on the Sunday the two magicians were not home so the photos were placed in the letter box Michael ponders on a photo of Nobbys Head while looking for copies of the Brunswick Head shots no matter checked out the beach the Star Hotel Michael sings Cold Chisel it's such a famous place to us Sydneysiders ever since that riot stopped off at Kilcare on the way home it was a good drive where is Lalla Ward? is she Rachel? holding up an old tape of The Bill Symphony under the Stars leaning on Michaels car in the Domain viewing fireworks at the end of the expected 1812 Overture finale that old sloppy joe I'm wearing is my favourite garment we'd got there just after the start Michael forgot the road would be closed so we were dropped off & he started to reverse out when the police shooed him onto the grass to make way for this official looking black limousine you can stay put mate that is what the copper said that was Michael with his deepest policemans voice laughter we listened to this South Coast piece which I think was called Thirroul the guy who composed it was welcomed onto the stage & I think he lived at Jamberoo however what really impressed us was a rendition of the theme from 2001: Space Odyssey Straussss Also Spruch Zarathrusa thanks Cat ghosts it looked as if it would rain so vendors were selling these hooded white plastic ponchos for five dollars it only sprinkled a few people walking around in these ponchos looking overwhelmed I love outdoor events but not the crowds looking down the bed intimate gatherings are my specialty the remark sounds deliberately caustic for the tape space what is still appreciated was to picnic at smaller outdoor events such as the short film nights at Elkington Park in Rozelle or to see Casablanca in the spacious grounds of Centennial Park what had been truly joyful was to see Before Sunrise on the enormous screen that emerged from the waters at the harbour foreshore even though everyone had to wear white plastic ponchos due to the constant drizzle the exact spot was by the Botanical Gardens where the Harbour Bridge & the Opera House served as a spectacular backdrop open space intimacy these were the two opposite dimensions that had to co-exist to obtain serenity often it was a case of one dimension rather than the other such as seeing a one-woman play in the tiny attic of a small café on Cleveland Street or venturing to the Cat & Fiddle in Rozelle to see underground theatre in a small stifling basement despite the quality of the performance in which the four actors used their powerful voices to express the loves they craved for Michael their simultaneous agonised utterances echoed the despair in his car that nigh it was a release to ascend to the main level the Gadflys lets dance Mick while I can here was a moment when it was good to be lost in a crowd to seek personal anonymity managing to lose all identity listening to Sinead OConnor on a day spent painting two large shopfront windows with many different coloured small flowers it was the one creative moment that had truly enlivened this dispirited soul friends of Michaels were renovating in Marrickville a shopfront & the big house attached to it from behind one of them was a doctor & she proved to be more than happy to speak to me about Melissas general condition yes I said the doctors at the hospital had been very helpful yet I had to say like any big institution a person could often feel like a lost forgotten soul inside them her practice is in an old restored Federation house in Leichhardt has this lovely black wrought iron fence & native trees to match I know because we went there just the once in the waiting room were lots of toys for Melissa to play with very homely Michaels promised to take a photo of the place anyhow we certainly had a good painting day very ambient for an activity like that afterwards we were supposed to be taken up to Than Huong 1 or Than Huong 2 for dinner as thanks they are both Vietnamese restaurants & are actually Masters favourite dinner haunts Mr Happy is the name he always books under a laugh It was a relief to go to this third Vietnamese restaurant where the woman who runs it is always shooing people to come in its always less crowded the food is just as good at the same cheap prices & there was no need to wait in a queue on the footpath for a table I could breathe a lot easier in there although the Vietnamese restaurant on Marrickville Road itself is still the original & best at a Thai eatery in Glebe its a small family run place & has a lovely earthy ambience it is across the road from Badde Manors which I have not gone too much ever since it

was renovated this Thai place is often near empty even when it puts on its lunchtime specials & on the weekend it is still an oasis to escape too which happened the time we were with Cat when the Glebe market crowd was more dense than usual due to the nearby annual record market a paradise for Cat a suddenly shaking arm grips the side of the bed there is the thought that seeking intimacy also led to chance human encounters that were now being consolidated as life enhancing memories with Melissa & Michael sitting with a Chinese family on a sofa a large traditional painting hanging on the wall behind them that is in Tempe we had stopped to help recharge their car battery better than hollering for a Marshall battery I joked at the time the family was so grateful they invited us in to have some green tea as it turns out the father is a painter beside an elderly Greek couple on a little porch of their Redfern terrace the old lady holds Melissa on her lap a card table with a backgammon board in the foreground there was a pub close by & Melissa & Michael were enjoying watching these guys roll these big silver beer barrels from their truck into this hotels den I had drifted down the street to this closed shop with this CAMERA LUCINDA sign in Redfern I kept walking & started chatting they looked so serene playing their game I remember when we were at Harris Park on the way home from going to Governer Macquaries place these 2 Arab guys playing backgammon on big ivory board outside the shop where we were buying pizza this yaya brewed up a Greek coffee for us read my cup I was to be promised a good life loving friends it was really good that Michael could interpret watching musicians around a pub table playing traditional Irish instruments The Thurles Castle it is on Cleveland Street like the Rose here is a photo of us at that pub playing bolle we ought to go one time to the Concordia Club at Tempe yeah it has moved over from Stanmore went there with Master one Sunday afternoon for a sauerkraut lunch as good as Unas it has white lace curtains on the windows that makes the place feel really kitsch along with listening to Surfin U.S.A sung in German it used to be a lawns bowl club but now people play croquet on the greens that is why I am mentioning it maybe ought to take Margaret a laugh she could make some new friends listening to Judy Garland singing Somewhere over the Rainbow at Carnegie Hall at the Castle it was Master who we met up with we heard Antony Green talk about the federal election system here is the beer garden the following week we went to the Cypriot Club at Stanmore to watch the election lots of good food put on met a guy who Michael worked with on that big Nicaraguan night as Michael here said there is always lots of food & alcohol all paid for by the local Labor Party branch he was right a deep sigh lost in space that is right Michael had looked encouragingly at his dreaming bed-ridden friend remember when I first saw Lost in Space as a kid at my cousins in their living room behind the milk bar my uncle had to serve the customers when the first scenes of the Robinson family came on Dr. Smith stowed himself away onto the Jupiter 2 we shook hands with the Robot WARNING! WARNING! DR. SMITH! Antigone she had courage yeah Michael felt a little uncertain that play by Sophocles was also at the Seymour Centre Cat got all of us cheap tickets at half-tix it is in Martin Place where you can really walk around reading the SMH the death of the worlds oldest orang utan the great dame Bhutan is moving from an absolute monarchy to parliamentary democracy thirty people in Kenya burnt to death the release of David Hicks compensation for an Indian Brisbane doctor who was thrown out of Australia & accused of terrorism increased bus fares in Sydney the Giacommeti AGNSW exhibition Ariel Dorfman Death & Maiden Ruth Cracknell was in the audience we were supposed to meet at the theatre but it was only at the end did we saw each other I had come from Cats place anyhow as it turned out we were only a few seats apart all that time Ariel it is another name for Jerusalem a yawn I am bored I am chairman of the board I think Iggy Pop said that I am playing cards at least I can get away from the maddening crowd being on the fringe of any large mass of the people yes joy on the margin not the centre even though I was amongst friends I cant tell you Melissa how frustrated I felt lining up in those long queues to see the Dalai Lama talk at Darling Harbour yet I was filled with a strong desire to see such a famous exile he was a person who struck me as still nourished with so much life I just waited exile home arrest sinking into the bed while the mind sinks into a mental quicksand the enforced conditions could be identified with this suffering body had confined a soul from the world yet a world in which this soul felt increasingly out of place nowhere utopia looking through more photos hundreds of people mingling in an Erskineville street outside a block of red brick flats a party without borders as Caterina reckoned this large crowd just too much so walked off with a French friend of Caterinas who worked for a French medical organization in refugee camps after a year of living in isolation this street party too big for her also Caterina & I had met Jacqueline at that big bookshop on George Street that sold thousands of cheap books & come back to this party on the bus so Id already got to know her a bit. lets go for a night ride up to Callen Park! ALL THE WAY TO ROZELLE where that art college is & the psych hospital! have a look at the lovely Florentine tower! wander around the big grounds! GO UNDERNEATH INTO THE TUNNELS USED TO HELP KEEP THE INSANE WHO ARE SUPPOSE to be OUT OF THEIR MINDS OUT OF SIGHT! TUTTI FRUTTI! COSI! watch that Con Frutti MOVIE in the MAD house! the likes of Gregor & Michael believed I still needed a positive outlet for so much anxiety & scratching a metal plate may have provided it hopefully my desire to paint would be woken up I appreciated Gregors interest but this project was never really going to get off the ground with Death Canvas JEWISH HOLOCAUST MUSEUM Stilled Life wed gone to this exhibition which included these abstract paintings by a friend of Michaels who had magnified sections of a kitchen scene with a cabbage & coffee saucepan painted by her grandmother her grandmother had ended up perishing in a death camp not just freedom but life extinguished we went to a gallery up a flight of stairs in Paddington where her work was also exhibited there was this large dream-like canvas with objects floating on this olive-green background to imagine a deathly immersion the curator would be on this ABC arts program GIO! DHL! BUNDABERG! PANASONIC! Michael reads the scrapbook Julian Beever the footpath artist from England lets play hangman! laughs Lisa who looks out for some paper & a pen to play this guessing game I got a better idea! announces Michael there was a guy who hung himself in a room where is there no furniture but a pool of water on the floor how did he do it? he stood on a block of ice! answers Cat too bad about anti-depressants! Popeye the sailor man says nourish yourself with spinach! A well-balanced diet! Eat your greens! Fish! Omega-3! Wholemeal! Less processed red meat means less bowel cancer! Follow the food pyramid! Not Pharaohs! Blessed are the poor for the kingdom of God is for them! Do not be without spirit! Cat downs in one go a full glass of red wine do not worry about your life! What to drink what to wear chest slammed with fist or about this body who can add even one single second to their life by worrying? Red red wine & anti-oxidants remarks Michael as he watches Cat go for another wine bottle after opening a Merlot Cat takes off The Smiths & puts on Louis Tillets The Hanged Man shows Michael a scrapbook which has a photo of a street artist who is sitting beside a five-foot long Coca-Cola bottle That is a drawing it looks so real In real life it is very distorted Id say its stretched out a long way on the footpath but if you stand at a particular angle to its right you get this normal proportional 3-D effect Holbein uses a similar technique in his The Ambassadors there is also those advertising logos on sport fields for television Lisa enjoyed a documentary on the opening night of this coastal outdoor film festival about a young guy in bombed out Belgrade who had lost everything & his family & found solace in taking care of all the citys stray dogs there was also this other one set in WWII Lithuania where this Japanese diplomat was giving away visas to the Jewish citizens so they could escape from the Nazis along a walkway in Hyde Park where poster size photos of Sydneysiders hang on banners looking with Melissa at Turkish football fans in Auburn cheering at an outdoor screen as a Turkish player scores a goal that night Queensland achieved a spectacular last minute draw with NSW at Telstra Stadium in the State-of-Origin remembers Michael he once said I had bored Lisa at a Henson Park pub trivia night telling her how Master & I had sat in his car when it was pouring with rain to watch the Berries play the Jets in a mud heap at Henson Park as well as these Newtown fans turning up to a game as aliens from Dr Who on their way to a fancy-dress house-warming however what I told her at the club she was impressed the casuals protesting about the corruption force transfer school gulag crazies get rid of the casual too permanents employment we will watch the A-LEAGUE enjoying THE LANTERN where you can have all you can eat for a few dollars it was in York St on the fringe of Chinatown lanterns on Gregors back porch just like having stars all around us the Asian Food Market apparently just like in the streets of Asia as Gregor tells us with food stalls masses of chairs & tables SEAFOOD banquet place in the main street of Wollongong those many steps a Thai restaurant in Oxford St also had to go up stairs I cant imagine climbing them a hazy bands of high key colours Lake George it is an exhibition of digital photos of Australian landscapes at the Addison Road Gallery apart from going to this lovely sandstone hotel there was a local gallery with the artwork of an Aboriginal elder on display Cat studying these Dreaming paintings now poor Pluto how could those scientists be so petty as to now call it a dwarf planet? Ronald Ryan moral hypocrisy the last man hung in this country the executioners song Gary Gilmore the rising house prices are a real financial strain not only for families who are being forced out of the Sydney market by greedy investors but also for pensioners like me who could never afford even the slightest rent price hike maybe I should have gone on the community housing list but that would be a long wait anyway Bukowski the writer for the dispossessed Cat recites over the hill a field of parking meters a silver forest or a town of old cars or a beach of metered women who uncross their legs when coins are fed to

them through slots the neon sun the rubber porpoises the land developers await you on the shore where is that from? If Cats intention was to distract Lisa from her own melancholy he has been successful a page can be heard being flicked over Michael Dransfields The Dancers it is dedicated for Queensland makes me think of the porpoise sign in Muriels Wedding youre terrible Muriel laughter Cat reads out a part of his framed Charles Bukowski Crime & Punishment poem which had hung above Lisas hospital bed I wish I hadnt gone to the track today I wish I hadnt done so many other things in my life but thats all chatter and looking back isnt it? There is always the next hill to climb the next fall lets get our legs back under us lets move on! that Dostoevsky was one tough son-of-a-bitch other poetry books are perused on Lisas bookshelves Steelbone Notes Ric Adamson Rabindrath Tagore Selected Poems Brahma Visnu Siva Age after age is slave to a mighty rhythm – At last the world-frame Tires in its body Sleep in its eyes Slackens its structure Diffuses its energy From the heart of all matter Comes the anguished cry – Wake wake great Siva Our body grows weary Of its law-fixed path Give us new form Sing our destruction That we gain new life here is Peter Bakowski In the Human Night remember when you climbed all those stairs to reach that room where he was reading his poems? Above that Darlo coffee shop not far from this hospital? it was a steamy evening a poem called One for Charles Bukowski Ive carried your books like bibles from Bali to Britain to north of Brazil yes oh yes in the human night the night comes down each star asks us to wonder at the distance between lives and wishes history and wisdom honesty and sin Gregor did some other Bakowski pieces Eastern European Song for Jacques Presser I Still we shudder awake on our thin rafts memory an ocean of knives: the stomach like a winter tree the axe through door and dreamer those train station goodbyes when humanity became cargo do you want me to read out more? Just this bit then III We believe that the naming of horrors is as important as the naming of flowers We believe each withered ghost must speak through us so we can begin to cleanse the horizon We believe when we hold a pen we are holding a swans neck And the swans neck is on fire This one too The painting and the girl Its night The refrigerator hums As the world seeks its comforts each house closing a last amber eyelid the girl begins to paint She paints a sky full of birds with each crow a liar She paints the mountain that envy must climb with all its fingers broken She paints an egg full of razors and the moon howling on the stairs like an orphan She paints regret returning again and again to the crossroads of sin and forgiveness She paints yearning: a drummer with bandaged hands and she paints a wish as tender as a snail She paints what dust beds moths and comets have seen She struggles with all of this on this night as small as a leaf and as large as Brazil thanks thats okay give me the book Suicide Our magicians tools: gas gun razor rope pill a leap with severed wings into crippled air the wish of pavements We wave our toxic wands over ourselves to the applause of dust that was a bit depressing Lisa it was real though Michael Melissa darling we cant hide from reality I like paying attention to the theme song of M.A.S.H Suicide is painless here is a poem for you Mick Graveyard shift Everything is bathed in yellow not a clear butter sun yellow but a sick greasy gnawing yellow We sit in the lunch-room men of all races: Poles Turks Yugoslavs Spaniards Greeks Italians Vietnamese here at 4 a.m. halfway through the shift all equal equally trapped Mindfield by Gregory Corso Thats Cat Stars Central the hole of creation escape hatch from impending light Uncreatures of space leap out Vivid fossils embedded in the night heres another one for the both of you Spirit Spirit is Life It flows thru the death of me endlessly like a river unafraid of becoming the sea Can I have a look? Sure Lisa here is one For Lisa, 2 I saw an angel today without wings with human smile & nothing to say the tape is turned over Gregor recites AND AFTER THAT The labyrinths that time creates vanish (Only the desert remains) The heart fountain of desire vanishes (Only the desert remains) The illusion of dawn and kisses vanish Only the desert remains A rolling desert That is from Federico Garcia Lorcas Poems of the Deep Song Lisa had a four leaf clover as a bookmark in that collection the next poem is from Pablo Nerudas Residence of Earth II Postino was such a humane sad movie that is so Lisa I am going to read out from The Drowned Woman of the Sky Woven butterfly garment hung from the trees drowned in the sky derived amid squalls and rains alone alone alone compact with clothes and tresses torn to shreds and centers corroded by the air Motionless if you withstand the raucous needle of winter the river of angry water that harasses you Celestial shadow dove branch broken by night among the dead flowers: I stop and suffer when like a slow and cold-filled sound you spread your red glow beaten by the water if we are going to be on a Latino theme here is something from Jack Keouacs Mexico City Blues go Cat! quiet Michael yes Lisa smiles Michael 184th Chorus Men are afraid to forget their minds Fearing to fall thru the void With nothing to which they can cling They do not know that the void is not really void but the real realm of the Dharma-Wow I thought reading that when I start falling in that inhuman pit of dizzy death I'll know (if smart enough t'remember) that all the black tunnels of hate or love I'm falling through are really radiant right eternities for me Here is Alan Ginsbergs HOWL I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked, dragging themselves through the negro streets at dawn looking for an/angry fix angelheaded hipsters burning for the ancient heavenly connection to the starry dynamo in the machinery of the night Cat could not resist having that on tape is there much more? inquires Margaret here is the tape. the first bit starts off in the shop then their voices are a little garbled due to all the street noise…descending through seven circles & Dante that eternal tourist in Hell who followed the conducted tour with various official state department guides who always kept him strictly within the officially prescribed itineraries never allowing him to wander astray into restricted defence plant areas or other top-secret projects of the Devil that he plotted out on special proving grounds and never allowing Dante to poke about himself because he was an unofficial observer - that is enough Cat giggles put the book back on the shelf okay okay for Melissa & other listeners that passage was from Lawrence Felinghettis HER William Carlos Williams [a siren] I repeat Asphodel That Greeny Flower The sea! The sea! Always when I think of the sea there comes to mind the Illiad and Helens public fault that bred it Were it not for that there would have been no poem- Cat I do not know what this has to do with anything but I still remember cheering along with everyone else on the school assembly when it was announced the Franklin River had been saved a saved world! However I will recall to you from memory excerpts from a poem called End of the World by Richard Hulsenbeck as we walk up Orwell Street This is what things have come to in this world The cows sit on the telegraph poles and play chess The cockatoo under the skirts of the Spanish dancer Sings as sadly as a headquarters bugler and the cannon lament. With a bow wow wow with a bow woe woe who today does not know what our Father Homer wrote They beat time with a coffin lid The professors of zoology gather in the meadows With the palms of their hands they turn back the rainbows the great magician sets the tomatoes on his forehead-the watermelons a symbol of life Michael was given two watermelons today by two different friends two lovers hold hands as the fall o their deaths at the WTC Panama votes to have their revered canal upgraded oh that little girl who hung for two days upside down in a tree after surviving a plane crash a counterfeit artist of famous art whose work is now in demand signed by himself Nigel Kennedy that off-beat violinist has a new CD out on the TV Dutch UN forces strip apart their blue berets in protest to being ordered to do nothing as thousands of muslim males are sent off to be slaughtered by Serbians this is peace in our time Australian scientists prove that Phar Lap was poisoned by arsenic in the US many Japanese tourists need psychological help after visiting Paris a couple of extreme cases are that one person thought he was the reincarnation of the Sun King another thought she was being monitored by microwaves however in general Paris does not meet up to their high romanticised expectations of the city of love leaving distressed reading in MAMBO the third of Earl of Tee in India invented t–pants for his Miloca bean workers in India & which convicts on a ship of James Cooks turned around to extend the pee hoe below decks t make the first true t-shirts buying readymade tandoori chicken at Lenards Leichhardt Mall reading about how a German driver obeys his car computer voice & crashed into a wall to watch Before Sunrise on that enormous screen which emerged from the water along the harbour foreshore peering back inside yet I guess intimate gatherings are my speciality recollections of open space intimacy two opposite dimensions that had to co-exist to obtain serenity so often it being the case of one dimension rather than the other: seeing that one-woman play in the tiny attic of a small café in Cleveland St to be lost in the crowd to seek anonymity that day in Marrickville helping to renovate a house that belonged to friends of Michaels painting flowers on the two former shopfront windows while listening to Sinead OConnor meditating yes with a cheerful history teacher friend of Michaels whose Swiss-French wife was a painter going to Normandy lost in the very long queue at Darling Harbour that had lined up to see the Dama Lama at the Hotel Palisade Lisa sitting on an outside bench of the Hotel Palisade enjoying the strong afternoon rays of the sun streaming down on her body we were there during happy hour this woman kindly helped me guide the car into a parking spot just outside it as I had done a really bad job of parking the first time about twenty people had been watching which made me really nervous she asked if I was blind drunk made me laugh she was really nice I told her I had stage fright. Michael laughs you would like the Palisade it is a historical pub like the Lord Nelson close by great façade with its name in big capital lettering up the top lots of space inside up behind the Rocks on top of the hill you just go straight ahead suddenly feeling cramp in the backseat of Gregors Peugot on the Anzac Bridge while hundreds of bicyclists of Critical Mass reduced the traffic to a crawl with Caterina & Gregor

at a Guatemalan afternoon in the courtyard of the old Childrens Court in Albion Street Surry Hills Caterina a Latino female vocalist & musicians stalls a talk at a similar afternoon for Nicaragua at a Latin American hut on the Addison Grounds a Chilean concert in the auditorium next to Radio Skid Row to remember Allende on the anniversary of his overthrow a liking for all things salsa had been cultivated at La Vina but an acute sense of insecurity that had developed over the break ups with both Timothy & Dan had also sparked a greater empathy to the plight of people eyes go watery an Indonesian fair also on the Addison Grounds a day trip to Berrima we had lunch at this old pub & went to the large Berkelouws barn to check out all their 2nd hand books an excuse to give me another chance to get out of the city as you know we ended up doing more & more little country trips in hindsight it seems it was the most natural thing for me to have gotten out of the city all together after you were born Melissa Karins letter Im a little cashed up as I sold my little bubble chocolate Morris Major that I used whenever I felt like getting out of London that American nurse friend of mine in Brackley near Oxford I would often visit made these lovely little coloured leadlight rectangles with dry leaves caught in between the panels Im sure Ive mentioned her to you before she works at a U.S. air force base that is nearby & I met her at the Stonehenge festival the Morris was as good as the Vauxhall I had back home I still think of the fake leopard skin that went across the top of the dashboard do you still remember the Freeway my first car? I should show you this photo of this old orange Holden Kingswood when I get back Henri was owned by the mother of a school friend & it had this chequerboard tape across the top of the windscreen as kids whenever we were in it we would always sing Henry the Eigth! I am! I am! etc Ive heard that Gregor sold his lovely little pointy Peugot for a bigger version Lisa sitting on a bright red couch to the side of a young man dressed in a green silk gown wearing a red fez with a yellow sash; he is stretched out on the lounge holding a red teacup with his head resting on the lap of his attractive guest on the wall are thin black vertical lines curling up at the ends into assorted curves The Beardsley Room after dinner Michael Melissa & Lisa were driven to Thirroul to catch the train back this good Samaritan who had now dressed up in his forties suit & hat took his friends in his old sixties Valiant car to the station Michael spoke to him about the poetics of Aristotle at the bottom of a valley in Royal National Park it can be walked too from Helensburgh station very peaceful very appreciated by a creek on a long bushwalk behind Springwood Green Hills Cronulla with Melissa in the water on Michaels old surf mat standing in front of a large photo that at the Survival Day concert I loved that day especially the afternoon I cant help but always remember the time I went to the Invasion Day March at Belmore Park in Central in Bicentenary Year with 10,000 Aboriginals from all over Australia a great memory Master & Michael were also there going free Sunday movie at AGNSW Melissa watching a busker in George Street wearing an enormous floppy red hat playing Christmas tunes hitting with a pair of drumsticks a home made instrument that consisted of two rows of hanging beer bottles singing ten green bottles hanging on the wall Christmas beer watching film by Michael Franti the muso You Are Not Alone the old Greek couple playing backgammon looking content saying hello offer Melissa a sweet playing bolle at the Thistle & Castle listening to the musicians jamming with their Irish instruments in the front bar like the Harp on a Sunday night on a sunny tranquil Sunday morning walking along the foreshore by the pier where the Balmain Ferry stops a coastal arcadia as Michael had called it having a palm reading with this burly gypsy woman in her exotic tent tomorrow we still have to go to that Marrickville Italian cheese factory to pick up some bulk ricotta Ive also made space in the esky for some packets of that cheap red salmon from that other delicatessen first thing in the morn is to visit local fish market ride Melissa clutching a newspaper article yes she has empathy Michael had met up with her at a Neil Murray concert & found out this gifted performer was staying with Lou she invited Master & him back to her place for a cuppa with him along with a woman who would always dance up front next to the stage her house reminded Michael of Masters place Master jokingly saying how the present Australian cricket team is made out of the same Dalek mould behaving mercilessly with the Australian captain as Davros Lisa relieved to hear how nurses are going to get more money off new Federal Govt to get them back so present nurses not overstressed seeing the Backsliders at Rozelle listening to a woman customer singing in a Newtown Turkish pizza place a powerful Carmen ballad everyone entranced including the waiter TV programmers often display a wicked in house sense of humour juxtaposing shows one after the other like Russian Revolution followed by Road to Utopia with Bob Hope & Bing Crosby or place offbeat show which has mild connection on an important holiday at Jaipur Bizarre Gladesville this Indian restaurant with flowing Indian curtains & lanterns come down from the roof photos of Indian goddesses Melissa Isabella Caterina Margaret & Master at a picnic in Whitlam Park mother & child up King St on an old double-decker bus from Tempe Bus Museum laughing with Melissa while watching a dog jumping through hoola hoops at a neighbourhood kids birthday party reading Dog Trumpet lyrics about suburb life woman with umbrella plays cricket at Hughes Park with Master James tells the wrestle hold Killer Kowaski was famous for was the Claw holding Melissas hand as she excitedly points at Inspector Gadget at ABC bookshop in Queen Victoria Building had to rush from Mary Martin bookshop York St to make sure Melissa would catch him in time Melissa with arm of the Sesame Street cookie monster around her shoulder while on a rocking car it turns out Chinese father a painter large traditional landscape Chinese paintings in the long narrow living room done by him the sanctuary of empty space on those uncluttered canvases objects floating in space as Gregor explained to me one time on the back porch Kandinsky considered shapes near top of canvas seemed lighter to him like they could be falling apart closer to the bottom same shapes seem more dense constrained heavy seeing two Mongolian films on video over two nights & feeling like am in Mongolia suddenly going up from Palm Beach to Newcastle to give those Indian magicians travelling around in an old Valiant the photos Gregor took of them performing their tricks at Brunswick Heads to live intensely sometimes feeling too much fear those late night calls to Michael that little rustic friendly Italian café in Rozelle with all the postcards & travel posters & specialist coffees gelato wanting to go for a midnight coffee at the Hernandez Café in the vicinity of the Cross Nighthawks to feel like one of the lost souls in Edward Hopper's painting of an American Diner late at night that version with likes of Bogart & Monroe Boulevard of Broken Dreams seeing The Backsliders large balls of fireworks over Enmore Park on Australia Day to end the festival giant slide at Gough Whitlam Park at Tempe chatting to that old Greek couple playing backgammon on the front porch of their little Redfern terrace that Chinese family in Tempe offering us green tea in their living room with large traditional paintings by the father after we had pulled over to give their car a battery start haunting music of Nick Drake took his life too soon listening also to Dog Trumpet Sinead O'Connor's music while painting flowers on shopfront windows of Marrickville home of Michaels doctor friend she helped Melissa eating Michael's haloumi cheese. at Marrickville Town Hall seeing a Guatemalan 'Beatrice' in her full glory with the full adulation of the Latin American community that encircles her buying prawn rolls at the Vietnamese fruit shop Vietnamese meals at the Hang Phuong listening to a recording of Three Men in a Boat at Cat's place the spiritual transience of night drinking red wine from bottles with Hermitage labels from Christchurch St. Lawrence at the Cat & Fiddle in Rozelle to see underground theatre in a small stifling basement four actors expressed the loves they craved for with powerful voices these simultaneous agonised utterances echoing the despair in the car that night finally released from this infernal space to ascend to the main level where the Gadflys were playing despite the crowd having a dance while it was still possible the moustached guy in COUGAR poster at Martin Place the spiritual significance of Balinese batiks on the back porch at Gregor's place walking through Campsie shopping centre with its huge variety of small businesses so many shop signs in different languages so many different languages spoken on the street a Suburb of Babel one-person play in a small attic above a café in Cleveland Sreet King Lear Seymour Theatre with Jonathon Harris Doctor Smith in LOST IN SPACE Cat shaking hands with the Robot DANGER! DANGER! DR SMITH! organised by LISA which stands for Lost In Space Australia we all laughed Michael yelling out LISA THE SPACE CADET! Carmen Antigone those other productions of Medea & Philomena LANDED at SIDETRACK THEATRE refugee children learning English Michael had said the Assyrians thought people were friendlier in Athens those Short & Sweet plays in Newtown Ariel Dorfman talking about his play Death & the Maiden at the Wharf Theatre Caterina says Ariel is another word for Jerusalem catching the ferry to Cockatoo for free during the Sydney Biennale but only wanting to go and see Cockatoo Island as most of the art was shalllow Casablanca at Moonlight Cinema in Centennial Park Starlight Cinema in Pioneer Park at Leichhardt Water Fools spectacular French street theatre with large effigies enormous woman wearing a bell shaped 19th century dress on a monstrous pennyfarthing bicycle fireworks rhythmic chiming music fireboats devils mythic beings wizards a female spectator with her leopard skin umbrella a man riding a bicycle across the water woman with babe in pram crossing waters…gods & angels in battle flames an exploding head a large floating bed barges a mini car driven around the Darling Harbour waters Ilotopie those colourful hot air balloons with faces on them at Homebush Bay listening to the furious pace of New York Spanish Harlem musicians in the Domain while playing Yahtzee..a huge movie screen jutting out of the harbour waters down by the Botanical Gardens Sydney Harbour Opera House.behind magnificent to see classics The Great Escape Before Sunrise Gregor considered many of his prints as positives based on his memories like

negatives in his head said he has been breathing out with all his travels now he was breathing in recording them & his memorable vignettes of life back home all these positives he is doing in his life now from the negatives stored up from the first half of his life Cat was so inspired that he went on to write a great review in his quotes book about Gregors art thus he went on to mention that Gregors carved zinc & copper plates are the absolute forms from which these prints are their mere shadows as we are only shadows of the absolute human form created by God those art market dealers who ask printmakers to scratch through a plate to destroy it ti raise the investment value of the available prints are as morally grotesque as those other cultural barbarians who pursued the burning of books which we all infamously know led to the scratching out of human life woe to the moneylenders & those who heed these vandals who abuse the temple that is each human life or that each life is a work of art oh yes yes yes yes yes yes hey sera sera hey sera sera hey sera sera hey sera sera hey sera moving gallery haikus on the Melbourne trains to read so it cannot be denied that it surely does seem as if one unjust catastrophe after another can suddenly befall us that truly is as if so much of life is not fair-

A shifting of a leg. Moving this body about on this 'white canvas' like some doll in a window display. Lying here always on display…Tiredness. The arm holding the photo steadily goes down like a drawbridge; eyelids close - other sensory orifices take over. Smelling the odour of body sweat. Hearing each breath. The rustle of the curtains. Human movement. Dry tongue on wet lips. Listening to other human speech far away.

The sun glowing on shut eyes. Blood red light over dark, blank vision. Sun spots. A large yellow medieval sun painted on a wooden floor painted in dark blue and covered with gold stars. There is a large face looking up at Rosie who is standing in the middle of this solar image with its circle edge of small pointy sunrays. Rosie holds up the firestick. Places the flame to her mouth. Spurts mineral turpentine from between her teeth to light up the large room with a big burst of flame. The firestick is placed in a bucket of water. Simmers as the fire-eater takes a quick gulp of water. Rosie looks at her audience. Smiles. "It takes water and courage to practice." A small, diminutive figure in a vast universe.

Eyes open.

Alone. Playing solitaire. To imagine a deathly immersion. While the tape whirs. The radio is on: Aung San Suu Kyi. A rightful ruler. Trapped. A hostage. Her power withheld by malevolent forces. This is understood. After all, a malevolent disease impedes any rule over this body. Fury.

The REC button is turned off. The cassette is taken out and Lisa starts to pull at the tape. Long strands of brown ribbon like the cord of the Three Fates wound onto the floor.

'There's your string theory!" A pause. "FUCK…No fucking stairway to heaven…'

A shaking chin, the photos are pushed away, slid back-

Another cassette. Placed inside the machine. The FF button is pressed. A fast whirring sound.

STOP. EJECT. TURN OVER. PLACE BACK IN. AGAIN FAST FORWARD. THE WHIRRING IS LOUDER. A SCREECHING STOP.

'Where is the beginning? Where is the end?' The top of the cassette recorder is slammed with a clenched fist. *"There is NOTHING. I would like to buried in one of those African totem coffins shaped as a seashell. I once saw on television a beautiful young girl wearing a white dress at some debutant ball emerge from a large white clam in a dance hall in Cuba.'* The cassette is flicked out. More thoughts: *'There was that day Cay & I checked out this second hand bookshop in Victoria street and then we went to this pawn shop which sold heaps of old cameras. It was on te way to Orwell street. He got this dictaphone and started reciting a poem. It's where I got the idea to record my voice...when we passed a*

stripjoint what did Cat say?' "We are like Tithonus who was kidnapped by Dawn to be her lover. Dawn asked Zeus if Tithonus could be made immortal. The request was granted. Yet, Dawn had failed to also ask Zeus that Tithonus also be given eternal youth so after many years his body gradually wilted, losing all its strength to become like some perpetual Lotus eater…alive but having only apathy for life…Dawn finally placed Tithonus in a room for her eyes only, where he stays to this day…so we too place ourselves in darkened rooms dreaming of immortality in our little screen." Thump of microphone on head. *"While our desire for eternal youth thrives on the big screen, even while our flesh sags… when we get home I'll show you a 2,600 year old poem by Sappho in my Times Literary Supplement. It was recently discovered, only her fourth full work known to us…it was on papyrus inside an Egyptian mummy…did you know that Plato saw her as an actual Muse…as an 'eternal force' who inspires art in us rather than just being another mere mortal producing it? Only Michelangelo has also being viewed in such an awe inspiring way. Nevertheless, Sappho makes mention of this legend in reference to her own ageing, it is the human condition to seek after the past glories of youth, to regret the passing of our mortal zenith-"*

'My flesh strips away at my zenith!'

The Invasion of the Mind Snatchers

A photo on the footpath outside Sapphos Books in Glebe looking proudly at the camera as if to scholarly imitate the famous female Ancient Greek poet; then pretending to be Audrey Hepburn in Tiffanys holding a take away coffee and wearing a shell necklace and large sunglasses just bought at the markets across the road.

"An imitation of absolute beauty as Cat would say." remarks Michael.

A nineteenth century gallery print of Odysseus and the Sirens on a window of an Enmore framing shop.

Lisa has posed as one of the black feathered Sirens that is singing to Odysseus who has tied himself to his ship's mast.

Michael stands with his back against the window and with his hands behind his back.

THE AFRICAN QUEEN. Posing as Katherine Hepburn with Michael as Humphrey Bogart outside a movie memorabilia shop.

Blowing a kiss to the camera. A skirt half pulled up like in the famous shot of Marilyn Monroe.

"Movies are Sirens too - according to Cat." remarks Michael to Margaret. "We sent a print to Karin."

"The guy who works in this movie shop seems to have some sort of palsy. I've been too polite to ask to find out but - at the risk of sounding patronising - he is very capable. I found him inspiring."

Celluloid constellations. A collection of movie classics, like Homer's Catalogue of Ships. Movies as ships sailing along mental currents. Film directors as captains. Actors as oarsmen. Posters as maps of this 'human navigation.'

Perusing through the racks, at Agamemnon's one hundred ships at the head of a mighty fleet.

War, 1984, Apollo 13, The Thing, The Claw, The Slime People, Terminator 2: Judgment Day, The Forbidden Planet, The Alamo, Dog Day Afternoon, Conan The Barbarian, Of Mice and Men, The Young Lions, Salvador, Thelma and Louise, From Here To Eternity, East of Eden, Singing in the Rain, A Clockwork Orange, Paths of Glory, Duel, The Andromeda Strain, Ben Hur, Grapes of Wrath, Dirty Harry, Blade Runner, Metropolis, In the Mood for Love, Mary Poppins, The Love Bug, Battleship Potemkin, Taxi Driver, The Godfather, Fort Apache, Vertical Ray of the Sun, Aguirre Wrath of God, Forty Thousand Horsemen, Merrill's Marauders, The Bridges at Toko-Ri, Il Postino, A Hard Day's Night. Help! Maria Full of Grace, The Magnificent Seven, The Treasure of Sierre Madre, Arsenic and Lace, Vertigo, Gladiator, The Day The Earth Stood Still, Star Wars, Battle of the Bulge, Fever Pitch, Fantasia, Big Wednesday, Sound of Music, Lost in Translation, North by North-West, The In-Laws, Lawrence of Arabia, Syriana, Shawshank Redemption, To Kill A Mockingbird, Wizard of Oz, The Blob, Alien, Platoon, The Sting, The Glen Miller Story, The Planet of the Apes, The Halls of Montezuma, Giant, West Side Story, Weeping Camel, Adaptation, Advise & Consent, The Man with the Golden Arm, The Sicilian Girl, BATAAN! TORA! TORA! TORA! Burnt by the Sun, Predator, Lord of the Flies, Soylent Green, Breakfast Club, Being John Malkevitch, Annie Hall, Cool Running, Mystery Train, My Big Fat Greek Wedding, The Italian Job, Midnight Cowboy, Failsafe, Twelve Angry Men, Birdman of Alcatraz, A Day at the Races, Die Hard, Goodnight and Goodluck, On the Road to Morocco, Romancing the Stone, Birds, 1,000,000 B.C., Romero, Solaris. Russian Ark, The Wild Ones, The Train, Manhattan, Some Like It Hot, The Towering Inferno.

Menelaus has sixty ships with Helen of Troy as his flagship.
Achilles sailing on the Last Tango In Paris has fifty ships.
Odysseus has twelve ships.

Ulysses Gaze, Mister Roberts, Breakfast at Tiffanys, Viva Max!, 24 Hours, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, Roma, The Great Escape, The Navigator, Matwon, Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, Ginger and Fred, Ulysses.

Ajax son of Telamon also has twelve ships.

Amistad, Psycho, Silence of the Lambs, Ocean's Eleven, King Rat, Rebel Without A Cause, Moby Dick, Reservoir Dogs, The Manchurian Candidate, The Seven Deadly Sins, The Raven, Oh What a Lovely War!

Philocretes has seven ships.

The Atomic Kid, Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?, Plan 9 from Outer Space, Meetings With Remarkable Men, Nosferatu, The Return, One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich.

Ajax son of Oileus, the lesser Ajax, has forty black ships under his command.
Tlepolemus, a son of Hercules, has nine ships.

Tarzan, Blow Up, The Summer of the Seventeenth Doll, Valley of the Dolls, Gallipoli, Forty Thousand Horsemen, 1900, Repo Man, To Sir With Love, The Man from Hong Kong.

Nireus of Syme contributes three trim ships.

Zorba the Greek, All Quiet on the Western Front, Night on Earth.

While the five Theban commanders of Boetia have fifty ships. They each reside on:

Radiance, True Lies, The Green Mile, The Seven Samurai, The Boys.

Along with these Boeotian ships, boats have come from all over the Hellenes under the banners of:

Boeotia, Orchomenus, Phocis, Locris, Euboea, Athens, Salamis, Argos, Mycenae, Lacadaemon, Pylos, Arcadia, Elis, Cephallenia, Aetolia, Crete, Rhodes, Syme, Cos, Myrmidons, Phylae, Pherae, Tricce, Ormenion, Argissa and the Magnetes.

In total a thousand vessels set sail for Troy.
"A thousand movies I must see before I die." A frown.

Troy

In the Trojan Horse are the following Greek leaders:

Neoptolemous, Odysseus, Menelaus, Diomedes, Thrasymedes, Idomeneus, Philocretes, Meriones, Epius.

Other Hellene commanders include:

Francis Ford Coppola, Peter Greenway, Errol Morris, Otto Preminger, Eisenstein, Stanley Kubrik, Alfred Hitchcock, Martin Scorcese, Fellini, Clint Eastwood, Mike Leigh, Kuwosaka, Spike Leigh, Baz Lehmann, Orson Welles, D.W.Griffith, Ken Loach, Stephen Speilberg, Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, Fritz Lang, Michael Moore, David Williamson, Quentin Tarantino, Emir Kusturica, Peter Weir, Pedro Almodavar, John Houston and Ed Wood with dress.

Who led Achaean warriors such as:

Montgomery Clift, John Wayne, Marlon Brando, Charles Bronson, Lee Marvin, Jack Palance, Burt Lancaster, Clark Gable, Ronald Reagan, Dick van Dyke, Dean Martin, Jerry Lewis,Sean Penn, Sammy Davis Junior,James Dean, James Cagney,Spencer Tracey,Peter Finch, Sean Connery,Harvey Keitel, Humphrey Bogart,Jimmy Stewart,Arnold Schwarsinger,Sylvester Stallone,Charlie Chaplin,Kirk Douglas, Jeff Bridges,Morgan Freeman, Kamal, Ernie Dingo, Austen Taychus, Robert Mitchum, Jamie Fox,Bruce Lee,Frank Sinatra,Harrison Ford, Bruce Coburn, Gene Wilder, John Travolta, Ernest Borgnine, David McCallum, Phil Sylvers, Woody Allen, Walter Matheu, Jack Nicholson, Robert Vaughn, Bob Crane, Tony Curtis, Jack Lemmon, Terence Powell,Anthony LaPagla,Lawrence Olivier,Don Adams, Elvis Presley, Bill Murray,Gary Since,Jonathan Harris, Errol Flynn,Pierce Brosnan, Billy Bob Thornton, Christopher Walken, Robert Cayle, Kevin Bacon,Charlton Heston,Telly Savalas,

Trevor Howard, Sid James, Van Damm, Jon Voigt, Henry Fonda, Terry Kinney, Peter Sellers, Micky O'Rourke, Ethel Hawke, Jackie Chan, Michael York, Bryan Brown, Michael Caine, Denzil Washington, Samuel Jackson, Vic Morrow, Red Skelton, Bud Spencer, Ed Harris, Al Pacino, Cary Grant, Gene Kelly, Gene Barry, Max von Sydow, Robert Taylor, Dustin Hoffman, Paul Newman, Burt Reynolds, Robert Redford, Dudley Moore, Richard Widmark, Mel Gibson, Jack Thompson, Bill Hunter, Russell Crowe, Anthony Quinn, Jose Mojica Marins, Donald Sutherland, Johnny Depp, David Tennant, Keanu Reeves, Noel Coward, Lloyd Bridges, Geoffrey Rush, Brad Pitt, Oliver Reed, Ed Devaraux, Michael Douglas, Clint Eastwood, Richard Gere, Sidney Poitier, Steve McQueen, William Shatner, Christopher Reeves, Peter Ustinov, Robin Williams, George Clooney, Liam Neelson, Robie Coltrane, John Cleese Leonard Nimoy, Robert di Caprio, Robert de Nero, Richard Basehart, Richard Burton, Paul Hogan, Richard Harris, Paul Mercurio, Groucho Marx, Bruce Willis, The Three Stooges, Tony Robinson, Hugo Weaving, Lou Costello, Alan Alda, Bud Abbot, David Wenham, Alex Dimitriades, Nick Nolte, Bing Crosby, Bob Hope, James Garner, George Peppard, Anthony Hopkins, Chips Rafferty, Gerard Depadiu, John Meillon, Roger Moore, Yul Brynner, Bob Mase, James Mason, Victor Mature.

A plump Charles Laughton stands beside Agamemnon who waits on one of the Greek ships. After hiding in a nearby bay the Achaeans are secretly returning to Troy to burn it to the ground once the rejoicing Trojans have pulled the wooden horse into their city. Amongst these many ships, men are boarding L.C.Cs to ensure they will quickly come to the support of their comrades in the Trojan Horse. Every ship has evil eyes painted on the bows and the landing craft and longboats have nicknames such as:

M*A*S*H, Laugh-In, Gomer Pyle, Gilligan's Island, My Three Sons, Petticoat Junction, Addams Family, The Munsters, Brady Bunch, Car 54 Where Are You?, The Monkees, Dr Who, Blake 7, Gigantor, Flipper, Astro Boy, Spiderman, Popeye, Spyforce, Aliens, Mutant X, Buffy, Zorro, Samurai, Combat, Scooby Doo, Wacky Races, Superman, The Waltons, Here's Lucy, Gunsmoke, Hawaii Five-O, Dragnet, Division 4, General Hospital, Dick Van Dyke, Temptation, Beauty and the Beast, Rollerblade, Petticoat Junction, Mannix, Carol Burnett Show, Ben Casey, Ironside, McCloud, Kojak, Fat Pizza, The Beverly Hillbillies, Happy Days, Mr Hell, Captain Scarlet, Mr Peabody, Mr Magoo, The Fugitive, Batman and Robin, Jerry Springer, Captain America, Monkey, Hulk, Don Lane Show, The Phantom, Bat Fink, Land of the Giants, Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea, Average Joe, Yes Minister, Neighbours, Pick-A-Box, Wheel of Fortune, David Frost Show, Lone Ranger, Goodness Gracious Me!, The Bill, Daktari, Days of our Lives, Flowerpot Men, This Day Tonight, Paul Hogan Show, Oprah, Blue Murder, Countdown, South Park, Thunderbirds, Judge Judy, Leave It to Beaver, Andy Griffith, Collectors, Perfect Match, MediaWatch, Minder, Colombo, Wildside, Kojak, Banajek, Fawlty Towers, Ghost & Mrs Muir, 60 Minutes, Angels in America, Two Men in a Trench, Sale of the Century, Who Wants to be a Millionaire?,Daizel and Pascoe, Spiral, Burnside, Six Billion Dollar Man, Dr Kildare, Get Smart, Tour of Duty, Roy & H.G., Roots, Prisoner, The Hathaways, Johnny Carson Show, Rove Live! Black & White Minstrel Show, Marine Boy, The Jetsons, Flintstones, Bewitched, Sweeney, Siberia Tonight, I Dream of Jeannie, Dobie Gillis, Invisble Man, Dukes of Hazzard, Torque, Sylvania Waters, Grumpy Old Men, Russian Dolls, Unit One, Space Angel, Hill Street Blues, The West Wing, Charlie Brown, Ali McBeal, Dennis the Menace, Heartbreak High, Acropolis Now, Going Home, Z-Cars, Mavis Branston Show, Little Britain, Simon Townsend's WonderWorld, Blankety Blanks, Matlock Police, Homicide, NYPD Blue, Sergeant Bilko, Treasure Island, Number 96, Desperate Housewives,

C.S.I., Rose&Malone, Charlie's Angels, Thunderbirds, Tom & Jerry, Bugs Bunny Show, Big Brother, Red Dwarf, Looney Tunes, Battlefield Galactia, Stargate, Prison Breakout, Bold & the Beautiful, Dallas, Playschool, Price is Right, Inspector Gadget, Fraser, Mission Impossible, D Generation, Rubbery Figures, Arrested Development, Race Around the World, Thomas the Tank Engine, Sesame Street, Food Lovers Guide to Australia, Jamie Oliver, Hogan's Heroes, Black Adder, Nerds F.C., Daily Show, Kath & Kim, EastWest 101, The Block, Banana Splits Show, Scarlet Pimpernel, This is Your Life, SuperNanny, Sister Wendy, Oz, Kojak, Avengers, John Safran vs God, CNNN, Carnivale, The Young Ones, Sex in the City, The Sunday Roast, Melrose Place, Northern Exposure, X-Files, E.R., M.D.A, Walking with Dinosaurs, Roger Ramjet, Star Trek, Footy Show, Monty Python Show, Chaser's War on Everything, Q&A, The Office, Scales of Justice, Hollowmen, State within State, Littlest House on the Prairie, ,Beatles Cartoons, Bandstand, Welcome Back Kotter, Partridge Family, Agathie Christie's Poirot,Green Hornet, Seinfeld, Australia's Funniest Home Videos, Blokesworld, Simpsons, Survivor, Archie Bunker, Dave Allen Show, Goodies, Little Britain, The Benny Hill Show, Littlest Hobo, Lost in Space, Phantom Agents, Bonanza, Ashes to Ashes, Life on Mars, The Beast, The Wire, The Eagle, The Untouchables, City Cabs, Inspector Montalbano, Top Cat, Mary G Show, thirtysomething, Aunty Jack, Time Team, Creature Comforts, Mr Ed.

"A talking horse. Of course! Of course! The famous Mr. Ed!" A clap. "Television is a Trojan Horse. Mick, have you ever thought that movies and T.V. series invade our minds like the way enemy ships attack a shoreline?" A bemused smile. "All the pretty horses…I'm talking like thy holy Top Cat."

A Burning Mind

Space.

Lisa peers out a window. "I love outdoor events but not the crowds…"

'I am heavy. In the constricted space that is my body. At ground level. It makes sense to me that when my spirit floats up I will disperse.

Lost in space. Yet to be intimate with a vast eternity.

Continuing to look out at the 'blue canvas' above. "I don't worry about tomorrow. Or at least I don't really have to. Tomorrow never comes as they say. Just get through one day at a time. That's what counts. I suppose. Gregor told me once he met this Aussie guy on a train in India. He was laconic, 'quiet spoken', a real bushie type; had the old bushie broad rimmed hat. He told Gregor that the day is a simple thing really, all you really had to be aware of was that the sun rises in the morning, that it moves along to be at its highest midday and that then it goes down by the end of the day for sunset. We just get on with what we think we have to do while that's happening. It's more or less guaranteed that the sun will do the same thing everyday. That's all we need to know. It's the only thing we can really count on. Yeah, best to think of 'tomorrow' in that simple way. Not get too fussed. To think of today, of each day in that same way…all…all…we have to really prepare for is…that one day we will never see the sun…again…'

A life which feels it is in a state of suspended animation hovering along the rim between life and death. All matter from atoms to black holes connected in the mind. Reality held together by a single mental gravity. The material equivalent

are the trillions of tiny vibrating super-strings in new curved dimensions that also unite this familiar four-dimensional world. Yet every personal world decays. Under a microscope it is seen as deteriorating quickly, while on grander scales the decomposition appears to occur at a slower pace. Yes, time is relative to space. A skin blemish gradually increasing over many weeks does not reveal the scale of an apocalypse where millions of healthy cells die in daily holocausts. This body is one cell in a universe in which a supernova – a cosmic blemish billions of light years away – extinguishes millions of stars within the time-relative blink of a hundred thousand human generations.

These eyes. The sun inside them. One octave of the symphony of the stars lighting up a whirring mental cosmos like a firework. Light transporting both time and space that may pass a micro-tear in the fabric of the universe…light particles could carry this spirit; at the very razor-edge of death a passage will briefly open up that will etherise it from this universe to another: a rupture between two total realities. The vibrations of this soul to be in tune with the Dowie. Light. A white death.

After Symphony under the Stars. Having listened to a composition by a Thirroul composer; to Strauss's Zarathusra. To the 1812 Overture.

The cannons.

The fireworks.

There is the walk through Hyde Park where hundreds of white fairy lights shine in the trees.

Fairie stars.

"Gregor says they remind him of the fireflies that hovered around everyone dancing at a fiesta in a village square in El Salvador. As if the stars had come down to join in the celebrations. I have an etching by Gregor of a village couple dancing at night surrounded by spots of light.

Dappled light; like in the Hyde Park paintings. Mother and child photographed in an imitation pose of a famous Renoir of the same subject of which a framed postcard was kept beside the hospital bed.

Nearby St. James station watching Cat play on the large chessboard with its equally large chess pieces.

Standing in as Queen. Melissa as a pawn. Cat as bishop. Michael a knight.

"God save the Queen from a fascist regime!" exclaims Michael.

Orange sunrays shining on the face as the others stand like planets revolving around their golden royal ruler. It could be understood how the music of the universe can be imagined as the celestial objects whirr around their grand composer.

"When Gregor saw this last photo he was inspired to put on a little golden halo dinner party. We all sat with halos on our heads around a candle-lit table on the back porch. Package cardboard and gold spray paint was used to make the head gear."

With Cat and other people setting up an outdoor screen at the amphitheatre of the Bondi Pavilion.

"A local friend of Cat's was putting on a film festival."

As the canvas is stretched out it appears as if Lisa's hand is drawing out the few remaining ripples. The sun brilliantly shines on the large hovering white surface. A hazy orange glow.

Michael thinks of his Desert Batik film which he showed at the Drummoyne house as Lisa stares into a blank dimension that at night will embrace many variants of the colour spectrum of a whole infinite universe.

(Infinite universes of the human imagination).

"Lisa could imagine the screen melting if the film reel shrivelled away. Gregor had told us he had seen a whole screen appear to burst into flames when the Mad Max film he was watching in Mexico suddenly caught fire in the projector. He saw a desert road giving way to brown, frothing celluloid…then all was white-

A burnt universe.

Tralfamadore Dreaming[1]

'I wheeze. There is no lifebuoy for me. I may drown from a sea of congested fluid in my lungs. Fear, real fear will strangle me. Everything whirrs faster in my head…the bits and pieces in my head are falling apart…I am tired…I am unclean…if only I could sit up…while…inside me my body fights some masterly dirty war…I know fear, real fear…I pay a heavy price for the 'hospitality' of having this enemy in me…these last days all these judgements of the world infiltrate me…I can see my own death the way Billy Pilgrim has seen his on tape many times. On February 13, 1976 he will die addressing a crowd in Chicago on the subject of flying saucers and the true nature of time…I scratch myself. Babble Kurt Vonnegut's prose from Slaughterhouse Five where he writes how the United States is balkanised; split into twenty petty nations so this superpower will never again threaten world peace ..'.[1]

SCRATCH**.** SCRATCH. SCRATCH**.** "I HAVE BEEN BALKANIZED!"

The night duty nurse comes over.

"THESE CREAMS DON'T DO ME ANY GOOD! I CAN'T STOP SCRATCHING! I AM MEAT GOING TO THE SLAUGHTER! I LIVE ON THE FRINGE OF HELL! I CAN'T STAND ANYMORE THIS SLOW DEATH KNELL! THIS HEART OF DARKNESS! IF ONLY I COULD QUICKLY DIE! AT LEAST REACH THE FRINGE OF HEAVEN! I WISH I COULD LIVE ON TRALFAMADORE WHERE PAST PRESENT AND FUTURE EXIST ALL THE TIME AT ONCE! I COULD SEE MY OWN CORPSE AND BE DEAD FOR A LITTLE WHILE AND ALSO LIVE AGAIN BEFORE ALL THIS! OH GOD-"

'Sounds continue to clamour inside me…circle after circle of inconsequential noise… the scratches of the universe on my brain…to have a strong sedative...the world is suspicious-

"I AM…NOT A…WITCH!" A wistful exclamation under hurried breath.

Fantastic Voyage

Town Hall station. Screened Bosch shadow figures moving on a curving tunnel

wall. A map of the Arctic. Two craggy-edged black cut-out like dancing figures on top of it. One tall figure looks like a matador. The other figure without hat or shirt has head bowed.

Dancing on ice.

Death is a frozen world.

"I saw a shooting star while I was on the Trans-Siberian Railway." states Gregor. "I was hoping to have caught even a glimmer of the Aurora Borealis. Seeing those Northern Lights above a never-ending white plain would have been like catching a glimpse of heaven from the land of the dead. Although, according to the people who live in the Arctic, shooting stars; those mysterious atmospheric dancing colours, are really the souls of the dead in the evening sky."

"Do you know how fragile life is on this planet?" rhetorically asks Cat who as he prepares a pot of tea again enters into one of his famous meditations. 'The Aurora Borealis is caused by storms on the sun which affects our magnetic field in the same way the moon's gravity influences the tides; the sun pulsates and throbs like our hearts where there can be sunspots that bubble up like sunflowers big enough to swallow the whole earth; while sun-flares rise up with the power of fifty million H-bombs. Solar winds stretch out so far their particles interfere with our atmosphere. However, if a magnetar within ten light years of us was to explode the ozone layer would disappear and in the ensuing radiation bombardment all life on this planet would cease. A magnetar is a small neutron star no bigger than a city and has a dense magnetic field. A neutron star is the corpse of a star that has exploded as a supernova. Death can kill us. A magnetar from fifty-thousand light years away exploded to affect our upper atmosphere last December. We are both wondrously and menacingly connected to the cosmos. I read that an object twenty kilometres long on the other side of the Milky Way blew up to release enough energy in a tenth of a second that would take our sun a hundred thousand years to expel.'

Cat's eyes look very glazed.

"We miraculously live along a cycle of life in-between earthquakes and starquakes."

A Final Loop

Africa. It's where life began.

"Michael. Stop daydreaming. Put Karin's letter away and let's keep looking at the rest of the photos."[1]

Mobius Sea

Walking around a large white cylinder sponsored by the Royal Blind Society that is outside the Art Gallery of New South Wales. Touching with closed eyes the raised texture of this sculpture that intimates that there are figures underneath a sail.

Earthmother

With Melissa beside a weathered rock sculpture of a mother with her protective arms around her child at the Opera House entrance of the Royal Botanical Gardens.

Wishing Tree

Beside a large Black Bean Tree from Moreton Bay in the Botanical Gardens after spotting a placard on this tree:

Common along streams the large woody pods of this tree contain chestnut like seeds that were a staple diet of Australian Aborigines after the toxins were thoroughly removed…

Quiet.

Michael whispers. "…source of the compound *castanospermine* the basis of the experimental drugs for A.I.D.S. treatment..."

Red Ribbon

A large red ribbon hanging down one side of a chimneystack at the Sydney Brickworks to commemorate World Aids Day. Lisa is leaning against it; imagined by Michael as one of the many hundreds of ribbons that are tied to a wishing tree.

Looking Back

A last glance at the Champys Elyees postcard as Margaret comes back with another fresh pot of Russian Caravan.

The Last Word

'…mama…mama… yes Ms. Davis I like these colour pencils …here we go round the mulberry bush! The mulberry bush! The mulberry bush! WE ALL FALL DOWN! CATCH ME MUMMY! I'M SCARED OF THE SLIDE…on this swing SO HIGH! We are not on a seesaw? Oh it's a flying horse! Flying horses circling above my baby eyes…who are all these boyfriends…m…u…m…m…y? Melissa…will you be alright? There's spirits…yes Michael…we are all lying under this big tree…yes Melissa it is like an umbrella…the stream…yes Melissa our hands go cool in the water…what is that Michael? Cool Hand Luke…hey boss what we've got here is a failure to communicate [laughter]…daisies…an old bottle…yeah, let's drink Coke…[more laughing]…the enormous branches give so much shade…I can feel the sun…on this…last day…the nurses chat…I am still…the sunlight is on my face…(all is quiet)…on the radio is the news, a cricket score…(the world goes on)…(I never made it to the hospice…)…yes…(it will soon be over)…(there will be peace)…the light of life enters inside of me as my life ebbs away…I will open my eyes.

A birthday card with a princess on a flying horse going to the moon…(I will have rest)…goodbye…Melissa…a song…(my island home…) (…enjoy, enjoy…)…everything's fading…(eyes close) (silence)…oh Mel-

Beulah

Michael drives the car up to the cliffs, Lisa's funeral had occurred several weeks ago on the first of December which coincidentally was World Aids Day. Cat and himself had gone that evening to a dedication service at a church often attended by James. Michael had only learnt of his friend's regular 'religious observance' from the night he had stood with him at the entrance of the Broadway Hotel. Perry Keyes and the Stolen Holdens were having a break between sets.

"As you know I'm Anglo-Catholic," slurs James. "It's just up the road here at Central Station that I go to Mass." Wheezing. "It's a very open-minded place providing, for instance, a good head start for Aboriginal education. I was once told Tranby College just up here in Glebe is on property handed over to it by this church. Nevertheless, the progressive attitude of these very good-hearted people has often put them at odds with a diocese which had not even readily welcomed Desmond Tutu."

Michael looks up at the bleak stretch of road which leads to Central Railway. It is a cloudy, windy, moonless night and along with the lightless buildings this cold concrete-scape looks desolate.

A dismal, dark lonely city scene.

"This looks hostile…"

"A wasteland…" agrees James whose body lists. "An Opposite to William Blake's mythological realm. Beulah is an Old Testament name for the Promised Land."

Leaning against the wall.

"William Blake devised it as a state of the subconscious between the world of matter and the world of the eternal."

James rubs his chest.

"My 'inner heart' to make contact with a divine aspect of the cosmos. It is this spiritual link between our human interior and the stars which will save us."

James looks directly into Michael's eyes. This avid listener can smell the strong alcoholic breath on his learned speaker.

"My friend, we aspire to submerge ourselves into our subconscious to reach resolution in the wilderness…to find the eternal point by which we seek in Beulah, a nightly moonlit world where all contrary states - including Heaven and Hell - can co-exist. Opposites living in harmony…to make possible forever what we desire: love. Life. Peace…"

James coughs.

"Which we always seek…"

New Jerusalem

James has taken Michael and Cat to the memorial service. The two visitors find it incredible to be amidst the burning and swinging of the incense and to listen to the angelic singing of the youthful choir do a rendition of Jerusalem.

"I feel as if I'm in a William Blake painting." quips Cat.

Remembrance

Michael recalls a candlelight parade for A.I.D.S victims. Hundreds of people had walked silently down Oxford Street to the Domain. It was so much in sharp contrast to the frivolity of the Mardi Gras he joined the procession to see what was to occur.

Hundreds of names were read out.

The calling out of a 'Lisa.' (There was no surname). A common enough name but it brought a chill down Michael's spine as he thought of Lisa lying so close by in her hospital bed. He is now determined to add Lisa's full name to the next remembrance roll.

Whisky Priest

Michael and Cat are astounded that Lisa's minister is the guest speaker. Mentioning the hundred funerals already performed by him as the inhabitants of the innercity continue to deal with their own holocasut. Lisa is also specifically mentioned in his sermon. Thus, all three friends find it satisfying to see her life recognized in front of so many hundreds of people.

A Perfect Day

At the funeral itself there had been a small gathering. Everyone who Lisa knew who had attended Melissa's christening had turned up for the morning service. Teresa was also there and had also brought her six-year old-niece Katerina to see and possibly be a comfort to Melissa. Madeleine and Blue had made the effort to catch a bus down while Jason had to stay behind to mind the kids. (These two visitors were put up in Master's place). A young nurse who had attended to Lisa in the last days was also at the service.

Michael made an effort to contact Lisa's mother. Blue said a woman with an incredibly craggy voice had rung asking for Lisa and he had provided her with the Sydney contact details. Lisa's mother had rung to leave a birthday message for her and Melissa on Master's answering machine but did not leave a recent phone number or address by which Lisa could contact her. Nevertheless, Michael had tried to look through the phone book to find anyone with a similar surname to Lisa's but this search had proven fruitless. Dan had also been contacted. He had no idea where Lisa's mother now resided and he thought it best not to go to the funeral. He was happy to substantially help pay for it and would send flowers.

"Yeah business is good and life couldn't be better." Dan urbanely stated before hanging up the phone.

There was no trumpet player or her dog. However, Cat had again brought his guitar; after mentioning a trip to Taronga Park Zoo with Lisa and Melissa he played Lou Reed's Perfect Day as a summation of what Lisa had meant to everyone's lives and to Melissa's life.

The minister dramatically holds up a large piece of cloth that Lisa had painted between her birthday and death. "As you can see this watery design has many earthy hues with a red-orange circle in the centre. Lisa whispered to me that it is meant to represent the mountain that can be seen on the road going into Mullumbimby. This black stripe is the road. Lisa said how by climbing a mountain a person could touch the sky."

The Minister Loses Himself in the Dreamtime

A pause.

"I can well imagine the countless hours that would have taken Lisa to paint this picture and with a hand that was not her normal writing one; a Herculean effort that

she kept secret from all of us. Only Death was her witness and it was only Death she wanted to defy. She was involved in a private battle striving to overcome the mortal collapse of her body through this act of culture so as to deliberately come into contact with eternity. We see here a large star; a thin stringy yellow line attaching it to the middle and a dark boat-shaped blotch with three figures alongside it…in the wavy cosmic lines and in the stream there is all a strong sense of the Dreaming."

A sigh.

"So many 'black fellas' I've spoken too have absorbed our myths into their religion but there is no reason why the process could not be reversed so that an ancient religion with its many ancient centres thrown out onto our social circumference like garbage could perhaps be brought back in to forcefully 'shade' our tawdry power centre with all its glaring glass, shining metal and burning asphalt; those of us who still cling to our spiritual beliefs and values but not always act them out could be transfigured just enough to allow us to comprehend that both varied nomad truths come from a similar wilderness; that they are for the wanderer…we must truly learn to welcome in the stranger..the stranger…*oh Lisa*…to be our new hero..*oh Christ-'"*

The cloth is lowered.

Hercules Street

Michael is amazed; he had given Lisa the paints and brushes but had assumed these materials were not being used. *'Tired. She always looked too tired…'*

The moment when he had learnt of Lisa's death is considered. Jesse had just been picked up to again be minded for a few days. Over the news it is stated that the number of A.I.D.S. death had decreased since the latest wave of awareness campaigns.

"All quiet on the western front." quips Michael.

Jesse howls. The car is pulled over to the kerb see what is upsetting this furiously barking dog; in Hercules Street by Ashfield station.

The mobile rings.

"Hey Mick…Mick…"

"Yeah Cat…what's up?"

"It's about Lisa…"

"Yeah…is she okay?"

November 28

"Mick…she is in Beulah…" Cat sighs. "It's William Blake's birthday…"

Dante

Michael is distraught. Accelerates to go faster rather than slow down. The Bar Italia. To meet Gregor. Yes, that was the original plan. Well, now there's another reason to see him. Norton Street. The only parking spot to be seen in this busy main street is outside the Roman Forum. It will be quite a walk back. However, it feels like a miracle to even find this space; there is always the back streets or the council car park. Yet, it's not the time to begin foraging; especially with Jesse still barking. The dog is taken down to the forum so she can stretch her legs in the wide space.

To sit under the frowning bronze statue of Dante, lighting a rollie.
Jesse is enjoying her run around and calms down.
A long walk for Michael to settle his nerves.

Blackbirds

A bird perched on the Aboriginal flag flying from the top of Leichhardt Town Hall.
Jesse is tied by her leash to a pole that is beside a melaleuca tree; the café is crowded; a walk through the long, narrow premises to enter the back garden.
A black bird suddenly swerves by. Michael remembers the time he was here for an afternoon birthday brunch for Caterina. On that occasion he amazed everyone gathered around a long table with a bird unexpectingly flying out from under his black coat. Birds signify travel someone had said. Now it can only be wondered as to where Lisa's soul had travelled too.
Gregor is then spotted. Sitting at a table, sipping his coffee. After he is told about Lisa it is decided to go around to the Leichhardt Hotel; to have a few beers and some laksa.
A game of snooker.
Then the walk back to Michael's car to go and see Cat. He explains how Margaret had been up to the hospital with Melissa who was ceaselessly crying. All three mates go together to Master's place.

Longnecks

Jesse feels at home as she watches the others have pizza and a few longnecks in the backyard.
Master lights up a fire even though there will not be a barbeque. It sets the mood to stay up late to talk about Lisa and swap anecdotes. However, Margaret is mostly quiet, sitting in a daze for most of the evening.

The Damning of Zeus

It has been a humid night. Finally there is a thunderstorm and Michael's car stalls on the large intersection of Victoria and Darling streets at Rozelle.
While he attempts to spark the car back into life the cars behind Michael's vehicle honk their horns.
In the heavy rain these drivers are unaware that the car up front has broken down.
Michael has had enough. He jumps out of his car, serpentines about the crossroads, raises his arms up to the thunderous sky, yells abuse at it and then at the cars behind him.
All traffic is forced to stop to avoid hitting the madman.
Gregor shouts at Michael to get back. Yet Cat has already jumped out to drag his weeping friend onto the rear seat. Eventually, Gregor ignites the car into life to drive the short distance to his place.

Time for a soothing tea on the back porch before going home via Cat's flat. All the way noting the somewhat melancholy musty smell of rain on the wet ground like with the aftermath of an Asian downpour as Gregor had earlier put it.

Epiphany

Michael looks at the rear view mirror. Melissa is sitting very poised in the baby seat. "You're wiser than me missy…"

Taking out some of the Rosemary that had been placed in a brown paper bag. It had been brought along as Michael had recalled how at a Remembrance Day assembly at where he worked as a teachers aide it had been said that Rosemary was always worn on this anniversary as it was believed by the Ancient Greeks that it was a plant that helped to strengthen human memory; thus the millions of dead who had tragically died so young would always continue to exist in the humane minds of the still living.

"Margaret give it to Melissa."

It was hoped that whenever this scent was ever smelt by this still so young daughter she would always think of her mother.

Two other snippets of Rosemary are also taken out.

Lisa is to never be forgotten.

'Fires in Menai have cut that whole area off from the rest of Sydney. People are being evacuated from their houses. The whole suburb is becoming a ghost town. Some people feel it is like the end of the world. The empty high school is being endangered as large fires jump the adjacent road. Helicopters with water bombs hover over this deserted region ready to quench any spot fires which directly threaten any property.'

Reminds me of those bushfires from the time I was up at your place Margaret."

'…with all this enterprise bargaining legislation the financial markets are also very pleased with the latest quarterly figures…'

"Why is it the people who get ahead in the 'new economy' are those who already have lots of money? My rego is due on Epiphany. Luckily my holiday loading has come through in the nick of time. Otherwise I'd be asking the Magi to drop their gifts off to me at the RTA. All these new tollways and tunnels, rising petrol prices…Melissa, your uncle Michael is always pushing up the proverbial stone that just keeps rolling back down! If I was to go to Brighton-Le-Sands to dive for that Orthodox Cross I'd be drowning - not waving!"

"Quiet Michael! Stop gibbering!" Margaret is upset.

'News has come to hand that in the Indian Ocean there have been after-'

The radio is switched off.

Ezekiel

Another glance shows an elderly woman with her eyes cast down. Cupped in her hands is a spherical urn.

"At least we're giving the sea a gift…and Margaret…the sea is our gift to Lisa."

No response.

A sigh. Michael is tired of all the sadness. Thinks of turning the radio back on but is then taken by another idea. "*Swing low…swing high…sweet chariot*…come on Melissa…sing!" The child repeats the words. Michael recites them over and over again until Melissa actually sings. He thumps the dashboard in joy. "That's it! We're in a chariot! We're taking mummy to heaven. Michael grabs the cassette lying on the passenger seat. Puts it on.

Lisa's Tape

"Hi. I'm speaking really late at night because it's a lot quieter. I'm whispering so as to not disturb anyone. There's lots of stars out. Twinkle, twinkle little star…that's for you Mel. I like how I can leave my voice. Thanks Cat for the Walkman. It's turned out to be a great birthday present along with that Meditations book. I still look at a passage everyday. It's good there's so many photos of me for you Melissa but at least you now won't forget what I also sound like. Too bad we never did do a video. At least there's the Super 8 of all us kicking around Master's soccer ball. I hope Melissa you are doing the right thing by Auntie Margaret and Uncle Michael and for everyone else like Master, Caterina, Cat and Gregor. Give them lots of hugs from me. Thanks Margaret for you, Jason and Madeleine agreeing to be Melissa's legal guardians. I know she's in good hands being with such a loving family…[heavy breathing]…I'm going to miss you Melissa…[pregnant pause]…I watch a lot of those foreign movies that are on daytime SBS…there's a little story I want to tell…[breathing settles down]…there was this Iranian film on today about a guy who wants to kill himself - I wonder if it was done by that Iranian director who was arrested while on transit through to the States - [a cough]…but…he needs someone to bury him in this out-of-the-way shallow grave he's already dug. On some deserted hill. I think he was going to do himself in with sleeping pills. He has a hard time convincing anyone to shovel these thirty scoops of dirt next morning. He'll pick someone up in his car and drive around explaining what he wanted done and then have to let the person out having to still look for someone. Eventually this old man agrees. Only because the money that'll be given to him will come in handy for his sick granddaughter…the old man tells the suicidal guy that if he puts his finger to his head and says his head hurts then he puts his finger to his ribs and says that hurts and puts his finger to other parts of his body and they all hurt and so on but its not the body that hurts but his finger so heal it. The depressed guy's mind is like the finger so why kill the whole body? The old man is having a hard time convincing 'his boss' to give up on his plan. So the old man mentions how years ago he got up one morning before dawn thinking he too had had enough of life. It had all got too hard for him. The man left his house and up on a hill found a tree to hang himself but a mulberry rubs on him and it feels good against his face. He sees the sunrise. He sees the birds. Sees the far off hills. A mountain. Sees the beauty of nature. It changes his mind. He decides to live. His tree of death became a tree of life. He climbs back down and returns to his house. His sleeping wife feels him get back into bed. 'Where have you been?' she asked. 'Oh nowhere.' he replied. I don't know why but something changed inside me as I listened to the old man's story. Deep down I still don't accept

what's happened to me. I don't think it's my fate to be suffering as I have. Or for anyone to suffer. I just feel calmer. That's all. The film ends with the suicidal guy lying down in his grave at night looking up at a full moon. You have to make up your own mind as to whether he goes through with it. I've just had another thought – it's for you Michael - if your 'mate' Zeus made the first woman from clay so as to spite man - and that god who gave us fire - and who then, when she opened that box, unleashed on the world every trouble at least when I return to the clay I can at least leave with all the hope that was left at the very bottom. It's all that's been left for me and it's what I dearly cling onto after feeling so cursed for such a long while. Melissa be a real brave girl for mummy and never give up on life. I want you to visit the spot where I go into the sea. Talk to me if you are feeling down. Visit me even when you are very old yourself. Even older than Margaret. [A laugh]. I want you to take your children to right where you are now and talk about their crazy grandmother….[a pause]…hold onto that print of the Renoir woman and her daughter that's the same as the one that's in the old photo of the milk bar…that lovely dappled sunlight on their bodies…it's you and me…walking on sunshine…[another pause]…is the sun going down? It's just a lot of little stars that come together in the daytime. Your uncle Michael told me that's what he said to his classmates in primary school. They all believed him. Believe me Melissa. Believe in me. We'll make our sun when we see each other again. [A yawn]. Sorry. I'm feeling tired. I'll stop for now. Thanks for playing the tape. I hope it's been a good idea to be listening to me when I go to be a part of that big wide ocean out there. Always like to look at it. Can never get enough. I hope you like the artwork. I felt defiant doing it. As well as really human…remember those Lou Reed words…if you quit, you quit but you can always give it your last shot…Dream of me. Bye. Bye. Thanks and bye again. Have a few icy beers afterwards. See you soon but not too soon [laughter]. Take care…Melissa-'

Transformation

Michael has stopped the cassette. "There's probably a bit more but that will do for the moment…" Michael says a little tearfully. "Don't want this crappy recorder chewing the tape."

Margaret is silent but she wipes her eyes. Melissa has been entranced listening to her mother's voice and looks out the window to see the vastness of the ocean. "Mummy…" she says softly.

Michael looks at Melissa then glances at the bottle Lisa had bought for her that day at the art gallery. It is filled up with fresh homemade lemonade and had been brought along at Margaret's suggestion to have a 'cordial communion'.

Dover Heights. New Year's Eve. Michael and Margaret had decided that after so much delay the last day of the year would be an opportune time to throw Lisa's ashes into the sea. They had also been prompted by a Central Australian batik, beanie and ceramics exhibition that was now on at the Bondi Pavillion. (A similar beanie display is being held in Alice Springs). It was appropriate to see such indigenous work today. Margaret bought two glazed clay brown cups and the lemonade would be drunk from these 'desert vessels'. In Michael's case he had been attracted to a painting of a young

woman walking through a desert scene that had a mountain range, swirling bushes and a small bird in one corner flying over the mountains.

"Looks like a nightingale." remarks Margaret. "What's it called?"

"On Track." Michael smiles. "Reminds me of Lisa. I'll buy it."

In the evening they would go to Cat's flat from where they would walk Melissa down to the end of Victoria Street to watch the fireworks. It would be an appropriate way to help make today a special day in Melissa's still young memory. "It'll be really good to see the Harbour Bridge all lit up with heaps of whizzing sparkles Melissa! I remember the first time I drove over that bridge – I was so nervous! Like a virgin! As Madonna would say. Looks like there's a good wind." Michael takes a kite out of the boot. It had been made using the thin cloth that Lisa had painted. The minister had mentioned to Michael after the funeral that Lisa had hoped to fly the cloth as a kite with Melissa. Lisa had gained the idea from the Festival of the Winds. "Something a friend telling her how the Mayans remembered their dead with kites on All Souls Day." stated the minister.

"That would have been Gregor or Caterina…"

While Margaret and Melissa still stand beside the car Michael like some ancient shaman dances a little zorba to appease the grim gods of the underworld. He then spins a ruler on a string using it as a bullroarer as if to open up a way through to the Dowie. All three walk over to the white wooden railing; snapshots are taken of each other using an old SLR borrowed from Gregor. Below on the beach is a child flying a kite: a boat with many sails.

Michael throws the sphere containing Lisa's ashes; it drops into the water and bops around on the surface for a few seconds before it disappears. Their hearts tighten as the little ball goes out of view; Margaret and Michael shed tears. It has been more painful than expected to let go of the last evidence of Lisa's physical existence. Michael grips the rail more tightly. Margaret sings a well remembered dirge. Melissa simply says: "Mummy"; she looks at the water silently with an uncanny calmness compared to the two adults. It is almost as if Melissa instinctively knows that everything is the way it has to be. A shell picked up at the beach after the christening is thrown into the sea.

Michael watches the waves that are crashing against the cliffs; this scene a reminder of a junior school painting he once did on a small piece of masonite. Acrylic white foam against a brown painted cliff with a turquoise sea and light blue sky; such an insignificant poorly painted teenager picture which now seemed to have so much meaning. The hands are finally loosened and the de facto shaman goes back to the car to get the kite.

The seagulls circling in the swirling air squawk. Their mad screeching echoes the frightening screams of so many drowned men and women. Human wrecks still trapped in shipwrecks. The Australian coast is littered with tragedy surmises Michael.

"The sea is a grave…"

Michael watches the surf advance and recede over the pockmarked rocks at the bottom of the cliff. He can see how these ragged edges are smoothed down to become polished rock. Thus Michael realises there is always a chance of renewal for the old so the old can once more become new. A cataclysm will perhaps one day sweep away the

coastline but even in this extreme case Michael is aware fresh contours which await the
same
slow
transformation
would be brought into existence. For Michael understands something else: the choppy sea brings life. While the barnacles and other soft organic matter emerging from the fathoms need the hard craggy surface of the rocks over which they grow, the sea will eventually succumb the hard to the soft in a way in which hopefully will arise movement.

Michael watches the airy froth go to and fro over the wet stone and back into the dark water again
to and fro
to and fro
forever

"The morning star." states Melissa when she sees Venus appear above the blood red horizon.

"Yes…Melissa, the morning star," agrees Margaret who is wise enough to see the truth and innocence of this comment in a child's eyes.

"Hey! This kite is getting some height! It's like a comet!" shouts Michael above the wind. "Melissa have a go!" Michael gives the kite string to Melissa and makes sure she holds it tightly as the kite travels to the heavens.

The hot sun is setting.

Venus ascends.

A universe of nebulas and expanding galaxies wheels above their heads. (If it shrunk there would simply be more room for Eternity). The trio stand still. They watch the kite continue its celestial journey. Light. Pinpricks of light begin to appear closer to them in the night sky. In Melissa's mind the kite will perhaps pass through one of these tiny white holes to reach her mother.

the three sentinels
remain standing
thinking
of other possibilities
in this world
of never
ending uncertainties
as they follow
with wide
open eyes
the motion of the stars

- **NOTES from hard copy publication.**
- **APPENDIX for online publication which includes: thoughts of CAT, MICHAEL, LISA, GREGOR & KARIN.**
- **Literature & Poetry**
- **Synopsis**

Notes

NOTES

NIGHT

Lisa & Melissa. 1.From William Blake's *Auguries of Innocence*.
Night. 1.Marc Chagall
John Singer. 1.John Singer is the central character in Carson McCuller's novel *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*.
Celestial Fire. 1.William Blake**.** 2.Alan Ginsberg
Cat. 1.A negro slave parody of the Lord's Prayer. 2. From *Jerusalem* (Chapter 2) by William Blake.
Last Judgement. 1.From T.S.Eliot's *Burnt Norton* in *The Four Quartets*.

DAY

Nina from Argentina. 1.Lyrics by Noel Coward.
A New Sirius. 1.Some other reference material about the installation as read by Michael:

…our Raft has, then, a double aspect : as the tool of that original "Crafty Rafty", Ulysses, it is a means of cheap translation[1] But, as the naval equivalent of Penelope's web, nightly woven and unwoven, it bears an opposite implication, inviting us to defer the ending, and to attend to the meaning of the sounds in-between, to entertain the possibility that the mere shuffling of feet, the back-and-forth journey of the shuttle, the ringing return of the typewriter-carriage – that these kinds of going-back conceal a different mode of grounding knowledge, of mapping time and space. Ours might also have been named "a craft of drafts."

1.A man called Raftapolous changed his name to raft – 'just to keep afloat'. With Homeric wit his workmates nicknamed him 'crafty rafty'. Like Odysseus he knew 'all the lurks'. (Paul Carter, The Sound In Between, 1992, p. 179).

Mother Earth. 1: Canto XXIX:

I doubt if all those dying in Aegina
when the air was blowing with pestilence
and the animals, down to the smallest worm,

all perished (later on this ancient race,
according to what the poets tell as true,
was born again from families of ants)

offered a scene of agony
than was the sight in that dark valley
of heaped-up spirits languishing in clumps.

Some sprawled out on others' bellies, some
on other's backs, and some, on hands and knees,
dragged themselves along that squalid valley.

Slowly, in silence, slowly we moved along,
looking, listening to the words of all those sick,
who had no strength to raise their bodies up.

I saw two sitting, leaning against each other
like pans propped back to back aginst a fire,
and they were blotched from head to foot with scabs.

I never saw a curry-comb applied
by a stable-boy who is harried by his master,
or simply wants to finish and go to bed,

the way those two applied their nails and dug
and dug into their flesh, crazy to ease
the itching that can never find relief

The Tropicana Cafe. Darlinghurst.1.Attributed the Japanese master poet Nijo Yoshimoto. (1320-1388).
The Great Subconscious. 1. *Panimaro '93*. Pet Shop Boys.
Chiron the Centaur. 1.Lisa has made a reference to the signature lyrics of Deep Purple's *Highway Star*.
The Mind a Cave - 1.*The Myth of Er* is in reference to the story that can be found at the end of Plato's Republic about a warrior who returns from the world at the whim of the gods after death. In the novel the *Myth of Er* references a lengthy meditation in which Cat mainly considers – through the prism of Ancient Greek myth – what Gregor experienced on his journeys. Below is this meditation in which a few sections have been revealed in this chapter *The Mind a Cave*:

The Myth of Er

Amidst his paraphernalia of Coca-Cola bric-a-brac like coasters, glasses, old bottles which he had bought at an out-of-the-way curio shop in Beverly Hills the mad king comes across his schoolboy FANTA yo-yo.
'The German representative for Coca-Cola was cut off from his American bosses due to the Nazi Occupation so, with Teuton enterprise, he formulated Fanta for the European market. (Awaiting the day American soldiers - refreshed on Coke - would liberate Europe for Coca-Cola). A filthy coin is made shiny when it is left in a glass of Coke. A silver obol for Charon will be under my cold tongue.'
"Penny for my thoughts!"
'Yet, my mind, if isolated from the world, cleansed of its grime, may open up to revelation.'
Cat looks through an old medium size Coke bottle. This thin glass vessel has been replenished with new Coca Cola. Eyes distorted.
'The consciousness of the modern age. A lost soul Gregor met in Shanghai. An old English sailor dressed in a suit whose coat was frayed along the bottom. Bearded. In his fifties. With a duffle bag. Who wanted to see the Three Gorges before it was flooded. To see what will disappear. As if covered by the river of forgetfulness. Nature displaced. Out of sight. Out of mind. No longer remembered. No existence. Our undulating mental topography can face the same fate. What we forget. We no longer know. Yet the unknowing may frighten us.'
"What we cannot comprehend does not mean it is not true! Trust and obey for there's no better way! Be happy in-" Cat looks at his Coke bottle. "We've been Shanghaied! We do what we do not want to do!"
"The past is bulldozed in Shanghai." claims Gregor. "Being replaced with skyscrapers. It's the first 'twenty-first century city'. You find Shanghai's past in all those Chinese antique shops. There's one in Newtown. In Wollongong. There's a warehouse in Alexandria. Our history is also being dismantled but more subtly. To become a 'world city.'" Gregor handles a small bakelite black milk jug. "Our past will - soon enough - also be only found in 'off-beat places.' Like that retro shop in King Street."
Another angle on this meditation.

'My lonely mind. A windswept tunnel. A silver serpent slithers into the high arched chasm. A barren tomb filled with disconsolate souls. Delayed. Freezing. Sweating. On bare bleak platforms. Late at night. Forced to double-back from unwanted destinations. Oh sweet home. To be away from the labyrinths of our self-mutilations.'

"To be cleansed! Cleaned! Not thrown away! I will offer Charon a shiny silver coin! Not a plastic token!" In the reflection of the Coke bottle is a distorted scene of the city through the window.

'It was Perseus, the grandfather of Hercules, who looked upon Medusa in the reflection of his shield to then decapitate her.[1] *An invisible Perseus is the human mind in a monster darkness of our own devising with writhing malicious serpents which must be overcome.'*

Cat puts down the Coke bottle and heads to the window.

'We know the new city will be as a square of light, no more this glossy decay, this decrepit image. No more this asphalt night. There will be brilliant shining diamond walls, with twelve gates of precious stones opening up to buildings rising like ziggurats made of gold that will reflect the blazing sun like glass. Ancient lost cities of heaven must be our markers. On ruined Mayan walls there are the markings of snakes as circles to represent the cosmos and other serpents grooved as squares to signify the human race. In a perfect order of the universe the square would be subordinate but in harmony within the circle. A mystical geometry which reflects the truths of a regenerative world where in serpent fashion old skins are shed to renew life. Always change. Yet an underlying pattern. The same seasons where after winter new stems arise from fresh soil. Death yet always birth with the emerging curvatures of a new foetus within a thriving womb. Nevertheless no immortality. The new city will be now ringed by a wide band of stars to secure a synthesis between earth and heaven that is broken by our imperfections. Yes, no more of this Babylon-'

"A perfect ZION!"

'A new Jerusalem worthy for those who hate the deeds of the Nicolatians.[2] *To worship not Moloch, who devours the first born, nor adulterous Balaam, or any other false god, but the Holy One who has a sword protruding from his mouth, who holds seven stars in his right hand and whose voice roars like the ocean. While four many-eyed creatures in forms of the lion, the bull, a human and the eagle, all with six wings, fall to his feet. The Lamb will break the seven seals which will spread war, disease, famine, last judgements upon which only the righteous will survive-'*

"Light is both waves and photon particles."

'Above is that starry monochrome snake the Milky Way which leads like a dirt road to the thrones of heaven. While here on this planet after the break up of the one continent who I suspect was achieved by Poseidon the 'earth shaker' there emerged in Australia's Dreamtime the Rainbow Serpent to wind a way like a river across this vast jigsaw piece "To the Four Zoas: COKE'S THE REAL THING!" A sarcastic laugh.Cat is looking increasingly crazy. This maddened seer now shifts his gaze up to the evening sky.

'In this universe which is the dream of some god are many seemingly improbable dimensions. A hall of mirrors. A honeycomb.'

to form the landscape; the spectrum colours that represent the complex, ethereal properties of this mirage we call the real world. In which we learn in Genesis that the rainbow became a sign of God's willingness for redemption of the world and humanity after The Flood.

"Let the light shine! Cleanse us! Open the doors of our perception!"

'Yet, all I see is night. A vast chamber. Void. Time. Chaos. Ether. Mass. Darkness. Light. Sky. Earth. Ocean. In this fluid vault where infinities and finites flow together the world is a raft. The lapping of water. White foam. Star clusters mirrored in the vapour

tips of crashing waves. The signature of Phorcys a treacherous sea divinity. The ancients remind us that although the oceans and the stars create life, amidst their presence death also lurks.'

"Repeat after me! SEA SHELLS ON THE SEA SHORE!"

'Nevertheless when we are ensnared only our physical selves are cast away. As Plato keenly reminds us the Orphics state when I die my immortal soul will see two grand chasms while above me will be two enormous holes. (A broken sky). Uncountable multitudes will be ascending or descending from these four passages all moving like ions in positive and negative currents. The unjust would carry a heavy pack loaded with their misdeeds upon their backs while more favoured souls will have on their fronts a token which is their ticket to ride out the next millennium in a heavenly state of bliss.If I am to suffer tenfold for my sins in the Underworld for a thousand years - rather than go to Paradise – I will be directed by the Judges of the Universe to go down into the earth (with obol in hand). At the end of my time I will mingle with other souls who have either descended from heaven or rose like me from Hades to mingle in a vast field. (A carnival of the dead). All purified either by our punishments or our pleasures. We will be led by a pillar of pure light bending through the Heavens and Earth like a rainbow to a vast spinning rod. Fixed at the bottom of this shaft will be a series of vast bowls cupped one within each other so only their rims are revealed. The orbits of the fixed stars, Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Mercury, Venus, the Sun and the Moon all whirling around the Earth. A revolving cosmos. At the end of a stick that twirls on the majestic knees of Necessity – the law goddess Themis. Necessity's three daughters – the Fates who determine our individual destinies – will help to spin the cosmos. At each orbit a Siren will continually sing a note unique to any other that is sung at a different orbit. Yet, inharmony so that all eight notes will create a perfect Pythagorean scale. While Atropos, Klotho and Lachesis will each chant of things past, of things present and of things to come. Time will be gone. Eternity will swallow us. (A thousand years in this mysterious Limbo may only be an hour in the afternoon of some pleasant, earthly Spring day). Unto Lachesis who holds the thread of life in her hands this laser beam of pure light will lead me to stand. I will have to make the experience of the life just past to be my only guide. I will snigger. It is convenient for the gods to offer us a choice. They absolve themselves of any blame as to the fate that will befall us. No, their omniscience goes missing in the revelation of what happens to a single human life. They are not responsible. We are each prodded in front of the Three Fates to make our guess as to how we must best fair in the next life. Of course, a soulless Plato, as it seems, befitting of a supposed descendant of surly Poseidon, would cast blame on the human soul for all the misfortune that may befall it. This 'collaborator' of the gods. Who does their dirty reasoning to perhaps find divine favour among them for his own destiny. So he may return as his precious philosopher king. Plato's eugenic 'good Republic' where the weak must die at birth. Where only the strong of mind and body are to be nourished. Children torn apart from their mothers to eventually be graded from the status of Alpha Pluses to epsoloms. Only the knowledgeable few deserve to rule over the many who are seemingly incapable of arising from their ignorance. Women emancipated, yet dutifully used at regular intervals to produce the human grist of this 'perfect society'. What use is your Immortality of the Soul, of the Pythagorean Mind aspiring towards the Absolute Forms and Ideas, of the Mathematical and Abstract Contemplation of Good, of a Universal Education, of liberation from the Cave of Shadows, of the wise Philosopher-King, of your abhorrence to the state persecution of Socrates as well as to the criminalities of the Thirty Tyrants, if tyranny also foully – if unwittingly - becomes your endgame? Did Dr. Mengele behave as a Platonist as he graded the human forms ejected

in their thousands from the daily cattle cars? (Here was the 'emotional freight' of a whole generation). Return to your senses philosopher, for as you undoubtedly know, without reason all justice is lost. (For too often the just ideal is corrupted by the reality of a desire for insatiable power). I will grimace as I look up at the whirring wide band of heaven which holds in the whole seen cosmos - like a rope that holds in the tension of a trireme wrapped around the outer skin from bow to stern – and chillingly hear the screams of the man who will choose to come back as a great tyrant yet will have to eat his own children; who are the children that an unhinged Plato will eat? Genghis Khan, Vlad the Impaler, King Leopold, Vladimir Lenin, Josef Stalin, Adolf Hitler, Mao Tse-Tung, Henry Kissinger? Will such maddened 'philosopher-kings' spend eternity attempting to wipe the blood to wipe the blood from their hands amongst the few souls - so mired with human evil -that their redemption cannot be sought? (What ghastly horror awaits a hundred fold for these human monsters? Some of the cruellest despots now at the mouth of hell. In front purified spirits ascend to the meadow all souls must wait before picking their next life. Horrendous screams. An unimagined fear pierces every departing being. A final heart-felt warning from the worse damned who realise they will not be released. Fierce guards drag these wraiths over thorns to Tarturus. The lowest hell. Deep. Chilling. Black. Unforgiving. Another climb. Other tortures. To only face one more weeping future). Yet, I know after my choice I will drink - like hundreds of thousands of other souls - from the river of Lethe to 'wake up' in a shower of shooting stars having totally forgotten my other world experience, to serve once more as oarsman or navigator on this celestial ship we call Earth. Yet as the cosmic sea plies around us there are the likes of Gregor who may or may not have tasted a river of forgetting but has sailed on a forgotten river. An obscure tributary of the Styx. On a discarded ferry of Charon's. Upon it forgotten souls.' Nicaragua…(…the Atlantic...)

"The morning finally came to leave the Mosquito Coast. We walked down the silent main street of Bluefields to catch the 5 a.m ferry to Ramos. We reached the wharf where there were vendors selling food and people milling around the gangplank patiently waiting to board the ferry. We were able to gain some space on an outside bench. I sat down and watched the vendor nearest to the gangplank selling chips, sweets, drinks, coffee and hot food. The man was in his late fifties and I couldn't help but think what a burden it would be for him to wake up so early three or four times a week to do his job.

The crowded vessel left on time.

Sheets of plastic were tied from the ferry rail up to the overhanging deck so as to give the outside passengers some relief from the wet weather. There wasn't much to do except to

try and sit upright and watch both time and the ferry drift silently by.

When the morning light arrived I went up to the forward deck to stretch my legs. I could see the river was wide and up against both banks the ferry passed the rusting bulwarks of abandoned ships. I admired a tall tree whose streaky overhanging vegetation caressed the water. Close to the river I could occasionally see huts and women who were lighting early morning fires. The ferry was slow and the stillness of the grassland on both banks led to a sense of time stopping. There was the hope that after the ferry would round another bend Ramos would appear and time would begin. The contras had sunk a ferry. I looked at both banks and sensed how vulnerable these vessels were to machine gun fire or a rocket propelled grenade. The river was now safe to travel on (otherwise I would not be on this boat). I went back to where I was sitting for the rain which had eased for the last few hours now soaked the ferry. It was difficult to see beyond the monsoon. Water flowed down the narrow deck and ran along our bench. The old women beside us were stirred from their sleep. The heavy rains continued and it was becoming a strain to

stand and wait. Finally, the weather calmed and shortly afterwards the ferry veered around the final corner and docked beside a small wharf. People rushed off the boat, walked quickly over several large rocks and ran up the slippery trails of a steep incline to reach the bus to Managua. People pushed themselves onto the dilapidated vehicle and I was one of the last to board it. Time begged to start. Again. I reset my watch. The bus moved. I then knew this purgatory was over."

Er of Pamphylia had been a warrior who had been killed in battle and whose body had not decayed after ten days. Nevertheless, on the twelfth day it was decided by his father Armenius to cremate his body on a funeral pyre. He then awoke. It was understood he had been sent back to inform the living of what to expect in the next world: the avenues to heaven and hell, a thousand years spent in either state etcetera and how eventually each soul would have to choose their next life and the need to rely on one's own wisdom to make a successful choice. The gods implored Er to say that attaining to know justice is what the living should aspire too in this existence. Gregor's account of this river journey, his wanderings through other twilight zones had put him in touch with the nether regions of this world which also reminded him of the no man's lands in his own psyche.

"Hitching from West Germany to West Berlin and back you noticed the East German speed traps. They fined the West German drivers very heavily as the West German marks were good for their economy. However, you had to carefully watch the signs. A hundred-kilometre-per-hour zone could suddenly change to forty. Also cars were not allowed to stop or move off the autobahn. On the way in I got picked up by this young woman in a Renault. She didn't mind me playing my Aussie music tape. The Sunnyboys, the Angels, Dave Warner. (As it was my brown cardboard BERLIN sign with the hopping kangaroo and little Australia had attracted her attention). I saw forests, old buildings, disused churches, many people on bikes otherwise in cars which seemed to be made no later than the mid-sixties. You knew any new car was definitely West German. The only thing that was new was the military hardware. We saw many truck convoys and - much like my visit to East Berlin - it felt like that the Second World War had only finished yesterday. (Always this sense of time standing still). As we reached West Berlin itself there were more tanks, barracks, Russian soldiers teeming in their hundreds. We even spotted missiles on mobile launchers on the side of the road.

Apparently we were travelling on a day when army manoeuvres were occurring. At the exit to West Berlin we were each scrutinized by the East German guards to make sure that the same number of people were in the car as when we had left West Germany. (It was the one irony of this whole hitch that once you got a lift you knew the driver had to take you all the way to West Berlin. There was no concern of say being dropped off half way to have to scrounge another ride). Also time was spent checking our faces with our passport photos. The border guard would stare directly into your eyes for a few seconds then check your photo. I remember years later having this happen to me in Minsk as I was travelling through from Moscow to catch another train to Warsaw – it was much cheaper catching two 'local trains' rather than go on a direct international link. Anyhow, the Berlin Wall had fallen but as the guard lingered his eyes on mine for several seconds that old Soviet sense of absolute power came back to unsettle me. On the way back from West Berlin I travelled at night which made the trip especially eerie. I actually saw a car pulled over by the East German highway police. My driver, an engineering student, explained how at the 'iron curtain' itself there were sharp shooters, five rows of mines, barbed wire fences, sniffer dogs, machine gun towers etcetera. As I realised half a continent was in quarantine I listened to Russian techno love songs; to a German rock-punk song about a forgotten soldier on the Russian Front and to Kraftwork's Trans

Europe Express. Crossing the border led to an interesting reaction. Udo – the driver – immediately fingered the volume on the car stereo and put his foot down on the accelerator. As we let out a collective sigh of relief I was surprised how tense we had been; from even inside our 'capitalist bubble' we had felt oppressed by the mere spectre of the DDR - if nothing else.

What I mainly remember about West Berlin is bright neon. An electric nirvana at the end of a highway labyrinth. To the East Germans West Berlin must have seemed like an untouchable – even mocking - oasis; yet, as it's turned out for many of them the West has proved to be a false paradise; what is only certain is they had lived through a true hell. As it seemed on my arrival to West Berlin that I had ventured through a land of shadows; I learnt to appreciate human freedom."

Gregor spoke as if he himself had been a prisoner in the Orphic cave of ignorance which Plato had well described. Yet, as it is well known, this cave is our mind. Each departure from this shore has proved for Gregor to be a transmigration of his intellect. Every trip a venture equivalent to Er's myth, the soul purged through different hells, different heavens, to prepare for each return to the purgatories of everyday life. Nevertheless, this life may be enriched incrementally based on what is learnt. To stridently walk in daylight, no longer held back by mundane apparitions.'

Cat holds up a clear glass.

'It is a slow process, to teach the soul, to go from one level to the next, to be educated on multiple realities in an absolute psyche; with jealous gods, on top of Mt. Olympus, marking in dead-end trails, or avalanches, to keep us at some base level, away from a pinnacle where our always rueful human condition may be more insightfully examined, for our just benefit.

"I've always found borders," states Gregor, "the gates you have to go through to arrive at another state, is where I have most acutely learnt about human corruption, power, all those negative worldly forces that threaten what we consider to be moral,to deny a soul the right to move along, to impede the attainment of his or her knowledge is tyrannical, as every refugee can attest, the denial of human liberty is akin to denying human identity, to make a man or woman stateless is at the core of human nihilism. A moral void. Always filled by the disasters of war. Human oppression. I went to Cambodia when it was still forbidden. At the Vientane embassy the Communist official forcefully interrogated me, ("Are you a journalist?!") then a smile. My visa was granted. Vouched by an aid organization, I was allowed to visit. (On a recent second visit the Cambodian customs was stamping passports on arrival. Tourists and their hard currency are now very welcome). Human sin. "You will know them by their fruits," said the American preacher on my short wave radio as I peered at the war plain beyond Phnom Penh. Other forbidden territory. A man took me on the back of his scooter to the killing fields. This particular day they were officially closed, however, he knew the local guards. For a small amount of money they undid the lock to the gate. I saw the patchwork of group graves on the bushy plain where hundreds of people had been buried. I gazed at the skulls of fifteen year old children which were encased in a high glass tower of skulls built in memory to the deaths of '75 to '78. I read on an outside notice how foreigners were also killed. I saw a photograph of a young bearded man from the N.S.W south coast.

I saw before me the evidence of an amoral universe. Here, in this land of secrets, where there had been secret bombings and a secret genocide. I was naïve of the truth of the deaths at my feet. I have no reason not to believe the skeletons in the earth below me were placed there by the Khmer Rouge. However, it has been said amongst the million people killed in the Democratic Kampuchea many had died from unavoidable starvation. It is said tribal groups, which were only within a minimal sphere of influence of the

Khmer Rouge leadership, had committed their own revengeful massacres. It has been said lives were saved by the Khmer Rouge by forcing the population to leave the cities to work in the rice fields. It has been said the genocide figures in the Democratic Kampuchea were exaggerated by the Americans to justify their own bloody incursion against communism in Indochina. I feel the present government would use these deaths to justify a prolonged hold on power. Thus, the memory of this genocide is used to the advantage of the main power players. I wondered if only the people who lived through this suffering care what happened?

However, I do believe the Khmer Rouge are murderers.

However, I do believe the American bombing was murderous.

I turn to the man who brought me here and tell him I find it hard to believe his fellow Khmers could be so cruel. He agrees.

In Phonm Penh I saw elderly Khmer gentlemen speaking exquisite French, wearing black berets, behaving like exiles resuming their lives after surviving a wretched past.

Cinema crowds underneath large billboards of beautiful Indian women and moustached macho guys swirling in and out of the large entrance from which came sounds that ranged from mystical rhythms to cowboy music. Along the pavement would be children playing games which included French skipping, plastic sword fights, hoola hoops, cards and throwing whirling things into the air. At dusk the dirt of the city would swirl up and cover everybody as the traffic became heavier and thousands of people left their daily chores to go home. The one constant sound throughout the length and breadth of Phonm Penh was the blare of horns. From outside the Hotel Sokhali motor scooters and a few cars mingled with hundreds of bicycles and cyclos, carrying goods as well as passengers, but all invariably ringing their bells. Women wearing Peruvian style hats would cling to their husbands on the back of motor scooters. Other bicycles and cyclos would be straining in neat lines waiting for the hand signal of a lone traffic policeman.

A cyclo stacked with Coke bottle crates; the driver could just peer over them to see where he was going. Watching him along with everything else I concluded that the powerless, those who belong to the under classes of history, must have no voice, (or another voice to speak for them), so as to be no threat, so as to suffer in private hells, so those with power may enjoy their pinnacle paradises.'

Lunch at a large wooden porch of a restaurant which is beside a lake near the outskirts of Phonm Penh. It is a pleasant scene where people – such as the Russian couple with their four year old blonde haired daughter – could gain some breathing space from the city.

It feels like I am dining at some out-of-the-way Elysian Field in this Hades. I think of my Khmer Australian friend who I saw in Vientane. I was supposed to meet him in Phonm Penh with his family. He had been the reason for this trip. After commandeering a plane to leave Cambodia on the very day the Khmer Rouge took over Phnom Penh he had wanted one day to return to see his village and parents after Pol Pot's eventual downfall. He also took his Lao wife who he met in a Thai refugee camp and his two sons who were born in Australia. Yet, there was a pensiveness of going to Cambodia 'alone'. A perception to the possibility of official persecution. It may prove beneficial to have an Australian bystander to witness any problems with the Communist authorities. However, my own more complicated visa problems, the scarcity of flights from Laos – in those days there were no direct flights from Bangkok - had led to me travelling separately. (As it was with no travel guide to help me I had discovered in a small travel agency in Canley Vale – a small suburb in western Sydney - run by a Khmer, that planes to Phnom Penh from Vientane flew only on Wednesdays and Fridays).The plan had been to catch up in Phnom Penh. Yet only on the eve of my final departure in Vientane did I see him - after his own

return. I was about to enter hell, as he was receding from it.

"I'm not religious. The Quakers just employ me." My host from Sydney is a teacher. "English has become the premier language to learn," she confirms, "especially now the Russians are pulling out from their commitments in Indochina. Many of my students are telecommunication workers. Telecom is here now. Sydney is the only place you can make a direct call to from Cambodia. Everything else has to go through Moscow…"

Beside us, feasting at a long table is a European tour group which mainly comprises of well dressed elderly people. Their female Cambodian guide had taken them to the Khmer Rouge torture centre at Toul Slong. "After you have enjoyed your lunch we will go to the killing fields."

Another unreality. The backpacker blare of Ko San Road. On my way to catch a tut-tut to visit the Khmer-Australian family. They were going to take me to the largest restaurant in South-East Asia. It was claimed by my hosts it had outside tables for two thousand people; waiters who moved around on roller skates; stages on which dancing female troupes in traditional dress entertained the diners. An Asian Empyrean where our impressions of a humid Orphic abyss were shared.

TRANSPLANTED PARADISE. GUESTHOUSE. Front step. Neon. Ignorance. Accentuated. Cold light.

"I am drunk."

Final. Glance. SOUVENIRS. OPEN. Shades. A young muscly woman. Braided hair. Coloured glass beads. Purple top. Scarlet dress. Gold rings. Jewellery. Pearls. A wipe-off tattoo of a red dragon on the forehead. Looking at a gold wine cup. She looks more like an Amazon maiden warrior rather than a trapped Eurydice. Talking to another of Mars's daughters. Perusing a clothes rack. "I've worn out so many garments. I feel stripped naked. I've been to so many cities. So many countries. I need a whole new wardrobe. My ten favourite cities are London. Paris. Rome. Munich. Madrid. Siena. Florence. Amsterdam. Jerusalem. Bangkok. I had seven boyfriends. My best lay was in Paris. The city of L-O-V-E. I'm heading home because I'm rundown. Some sunbaking at Bondi. Earn some more money. Then it's off again to London. I'm known as a good worker in all the best hotels. If I was going there now I could have hooked you up to some excellent contacts. Get a copy of TNT. For work. Accommodation. Travel deals. If you want to see Aussie bands catch the tube to Fullham. Last time I saw Mental As Anything. I recommend the Kontiki tour to Scandinavia and the Top Deck Tour to Europe. Everyone on both buses thought I was such an independent traveller. Always thought for myself. Did my own thing. Broke all the rules. Got away with a lot. My nickname was Priscilla. The Queen of Europe. Make a bee-line to Florence. The Italian guys follow people around the town square in a queue copying everything they do. It was so funny. I got trashed at Oktoberfest. Yet Prague has the cheapest beer. With a Eurail Pass I went on my own to the Running of the Bulls. A real fiesta. There's a photo of me in a Pamplona newspaper with other Aussies all on our backs wiggling our hands and feet in the air. I had some real adventures. I took risks. If you haven't been overseas you haven't lived. My only regret is not getting to Gallipoli for Anzac Day. There's next time. At least I've been on the Bridge to the River Kwai day tour. Hell's Pass was awesome. Although they ought to spice up the bridge with a laser show. I should work for Lonely Planet. After you've done your exotic tribal village trek from Chang Mai head down to Ko Samui. It's such a party island. Talk about 'human zoo.' Come with me to the big weekend markets tomorrow. I'll show you how to bargain. These shopkeepers are thieves." A knowing look. "Everyone has to prostitute their culture and country for the tourist dollar." A smirk. "I would. Ever wonder how these people would live if we weren't here? Make sure you only go to Asian bars that are off-limits to the locals. They're safer. I'll haggle for

this shirt. Then we'll watch Armageddon in that café across the road. I could do with a smoothie. I can't wait to get home to go to the Darlo Bar! I hear it's packed out with English guys. My girlfriends love their accents. Definitely the sort of people who should keep overstaying their visas-"

"COCKROACH! BABYLONIAN WHORE!"

The Mekong. Where I had reminisced over the uncertainty of this trip while lying in the darkness of my hut. Voices of travellers on the main porch of the bamboo restaurant. A whispering river quietly splashing the rocks sloping down to the water. A lit candle. The slight wind is causing the flame to flicker. I looked at the ceiling to watch the unfocused, dancing shadows. Sometimes in life we see in everyday events patterns unfurl which help give us direction. We will watch these rhythms emerge, ebb and flow and finally subside to allow other rhythms to take their place. We may choose to evolve our decisions and plans on the sequences we see occurring around us. Intuition rather than logic becomes the basis of our willingness to take certain risks. There are moments of pleasant surprise which confirm our intuition. Sometimes the patterns we thought we had so clearly observed and interpreted leave only the bitter taste of ash in our mouths. The candle goes out.

SOVIET IMPERIALISMO. A black silhouette of Augusto Sandino on a blank all red background has one foot on this headline which is at the bottom of the poster. Blatant. Untrue. Propaganda. Rifle shots. Machine gun fire. In the surrounding hills. As no one is concerned, neither am I. Waiting at the Honduran border after leaving Nicaragua. Travellers, locals alike have been escorted across a mile long no man's land in a military Sandinista truck. (The soldiers with us kept their eyes at the road at all times for there was always the fear of a contra attack). Our backpacks had just been checked by Honduran customs. Just before lunch. This was fortunate for me. I had hidden a book on the Nicaraguan Revolution in a small 'secret compartment' below the main space of my backpack. It could only be accessed by a zipper that was concealed by the bulk of the over-filled pack hanging over it. Unless an official was very thorough it would seem as he finally viewed the bottom of where my clothes were stored that he had done a total inspection. Other books, such as a paperback novel and travel guide had been obviously placed in side pockets so they would be discovered first. (I now well understood how people in Eastern Europe would only read a few torn clandestine pages at a time of any forbidden book). The customs official had been in a hurry. He was more interested in his tortillas than looking for subversive material. A German man in front of me had not been so lucky. A children's colouring book made in the Soviet Union was confiscated. It had been on top of his clothes. Next our passports were checked; although this took time we did not have to wait until the end of lunch to get them back. Nevertheless, I was not equally thankful that my travel details had been typed into a computer. I saw this happening by bending my neck to peer through an open door to the side of the front counter in the main office. (It was here where all the foreigners had to wait). I was presently told by an English female internationalista that the personal information of all Western travellers when they left Nicaragua was passed on to the U.S.A. It seemed like a fanciful rumour but what I knew to be true was that a friend from Leeds who had recently gone home had only been given a three-day travel visa by U.S. border officials - at the California-Mexico border - when it was discovered that he had been on a long visit to the Sandinistas. The three days were only enough time to catch a flight out of L.A. When I reached the U.S. border at Brownsville, Texas I had the clarity to slip a paper clip over two pages in my passport to hide my Nicaraguan visa from the two very polite U.S. border officers. (Minor gatekeepers to this Olympic property of the gods). My U.S. visa was fortuitously on the other side and with the paper clip overlooked it seemed

everything was in order. After I replied 'Guatemala' to the apparently innocent question of how far south I had travelled in Central America I freely entered Cat's 'big whore.'

As I waited for a Dallas bus I watched some T.V. on a small coin-operated set attached to my seat in the bus station. THE WORLD AT WAR.

"I told the government man that my neighbour is a good citizen. The schoolgirl was just telling silly stories. I was believed and my friend was not arrested. It worries me I had to lie. Yet the elderly gentleman in the flat above me said if we really lived in a democracy law abiding citizens would not be so afraid as to hide the truth."

"I LOVE JESUS! TRUST IN JESUS! HIS TRUTH WILL SET YOU FREE!" The Guatemalan truck driver trembled as he told me the truth that should not be hidden under a bushel. To stave off any death squad who may mistake him as one of those followers of the Catholic Church who believed that to be a Christian you had to serve the poor; that the government who persecuted the voiceless, who cut out their tongues, worshipped false gods, were the true blasphemers.

"Truly, truly, companero JESUS SAVES! I AM BORN AGAIN!" An American Evangelical tract.[3] *"I FOLLOW THE WILL OF MY PRESIDENT. WHO SERVES THE PEOPLE. WHO IS ALSO BORN AGAIN.HE, LIKE THE ORDAINED LEADER OF EVERY RIGHTEOUS NATION, INCLUDING THE PRESIDENT OF THE GREAT UNITED STATES, HUMBLY BOWS DOWN TO YAHWEH & DOES HIS HOLY WILL. YAHWEH IS A JEALOUS GOD. MANY PEOPLE IN MY COUNTRY KNOW THIS & A GREAT REVIVAL HAS SWEPT THE LAND TO ASSURE OUR SALVATION! You need somewhere to sleep while we wait for the barriers to open tomorrow?" The truckie is out of breath. "I have a hammock that hangs under my load."*

Gregor in mid-space. On the Guatemalan-Honduran border. Another limbo. A cold night. Wet. Heavy rains. Pelting the semi-trailer. BANG! BANG! BANG! Yet, it was open space. Outside any dark cave. (Like the driver was in his righteous cabin). Or paradise. A modern-day Er. On visitations. To little hells. Heavens. Purgatories. At railway stations. Bus depots. Airports. Hundreds of thousands of souls waiting to proceed daily to their respective destinies. Many happy returns. Gregor could look back to note how the gods would fickly shift and change the truth depending on geography. Or situation. Or temperament. MIND (THE) GAP. (There was that El Salvadorian man who had no arms below his elbows. He had both limbs blown off by a mine when he was sowing his field. Proudly, he could still light and smoke his own cigarettes. Those bitterly quiet FMLN guerrillas who showed that video of their comrade discovered in a shallow grave tortured and killed by a death squad. Yes, spending a night in a guerrilla camp in the mountains which had a ferris wheel brought in for the children who could be seen handling AK-47s. That football game next day with the rifles nestled against each other by the field). On a television at a transit lounge in Heathrow Airport is a demonstration against Pinochet outside Downing Street. A Polish businessman who is sitting beside Gregor turns to him. "I know the Chilean Constitution has been twigged so he has immunity at least for a few years but what shocks me is to discover that the United States terrorizes 'her backyard'. I have always viewed the Americans as the great supporters of democracy, especially when I consider their morale lifting aid in my country's independence struggle against the Russians."

TV audience chant.

"YOU SUCK! YOU SUCK! YOU SUCK! YOU-"

Gregor briefly turns down the volume on his bus station seat TV set. Turns it back up.

"…YEAH! WE PIMP OUR DAUGHTER-IN-LAW! WHY I DO BELIEVE WE'RE IN GOD'S OWN COUNTRY! IT'S STILL THE LAND OF THE FREE! SO WE CAN DO IT! WE GOTTA EAT! OUR GOOD-FOR-NOTHING SON STILL DON'T HAVE NO JOB! SAY HE DON'T WANT TO WORK FOR NO PITTANCE! WELL WE WORK ALL OUR LIVES FOR HIM! HE'S GIVEN US

NOTHING BACK! HE OUGHT TO PAY HIS DEBT! GODDAM IT! TO US! WE SUPPOSE TO SHOW COMPASSION? WE WERE'S GOOD PARENTS! YET WE STILL WORKING! NOW WE'S HAVE A JOB WHERE WE CAN KICK BACK A LITTLE! HIS WIFE LIES ON HER BACK FOR US! HE DON'T EVER KNOW IT BUT SHE WAS A WHORE ANYWAYS! SO WHAT SHE HAD NO SELF-ESTEEM! IT NOT OUR DOING! AS THE BOSS MAN OF THE HOUSE! LIKE IT? I PAINT IT WHITE! ALLS' I KNOW A MAN HAS TO DO WHAT A MAN HAS TO DO! I'M DOING IT! PUT MY SON IN A CHAIN GANG! I SPIT ON HIM!"

'The coldest war is in the mind. Lying to ourselves. To each other. All the time. To survive. To second guess the gods. So we may make the right choices. To please them. To avoid damnation. Always to be on guard. Never lazy. We can't afford to be.'

"A question of mind." Cat plays with his Fanta yo-yo.

'Like the fixed stars whose medieval orbits could be predicted, we often establish the one orbit for our consciousness so our lives may run a stable, unwavering course. (I have been perceived as psychic for so easily anticipating what a well-encrusted, fundamental mind will do or say. Pity our tempestuous divinities could not also be so sterile). Never deflected. By morals. Or ideas. Or visions. Or life shocks…yes, oh so…be it…a steady life trajectory that will not be re-aligned. (Has Er told us - nothing?).'

"Where's the PAVLOVA! OR PAVLOV'S DOGS! HOW ABOUT A BOLT OUT OF THE BLUE!"

A galaxy with no stars. This celestial dark cloud. A hydrogen foetus. Could our collective consciousness also be so embryonic? Star child. By the side of a track a dead baby wrapped in rags. The exposed face is half-eaten. At a levelled site the leftover pieces of an adult human rib. Vultures.

"Normally, a corpse is sliced into small pieces. Makes the whole body easier to digest. The whole canopy becomes the domain of the spirit as the birds fly around. A sky burial is more efficient than burial in the ground. The Tibetan plain is so hard." The monk looks up. Gregor also views the spiralling vultures. The spinning bowl that is the sky. Colliding galaxies. Ovum and sperm as one. (The Cosmic Egg impregnated. Dividing cells. Stars). A human body as the universe. Or visa versa. The music of the heavens vibrating inside every organ. As the body and soul entwine, to give each other sustenance, the universe and I do likewise. The stars my eyes to look into eternity. To guide me. The sun my soul. The earth my heart. The sky. Deliverer of water. (I am water). Yellow. Red. Blue. Primary colours sustaining life. The rays of the firmament warm my blood. The heart of Dionysus Za'greus.

"He was the son of Persephone and Zeus who slept with her in the form of a snake which would have represented life slithering into the tomb and overcoming death's power. As it was Persephone was Zeus's daughter, who had slept with Demeter her mother." Cat speaks to Michael, Gregor, Lisa, Margaret and Melissa at The Gap on the South Head. A magnificent blood-red sunset sprawls across the sky. "Zeus made him ruler of the world. Dionysus Za'greus on his throne was guarded by the Corybantes. They are the male priests to the Asiatic goddess Cybeles. As well as making a woman's womb fertile, Cybeles can bring on the wild forces of nature and cure - as well as bring - on disease-"

"Sounds like this old pensioner Master and I met when we went to pick up some mulch at the Addison Road nursery." interrupts Lisa. "This woman was there shovelling it all in a council garbage wheelie bin." A smile.

"It's really easy for me to wheel it back and forth across from my place. It's only across the road. I've been renting there for six months. It was barren when I arrived. Now I've got all sorts of vegetables growing in garden beds that run alongside the side of the backyard. I only throw in the seeds from the food scraps and the plants just spring up. You have to let life run wild."

The woman stretches out her hand to the pumpkins and tomatoes growing right beside

her. She had taken Lisa and Master back to her place so they could have a look.

A mindful look. "We all make mistakes. We all want our second chance." A prolonged glance at the wild garden. "Yet, everything can sort itself out in good time."

"Consider the lilies of the field…" muses Cat. A reflective look at the sun. 'Apollo, you shine on every field, a god worshiped by nomads who can see you from anywhere as they search for fertile soil. Every local god would have been as if encountering a foreigner; much more preferable to look up to you or your sister if not Zeus or Hera or even Hermes who will guide us to the underworld where we must all journey too; in this sense we are all nomads. We will walk amongst fields filled with the flowers of the dead; the same asphodels that Odysseus saw at the feet of the many wraiths he spoke too when he too marauded the earth. Agamemnon, Ajax, Achilles, may consider bygone days when they controlled a vast acreage tilling the land; while peasant farmers with their small land plots may have looked up to Demeter or Dionysus Agamemnon and the other Greek kings would have put their trust in Ares for the ultimate agricultural exercise: war; while offerings would also be made to Hephaestus who would provide the armies with the 'hoes' needed to till over other men; especially the 'lesser peoples' of the nomad tribes. All empires need energy to sustain themselves. War is a good producer of such fuel. Yet, the likes of Agamemnon would now realize his power-plays; intrigues and skilful human machinations were mere incidental details for what was truly being achieved: to serve up evermore grist to the divine Hades who will always remain the largest landholder of all…'

"Overall, the life energy of Cybeles is a liberating force yet Hera was jealous of Dionysus Za'greus. Apart from his pre-eminence, he was a living reminder of her husband's adultery." Cat is staring at the sky. "She had the Titans, who whitened their faces with chalk, lure the horned child away with toys and a looking glass. They seized Dionysus Za'greus, tore him apart with knives and then feasted on the child like vultures. Dionysus Za'greus tried to escape by transforming himself into different living beings and was eventually devoured as a bull. Except the heart which was saved by Athena. Given back to Zeus this life sustaining organ was used - by this supreme god - to re-create his son who was placed inside Semele to be re-born. Zeus obliterated the Titans with lightning. From Titan ash arose human beings. We are rebels to the gods. Yet there is a divine residue in us. Immortal essence. It originates in Zeus, yet we are also imbued with the Underworld, for Persephone, the wife of Hades, is our original mother. Hell. Heaven. Even Purgatory. All are inside us. We visit ourselves - as much as anywhere else - as we feel cursed. Or blessed. Or wait."

Lisa stands in the centre of a small sandstone circle. This ring is the part of the remains of a World War Two gun emplacement. Sunrays on her face. "Do you think it was ever used?"

"The Japanese actually had midget submarines attack Sydney Harbour." states Gregor. "An elderly woman I know in Glebe told me as a girl she heard shells from the mother submarine whiz over her auntie's place and land in the golf course."

"Would have just been down the road here in Dover Heights." remarks Cat.

"She is a very interesting woman who let's us have our Guatemala human rights meetings at her place." continues Gregor. "About eight people – including Caterina – turn up every second Wednesday; there is always a very good selection of tea and biscuits to have after the formal proceedings. Most of us had travelled on a 'road to Damascus' in Central America to become involved. The President of our little committee is a Guatemalan lawyer who escaped with his family from the death squads. 'Victor Hugo' works now as a cleaner. Our host is involved with the theatre, she helped to set up New Theatre in Newtown; was a documentary film maker for a waterside union and used

to live a bohemian life in Kings Cross. Still is a bohemian. A 'grand woman' who really inspires us to see that if we reach our eighties we could, even then, still live full, engaging lives. You ought to meet her Cat."

Lisa stretches out her arms. Shouts. "My voice is echoing."

Everyone has a go including Melissa. Yet, no one can offer an explanation.

"Lifeline has it's phone number here." Michael is examining the white railing that runs along the cliff top.

"Telstra are thinking of getting rid of the free call service to them." comments Gregor.

"A dolphin!" exclaims Lisa. All eyes look out to sea. A dolphin is jutting out of the water followed by others. As if aspiring to touch the sky. These extremely intelligent sea mammals disappear under the sea.

"A surfie mate of mine was off Shelley beach at Cronulla when he saw a dolphin nearby make a whirlpool with his tail." nonchalantly remarks Michael. "These fish got caught up in it and the dolphin grabbed a few with his teeth to eat."

"The kidnappers of Dionysus." comments Cat while gazing at the dolphins. "Semele was also the mother of the more well-known Dionysus who was also fathered by Zeus. She was the daughter of Cadmus. A Phoenician who was the founder of Thebes, which would one day have Oedipus as its king. He was the brother of Europa who had been taken away by Zeus to Crete when he disguised himself as a bull and approached Europa who was swimming along a seashore. Europa somersaulted on the laidback bull's back. Zeus took Europa by sea to Crete where as a man he fathered Minos and Rhadamanthus to her; their mother taught them how to leap Zeus as she had done and it became a revered skill amongst Cretans. Although the brothers squabbled as to who would rule Crete Minos was to become king.[4]

Minos was a just ruler. Along with his brother, Rhadamanthus, Minos would become judge over the dead in the Underworld; they would choose both the punishments and where the dead would go according to their deeds and misdeeds achieved on this earth. Aeacus was the third adjudicator of this lordly triumvirate that would direct the eternal destinies of mortals; he was a pious man who would sire Telamon, the father of Ajax the Greater and Peleus, the father of Achilles. Zeus was also Aecus's father and his mother was the nymph Aegina which was the name of the island he ruled."

"Was the Aegean Sea named after Aegina?" inquires a very curious Michael.

Cat shakes his head. "After Theseus's father whose name is Aegeus. Although the Greek word for storm is supposed to be agis. Can you enlighten us…"

"Na…my Greek vocabulary is no good…"

"You are so useless -" laughs Lisa. " - MICHAEL!" Comes the shout so as to hear the echo in the gun emplacement.

"On Aegina Aecus's people were wiped out by a plague but Zeus repopulated Aegina by making new people out of ants. It seems a Greek word for ants is 'myrmekes' which explains why this new race was called Myrmidons who according to Homer were ruled by Peleus and Achilles. Aecus, who convinced the gods to end a drought on mainland Greece, is worthy to share with his half-brothers their prodigious judicial duties in Hades. Yet, this is all a digression from considering Semeles and Dionysus.As I said Semeles's father was Cadmus who was encouraged from giving up his search for his sister Eurydice by the Delphic Oracle. This esteemed seer had Cadmus follow a cow for where it lay down he would found Thebes. Hera was said to be 'cow eyed' so these animals were held in high regard." Cat lifts back his cowboy hat. "Cows may allude to female, maternal universal forces while bulls correspond to this creation's male aspects. Zeus is meant to be 'broad-faced'. I imagine like Taurus. Yet, as I have mentioned earlier Semele - the daughter of Cadmus - was the mother of Dionysus. At last,

we come to the main subject in this broad overview of ancient legend." Cat grins. "I often wonder if the gods had me as Ovid - who wrote Metamorphosis - in a previous life. Zeus slept with Semele and Hera, insufferably jealous, disguised as a human, convinced Semele to ask Zeus to visit her in his full godly splendour. This king of all the deities reluctantly visited this mere mortal – who at most could only hope to become a minor earth goddess - as a massive bolt of lightning. Semele was vaporised. However, the unborn child was saved from the ashes was still fiercely jealous made Ino and her family become insane. Ino's husband was killed by Zeus. The melancholy thunder god placed Dionysus in his thigh. After his birth, Dionysus was handed into the care of Ino, who was a sister of Semele. Yet, Hera who his son and Ino drowned herself in the sea with another son." Cat glimpses a pensive Lisa - who is staring down at Melissa - from the corner of his eye. "Yet, there is some hope in this tragedy as these two were both transformed into sea divinities. Thus Dionysus was given over to the nymphs of Mount Nysa where it is said he was named and where he first cultivated magnificent vineyards. With a band of followers, Dionysus travelled throughout Europe, Asia and to India - where I am certain his wild spirit is still instilled in the Bollywood musical – those who accepted him were blessed with wine and those who despised him were driven hysterically mad. Those who doubted his divinity bullied Dionysus, but he overcame all his foes. In Thrace, Lycurgus chained the bacchantes and satyrs as he had rejected Dionysus. Dionysus from the clutches of Hades. Disconsolate with life, Orpheus was absent from this world in both mind and spirit as he walked with a Thracian band of Dionysian women known as maenads. So the story goes this distraught figure would preach about the Dionysian mysteries and what he saw in Hades. Indifferent to all other women, these wild maenads finally turned on our sad musician when his apathy led him to ignore some orgiastic rite they were performing." Cat's knuckles go white as he tightens his grip onto the white wooden rail. "Perhaps Orpheus knew what he was doing for these Dionysian 'whores' were angered and tore him to shreds; these jealous, murderous creatures would be turned into oak trees but not till after they had thrown the head of Orpheus into the water where it was heard yelling out 'Eurydice!'" Silence.

The audience is pensive. A distant look by the storyteller out to sea. "Orpheus…also sailed with the Argonauts…"

A red sun.

"A Homeric hymn tells the story about Dionysus being shanghaied by Tyrrhenian pirates who shoved him on their ship and went out to sea. Dionysus who had magnificent long black hair and a purple robe that hung from his strong, broad shoulders was assumed to be a royal son. Surely a king would pay a hefty ransom for his return. Yet, the ropes that tied the regal prisoner soon hung loose about him and he smiled with his dark eyes at his captors. Only the helmsman realised that they had kidnapped a god. He pleaded with his comrades to set their captive down on a nearby dark shore. The helmsman feared that the wrath of Dionysus would whip up a hurricane storm that would sink the ship and drown the crew. However, the ship's master gave the helmsman a tongue-lashing, calling him the true madman, that he should watch the wind so they could set sail to Cyprus or Egypt or to some far place - wherever their prisoner was heading – he would be forced to tell soon enough, then they may go and parley with his friends, to release him for a high fee. "He is no god but a god has favourably sent him to us." This captain was pleased to see his ship take on a full sail. His crew tightly pulled the ropes as the vessel fiercely whisked across a 'wine-dark' sea. With such smooth sailing there was no need to pull the oars and so the sailors were very pleased – except for one. It was the helmsmen who first saw a sweet fragrant bubbly wine stream across

the deck, then to notice a vine coil around the mast and spread along the top of the sail to release clusters of grapes. Flowers were also blossoming and tasty berries, suddenly along the rowlocks there sprouted garlands. The crew had been amazed, yet were now fearful, and rebuked the helmsman to now take them in to the shore. Yet, what had now appeared as wonderful, would be overtaken by the horror of a god transformed into a lion. A roar. With royal mane, Dionysus stood up on the top deck, glaring threateningly at the crew. Everyone ran to the stern, where the panic stricken crew surrounded the helmsman - a man who Homer says had 'a wise soul'. Huddled together the frightened sailors watched the lion jump on their master. The captain had stood his ground, his fantasy of divine favour, his unlimited greed, blinded him to the miracles occurring all around him, for what benefit were they to him? As it turned out, no benefit at all, and as his body was devoured - with pieces of his flesh flung overboard - the crew became hysterical, as they dreaded the same doom, all jumped into the sea – except for one. The helmsman watched in amazement as these once panic-stricken men now chirped and laughed in the splashing waters around the boat, for they were dolphins. Without a care in the world. Dionysus was back to his old self and applauded the helmsman for his charmed life, he told him to take courage, for his wisdom had already tamed a lion, no harm would come to him for he sought not to harm a god. A strange god, but a divinity nevertheless. "I am Dionysus, the roaring god." As Homer tells it. Yet I see him as a divine gypsy." Cat muses. "Anyways, the wine god spoke with impeccable grace, befitting his beautiful face, of his genealogy as he helped the helmsman set sail to shore, a fortuitous mortal who survived his adventure with this wayward god, to tell the tale..."

Lisa tilts back her head. "Dan told me according to his mother he has some gypsy blood in him." The others were then told of Dan's family folklore which involved a Spanish sailor marrying an Irish woman in Elizabethan times. The Spaniard had survived a shipwreck while thousands of his compatriots had died when many vessels of the Spanish Armada while heading home had smashed onto the rugged Irish coastline. Despite their best navigational efforts these particular boats had still drifted uncontrollably in the strong North Atlantic current.

Cat interrupts by repeating his Japanese haiku about drifting boats.

Lisa continues. "One descendent from this Spanish-Irish mix was a great grandfather who fell in love with a village woman when he too was shipwrecked but on an island in the Mediterranean Sea." A laugh. Lisa looks out to sea. "When he was being picked up he had her dressed up as a sailor to get her onto the boat. Dan's great granddaddy even had her use a flask and tube to urinate over the side to convince everyone she was a man! It's mainly because of her that Dan has that swarthy look. If nothing else, his whole family background may explain his hot temper." Lisa looks whimsical. "Maybe she's out there now…"

"My dead husband could be!" muses Margaret. "His nickname was Flipper!"

"40,000 years on my mind…that mural outside Redfern railway station has that big Rainbow Serpent running along the barrier wall…yet what few people know is that the dolphin is apparently the actual tribal totem for this area…" Cat is looking absentminded. "The followers of Dionysus were exhilarated to lose their identity in divine ecstasy." Hands still on the rail. 'To the gods our whole bodies are masks. We must clothe our transforming soul with ever new disguises. To reflect continuing change.'

"Get the best suit that fits!" Cat winds up his yo-yo. "Don't hire one for $89. Buy one for the same price! Try out our new factory shop in Erskineville!"

Trying to eye the old Quarantine Centre on the North Head. It was the abode to many dead. There were also ghosts of suicides and shipwrecks in the water. This harbour was a

watery divide between the living and the dead. As the sun continued to sink over the horizon it was certain this group would soon be departing Cat thought of the murky nether region between daylight and night where along the last shore of the last stream of the river Oceanus, beyond the wild coastline of Persephone's Grove, was a haunted spot where two tributaries of Hades met. The fiery waters of Pyriphlegethon as well as Cocytus a river of lamentations a branch of the Styx. The waters from both these rivers then flowed into the Acheron which was the second great river of Hades. A large rock pillar marks this spot in a land of misty shadows where the Cimmerians lived. It was the very edge of the world. In perpetual darkness. A dreaded eternal night. Odysseus carved out into the ground a trench a cubit square in height and length and breadth in which the sacrificial blood of a ram and black ewe was poured. This mortal of Ithaca then held up his sword as a multitude from the dead appeared from the black void beyond the large rock, with the water of both hellish streams crashing on either side of it, to then meander around the ground in front where Odysseus stood behind the square pit of blood, as if at the very tip of a pointy island. Thus Odysseus, along with Er and Orpheus, was the only third ancient mortal to see the shades while he was still alive. A loud murmur. Odysseus held back this ghoulish crowd made of all the dead that had yet been. It was if their faded faces would float in the dark air to greet this living being with whom - by approaching the sacred blood before him - they may converse and hear news from the world of life. All had to be held back, including Odysseus's own sorrowful mother and unlucky Elpenor, a young sailor who had just died on Circe's island, until the aim of his visitation was accomplished. Odysseus had just come from Circe who advised Odysseus to go speak to Tiresias the blind prophet to find out about his future. As it was only Ajax the Greater - still so embittered by losing the right to own Achilles arms to Odysseus - had no desire to speak. Lord Tiresias, there he was, with a gold sceptre in hand, a man but once a woman now a man again. Who tasted the blood set down by Odysseus to then speak of Poseidon's wrath towards the Ithacan for blinding his son; of the certain death that would befall his men if they ate Apollo's sacred cattle and of the lonely wanderings and trap that awaited Odysseus from the suitors. These were the warnings to this royal Ithacan in his present life. Although it was not said in so many words Odysseus is to consider that wisdom rather than human strength is the avenue by which true leadership and achievement can be attained. Polyphemus, who belonged to a lawless tribe of giant Cyclops who, despite their brute strength, had no real knowledge or ability to take advantage of their tethered lands, was outwitted by a much smaller but more intelligent being, while it was the Phaeacians, a wise race who exercised control over their natural surroundings, who will provide the Ithacan stranger - who has fallen on hard times - with hospitality and a sanctuary, as well as the means by which he will be able to continue his journey home. Odysseus will die peacefully in old age, on dry land, surrounded by his well-endowed community. Yet it was Achilles, with his weary blackened eyes, who bade him excellent advice to any new existence. "Thank you. I am full of joy that my son fought so bravely at Troy. However, my news to you is that no matter how much family glory can be bestowed upon a noble warrior as myself, it would still be better to be alive as a slave to a landless peasant than as lord over all in this land of the dead."

It would seem that it was advice well taken. For when the time came for Odysseus to stand in front of Lachesis and pick the form of his next life, this resilient warrior chose to come back as an ordinary man. It was so unlike the choice of say Agamemnon who, tired of the treacherous world of men, desired to be an eagle. Still a regal creature. Ajax would return as a lion. A royal beast but one who would not humanly recall foregoing his mighty cousin's armour. (More contemplative, at least, was Orpheus who chose to be a swan).

"You looking for the Quarantine Centre Cat?" inquires Lisa. "Over on the other side of this 'Swan Lake'? Ever been on the ghost tour? You ought to go after I'm gone. Might meet up!" A cheeky snigger.

A wistful look. 'Who was the extraordinary ancient spirit that would choose to be clothed by this ordinary, fateful woman?'

Time to go.

1.To look at Medusa - whether she was alive or dead - meant being mesmerised by her and turned into stone. a thousand snakes writhed from Medusa's head, these former strands of hair were kept alive by her horrid psyche. This Gorgon was the only one out of the three vile creatures that was mortal; once a beautiful woman Medusa was turned into a monster by Athena who was indignant of her physical liaison with Poseidon in one of her temples. Perseus was the son of Zeus and Danae who was impregnated by the thunder god in a glittering golden shower while she was still imprisoned in a bronze subterranean chamber. Danae had been encased by her father Acricus of Argos when the Delphic Oracle had prophesied that her yet to be born son would kill him. Eventually, mother and son would be placed in a chest by Acricus and thrown into the sea. Danae and Perseus were washed ashore at Seriphos where the king was love struck by this single mother, while the young warrior son was seen as an obstacle. Feigning a wedding to another woman, the king asked for wedding gifts, and gave Perseus the impossible task of obtaining Medusa's head as a trophy. King Polydectes would have thankfully believed he would never see this protective son of his true love again. Perseus went off to the three old witches known as the Graeae who were the sisters of the Gorgons. Their mother was Ceto who was both wife and sister to the sea-god Phorcys. (Phorcys had also fathered the nymph Thoosa who would mother Polyphemus by way of Poseidon. With Hecate the witch god he also sired Scylla who was a sea nymph who Glaucus fell in love with. Glaucus was once a man who was transformed by eating a magical sea grass on the shore into a minor sea god. Yet, Glaucus had no power to gain the affection of Scylla who was a sea nymph who Glaucus fell in love with. Glaucus went to the enchantress Circe for a love potion but she fell in love with Glaucus who resisted her advances. Circe thus went off to the channel between Italy and Sicily where at a rock pool - shaped like a crescent moon where Scylla swam - she threw poisonous herbs into the water. Scylla turned into a sea monster with six snakes with dog heads protruding from her upper body. Along with Charybidis the Whirlpool they would in these straits either suck ships to their doom or devour the crew as sailors tried to avoid one or the other horror. Six of Odysseus's men would be killed by Scylla who especially despised the Ithacan due to his new-found friendship with Circe. (Ulysses knew of the tragic fate that awaited six of his men – although he did not know which six – so thought it best to keep the information of this horrific but unavoidable, brutal destiny from his crew). Medusa, Scylla – two of Phorcys's beautiful offspring who were tragically fated to become horrible malevolent forces; Phorycs – the son of Pontus the Sea and Gaea the Earth – considered to be the sea as evil was also known as Phorcus the Intrepid.In contrast Nereus - another son of Pontus and Gaea and born early in the creation of the world as seen by his greybeard - was just and kind. In the Aegean this 'Old Man of the Sea' would often leave his sea cavern to help sailors and provide friendly advice. Nereus's wife was Doris and one of their fifty daughters - who were known as the Nerieds - was Thetis the mother of Achilles. Another benign sea divinity was Proteus the son of Oceanus and Tethys who was also known as an Old Man of the Sea. He would shepherd Poseidon's seals and could see into the future and always spoke the truth. However, he would always change into different animal shapes to avoid this task but would give up the deception if the seeker of truth and the future was courageously persistent.). The three grey haired sisters only had one eye and one razor-edge tooth between them and Perseus grabbed the eye as it was passed from one hag to the other. It would not be given back until the location of the lair of the Gorgons was spelt out to Perseus. Although their eye was returned this resourceful

intruder still obtained from these elderly shrews a dark hat that rendered him invisible, a magic satchel, and winged sandals, which could make him fly. Following misty, dark paths that were littered with many statues that were Medusa's previous victims, swift invisible Perseus reached his ghastly goal. Perseus stealthily carried out the execution with a sickle given to him by Hermes. From Medusa's sliced neck emerged Pegasus the flying horse and Chrysaor a male warrior holding a golden sword, both had been fathered by Poseidon. With Medusa's head in the bag Perseus was chased by the other two Gorgons but escaped from these mangy dragon-like beasts by riding Pegasus Coming across Atlas's kingdom Perseus asked if he could rest but the giant Atlas who feared this son of Zeus may steal his golden apples refused him hospitality and in turn exposed by the sight of Medusa's head was transformed into a mighty mountain - which on its back still rests the earth and heavens. In a desolate Ethiopia Perseus came across and saved Andromeda from a sea monster sent by Poseidon who was as equally outraged as the Nerieds by Andromeda's mother's remark who had stupidly said she was more beautiful than these sea goddesses. (Mention should be made of the seven Pleideas who were the daughters of Atlas and Pleione: Alycone the Queen who warded off evil storms was seduced by Poseidon and most likely gave birth to Orion's father; Asterope akin to a twinkling star; Celseno who was swarthy; Electra akin to bright shining amber and it is thought that the Greek word electron is derived from her; when static electricity was discovered in 600 B.C. by Thales of Miletus the use of the term probably came from the name Electra. It should also be noted that Electra was the name of a daughter of Agamemnon and Clytaemnestra who along with Orestos killed her mother and her lover to avenge the death of her father; Maia the Great One, the eldest and most beautiful of the Pleideas, seduced by Zeus to give birth to Hermes; Merope the eloquent and Taygete the long necked. Pleiades is in reference to the star cluster of that name and the word plein means to sail and it is said the star cluster's conjunction with the sun in spring and to its opposite in autumn marked both ends of the sailing season in Ancient Greece. There is also mention of the word pleaos 'full' which means many in its plural form that can relate to a star cluster and also to peleiades 'flock of doves' the seven sisters were metamorphised into this bird and flew to the stars). Intending to torment the land this behemoth would instead devour Andromeda as a worthy sacrifice; she was chained to a rock on the insistence of an oracle to the king. Perseus freed the princess - and once the tough-skinned marine creature was defeated - married Andromeda. Medusa's head was placed on a nest of seaweed beside the sea while the wedding proceeded and this sea grass was transformed into coral. It had been the case that when Perseus flew over Libya each blood drop from this severed head landed in the desert to create new snakes. In Seriphos Polydectes was maltreating Danae who did not love him so Perseus on his return revealed the head of Medusa to turn this corrupt king into stone. The helmet and the satchel were given to Hermes, and Medusa's head was placed on Athena's shield. Danae and Perseus headed back to Argos where on the way Perseus competed in funerary games at Larissa where Acrisus having left Argos to avoid his grandson was unwittingly in attendance and was thus accidentally killed by a discus thrown by his unknowing inescapable nemesis. However, the fated grandson chose not to take over the throne of Argos and went to the kingdom of Tiryns where he founded Mycenae and from his family of the Perseids Hercules, also fathered by Zeus – disguised as the husband of Alcmene - would become it's most famed son as portended when as a baby he killed the two poisonous snakes an envious Hera had sent to kill him. It was also on this outing to South Head that Cat told the others about Demeter the vegetation goddess who looked for her daughter Persephone with two torches after she was kidnapped and taken by Hades to his underworld. The earth went barren while Demeter continued her search. It wasn't until Helios the sun god who could see everything from his great height spoke to Demeter that she found out what happened. Picking flowers while playing with the daughters of Oceanus - who is the circle waters that surround the world - Persephone saw

the narcissus placed in the ground by Gaea the earth mother for Hades - the 'God Who Receives so Many'. As Persephone unwittingly plucked these flowers a chasm opened up and the god of death emerged to seize Persephone whom he loved and who he would marry in the Underworld. Crops no longer grew, animals stopped breeding and death came to humanity. A wildly grieving Demeter went to Zeus and demanded that he make Hades return her beloved daughter. The lord of Olympus said this could only occur if Persephone had not eaten anything in the land of the dead. However, Persephone had eaten a fruit seed which Hades had slyly given her. Fortunately, a compromise was reached whereby Demeter would go back to Olympia to restore the earth's agriculture while Persephone would return to the surface at spring and go back to hell at the time of the harvest just before winter. Persephone's movements would reflect the hibernating and regenerative qualities of the earth's four various seasons. Cat added that a source of this vegetation myth is Eleusis near Athens where there was a performance of a religious ritual which represented how a corn goddess would go beneath the world after the harvest at the start of the summer months personifying how collected corn was stored under the ground to escape the blistering heat of the sun which could leave the bare earth dried out. Keeping the corn away from these furnace conditions helped to retain its life properties.

2. Revelations 2:6: *but you have this in your favour: you hate the practices of Nicolatians which I also hate.* [NIV].

3. In what seems rather ironic to him in the present context Gregor finds himself viewing MARK 9:33-50. [NIV]: **[*Who is the Greatest?*]** *They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the road?" But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest.*

Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last and the servant of all."

He took a little child and had him stand among them. Taking him in his arms, he said to them. "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me."

[*Whoever is not against Us is for Us*] *"Teacher," said John, "We saw a man driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop because he was not one of us."*

"Do not stop him," Jesus said. "No-one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, for whoever is not against us is for us. I tell you the truth, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to Christ will certainly not lose his reward."

[Causing to Sin] *"And if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone tied around his neck. If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, Where*

'there worm does not die,
and the fire is not
*quenched.'**

Everyone will be salted with fire. Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with each other."

* *"As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me," declares the LORD, "so will your name and descendants endure. From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me," says the LORD. "And they will go out and look upon the dead bodies of those who rebelled against me; their worm will not die, nor will their fire be quenched, and they will be loathsome to all mankind."* (ISAIAH 66: 22-24. NIV).

4. It is said Zeus influenced his ascendency to the throne by sending Minos a white bull from the sea but it is also speculated that Minos asked Poseidon to send him a sacrificial

victim to assure his right to rule. It was the sea god who sent the bull. However, it was such a fine animal that Minos did not have the heart to kill him. For a while, Minos was unable to have sons due to Zeus's displeasure in not carrying out the sacrifice. Every woman who slept with Minos died due to a poison in his body placed there by Zeus. Not until Procris came to Crete - after her fallout with her husband Cephalus caused by the goddess Dawn who loved Cephalus - and formed a woman's shape for Minos to sleep with and draw the poison out. Minos would give Procris a magical spear and hound with which she gave to Cephalus and they were reconciled. However, a jealous Dawn would trick Cephalus to kill Procris who the hunter had mistook as wild game hiding in a bush. Nevertheless, the original situation of 'lethal sex' with Minos possibly enabled Poseidon to have Minos's wife Pasiphae fall in love with the bull by which the Minotaur was produced from their union; a monstrous creature who had the head of a bull and the body of a man. Daedelus, an inventor from Athens who had been exiled to Crete for throwing his nephew pupil Talos off the Acropolis, thankfully Athena saved him and turned him into a partridge - Daedelus feared that Talos, who had invented the potter's wheel and the saw, would grow in stature over him – was commissioned by Minos to build a labyrinth that would imprison the Minotaur. I should also note that Daedelus was famed for his many mechanical devices and moving sculptures which had to be chained down; they may have been the first robots as it was said these figures could also make themselves.It was Daedelus that made the fake cow which fooled Minos's bull to impregnate Pasiphae. Minos deeply mistrusted Daedelus so he too was imprisoned in hi s labyrinth. As it was Daedelus gave advise to Adriane who would give Theseus the thread that would help him to make his way through the labyrinth to kill the Minotaur who had demanded human sacrifice to him every seven years. As we know Daedelus would famously escape from the labyrinth with his waxed wings in which he lost his son Icarus. Minos with a great fleet tracked Daedelus to Sicily where he had gone to live after not having the heart to go back to Athens without his son. In the Palace of King Cocalus Daedelus would be boiled to death in a torture bath he invented. Although another legend has it that Daedelus, who was loved by King Cocalus's daughters because of the beautiful toys he made, helped to plot Minos's death and it was he who was boiled. I prefer the first version as Daedelus, who was revered as a craftsman by the Greeks, with a divine touch like Michelangelo, is to me a horrendous creator. Cadmus had to kill a dragon which had killed his companions who were fetching water - for a ritual in the sacrifice of the cow to Athena - from a spring the beast was guarding. Athena had him sow half the dragon's teeth into a field while the other half she kept for Areetes the king of Coletes, who would give them to Jason the Argonaut. Cadmus watched a harvest of warriors rise up from the ground. Dadmus threw a stone into the middle of this phalanx and in the fighting that ensued only five sown men survived and these Spartoi would build the citadel Cadmea and become the ancestors to the noble class of Thebes. Zeus gave Cadmus, Harmonia - the daughter of Ares and Aphrodite - to marry; every divinity was at hand to attend this wedding and at the end of their rule Zeus transformed this regal couple into snakes to take them to Elysium which is the Isle of the Blest. Cadmus is to be noted for introducing the Phoenician writing script to the Theban Boeotians as these letters would form the foundation of the Greek alphabet

Immaculate Transmutation.1 'Looking Glass' at first glance the reader may think of Alice in Wonderland but Cat is referring to Marcel Duchamp's seminal work *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors*,*Even*,(1915-23) & is commonly referred to as *The Large Glass*. To describe it crudely there are brown coloured flat sculptural/machine pieces/drawings (including that of a chocolate grinder) in symbolic relationship to each other between two thin door size rectangle glass panes (with the glass accidently broken in transportation to the Art Museum of Philadelphia) & which essentially obtains meaning through the title that M. Duchamp has given to this enigmactic 'non-painting'.

The Burial of the Dead. 1. (Translation): *I am not Russian at all. I come from Lithuania*.

I am a real German. 2. "MOLOCH!" *'Far gone schoolyard days when I was always 'cat-called' by the bullies grated by my so called 'eccentric wit.' Having to try to cope like the other students and teachers who were verbally assaulted for being 'different' or 'soft.' The hard-hearted only understand a hard god. Harsh. Unforgiving. Barking out his divine vitriol on the undeserving. Only valuing the moral cowardice of the pack. The 'strong' must crush the single, powerless 'weak'. Loneliness. To grieve inside oneself. A mental erosion. Breathless. Weak-kneed. A persistent throbbing headache as that last scene of humiliation is replayed over and over again in the mind. Wondering how it could have been avoided. Or doing something about it. Yet to only be left dealing with a hurtful, uncaring sarcasm. Piercing. Like a knife stabbing into the heart. Ripping through our shallow civil defenses to strike deep into the core of our self-beliefs. Suffering as if one's life is fraudulent. The honour and truth of a person crushed under an avalanche of lies. Cat perceived that his only chance of psychological survival was to hold onto who he was especially when the ignorant directly persecuted him. These followers of a foul god who demanded his sacrificial victims for the upkeep of his vicious intolerances. Yes, not to die inside one's self. Taking on the nickname Cat. Let the light shine. Human compassion. Human understanding. Human dignity. To stand up to being a human being. No longer to be objectified. Maligned. To also deal with a social darkness by looking into the shadows with 'cat eyes' to spot thin slivers of the proverbial hopeful glow. To no longer be afraid; to yearn for emotional maturity; in search of a resolution that allows life to keep its meaningfulness. To have moral fibre. To overcome a lack of self-confidence and emotional paralysis that could lead to a life made impotent. To be imploding. Crippled. Prejudice. Hate. Everywhere. Germinating in a world filled with a social fascism in all its well-known vile mutations. Satan is real. A grotesque monster. Callous. Emotionally brutal. Insensitive. Vandalizing not only the body but the mind. Instilling only unhappiness. Harming those who wish no harm. Horrors on the innocent. It is so unfair…there is bitterness….tears…what is desired by every psychological 'human sacrifice' to Baal is to be respected. To be left alone. Yet there is the tearing. Of mental flesh. The heart cut out. Stripping away. A human being. To be all bone. For the flies. Vomiting. On a human soul. To be nothing. What you have lived. As nothing. The rich experience of a life made valueless. That you only have value if you cower. Or conform. The gutless prey on 'easy meat'. Ripping apart. Invalidating. The persecuted not to be known. Only accused. Misunderstood. Stereotyped. Depersonalized.'* Cat knows what it is like to be laughed at; while inwardly in tears. *'Cruel men. Mocking over the corpse of a soul. Human pain. To cry. Yes. To save yourself.'* "They said the Savior could not help himself..." *'A crown of mental thorns to overcome. Yes. The mocking of Jesus. Laughing. Grotesque. Sneers.Falsely accused.To persecute a human life to feel if every achievement is invalid. A whole life to feel as nought. Without any worth. Integrity. Value. Denied. Yet not to be forced back. Or crushed. Or shell-shocked or broken-hearted. As others had. Cat would always stay on his feet. Flamenco steps. On the footpaths of his life. Justice for himself then for the accomplishment of a social justice.*"To have others care. For where is the human empathy for each other and ourselves?"A very small leather bound copy of Oscar Wilde's *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* is always in the back pocket of Cat's jeans. He taps it."Defeat the demons!" A tap of the forehead. A swig. "Have courage." A fist slams the chest."Stand up for who you are!" Another swig. "Keep your self-respect."Human Malice. Cat listens to a news report that states how looters in a flooded city have been sniping at rescuers "The incomprehensible irrationality of human nature…*We* make Atlantis fall! 3. In *A Perfect Day*.

Plato. 1.On the 4th of July, 1918 at Hamel a joint Australian-American offensive was mounted. The infantry were well supported by tanks, artillery, planes and fast

communications etcetera to achieve a spectacular success. General Sir John Monash's battle tactics where all of the machinery of war worked together as one offensive unit was a formidable precursor to what became more infamously known as *blitzkrieg* by the *Wehrmacht* at the start of WWII. Monash who was a meticulous battle-planner earned the well-deserved reputation of being the most accomplished general on the Western Front. One of his inventive tactics was to bombard the German trenches with both gas and smoke for several days before a major attack. Yet on the actual day of the offensive only smoke bombs would fall on the German lines. Conditioned by now to also expect gas the German troops would still put on their cumbersome gas masks which slowed them down while the smoke still provided the appropriate cover for Monash's attacking troops. This particular conditioning tactic to link a connection between two events where there really wasn't one fascinates Cat.

ETERNITY

Russian Roulette. *1.* Marcus Aurelius Meditations BOOK 12. Chapter 30. *2*. BOOK 8: 52. *3*. BOOK 4:49. *4*. Ibid. *5*.BOOK 2:17. *6*. BOOK 4:3 *7*.* BOOK 5:9. *8*. BOOK 6:15. *9*.BOOK 6:15.*10*.Ibid.*11*.BOOK 8: 60. *12*.BOOK 10:27.*13*.BOOK 5:27. *14*.BOOK 8: 26.*15*.BOOK 7:49.

*****In reference to Notation *6* for Marcus Aurelius quotes by Cat: *'The whole world is change, and life is what you deem it.* The translator of the Penguin edition of Marcus Aurelius's *Meditations* – Maxwell Staniforth – makes the excellent point that this thought is also conveyed by William Shakespeare in *Hamlet* (Act II, scene 2): "*There's nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so.'* Yet is more succinctly expressed by Marcus Aurelius who uses only two Greek words and which in a literal sense means: 'life opinion.' (See the footnote to BOOK FOUR Chapter 3. Penguin edition. 1964).

The American Triumph. 1.Dante is especially intrigued by this epic land for he had promoted the legend that Ulysses had been the first to sight it, for in his travelogue to the Underworld the Florentine had 'recorded' that the Ithacan had remarked to him that his men and he had passed the Rock of Gibraltar to tarry in the western ocean for five months to only perish in sight of a 'mountain shape' - which was been conjectured by some commentators to be this New World, although the prevalent view is that Ulysses had sighted Mount Purgatory that lies in the Southern Hemisphere. 2. ***Laser Inferometer Space Antenna*** see **http://lisa.nasa.gov/**

Lost World. 1 Sticky-taped to the cassette box that had the recording of the Mexican poems is a yellow envelope with photos which include: Lisa with Melissa at Central Railway with busts of Latin American explorers and independence leaders at the Plaza Americana; Juan Azurduy de Padivio. 1780-1862. A Bolivian female guerrilla fighter. Simon Bolivar. 1783-1830. The 'George Washington' of South America; Michael shaking the hand of the Mexican Benito Juaz; Gregor looks seriously at Jose Marti. 1853-1895 who is revered in Cuba like Augusto Sandino is in Nicaragua.

"There should have been a bust of Macandel who led a rebellion in Haiti." remarks Michael. "Alejo Carpenter the Cuban writer turned Macandel into a butterfly when he was burnt at the stake by the French.

Optic Painting. 1. What Gregor would mean is that after spending so many frustrating moments rushing about in the stifling heat of the vast, crowded Asian Continent, often getting many things only half-done, he learnt it was satisfactory enough for him to just achieve one thing well each day.

A Final Loop.1. Before the letter is carefully placed back in the large yellow Air Mail packet. The postscript is re-read: *'Many thanks for the photos! Lisa has a good eye! Your shot was good too!'* Michael had sent a re-print of himself holding his fist up with the mural that can be seen from MacDonaldtown Station of two Afro-American Olympic

athletes doing the Black Panther salute - which he was copying - behind him. A photo of Lisa standing against a large mural of Africa on the side wall of a two-stories high building that houses on the ground floor an African restaurant in Newtown had also been sent. Now Michael had just come back from sending off to Karin photos of Melissa's christening and Lisa's funeral. The latter shots had just been developed and he placed them directly behind the older photos of the kite festival afternoon. It should be mentioned that the Australian silver medallist Peter Norman supported the two Afro-American athletes by wearing a badge of the Olympic Project of Human Rights who had called for a boycott of the 1968 Mexico Olympic Games by black athletes. Peter Norman – this courageous unsung hero of Australian athletes - was never given the opportunity to run for Australia again in the Olympics; despite running within all qualifying times. No other male Australian athlete has yet been able to match his success on the field.

Norwegian Wood. 1.It was a relief for Lisa to finally find somewhere to live after splitting up with Dan. Her time doing a house-sit in Rozelle was about to end. Although it would be hard to leave the flatette by the water it was good for the mother-to-be to have her own stable space. The rent was very affordable; which was a great help in a city where home values were greedily on the rise. It was a lovely place; always this crisp golden light in the afternoon; a quiet, leafy street. Having spent a month before the Rozelle house-sit feeling like a drifter in an urban wilderness - spending a few nights in the houses and flats of acquaintances and friends – there was a dread to return to that uneasy situation; despite the friendliness and understanding of most people. As a welfare worker would most likely say there were no steady co- ordinates such as home, job or family to be a psychological anchor for Lisa; with somewhere now to live the coming birth of Melissa now gave her further purpose. There was always an attempt to be a good worker. Never to be slack. It's a cruel world. As Cat would say: "Look what happened to that poor overworked horse Boxer in Animal Farm who was carted off to the glue factory!" Lisa was an honest, trusting toiler who literally got up on both feet after leaving Dan; working anytime day & night. Certainly, there was the motivation to earn more money before her child's arrival; there was also a need to fend off in a practical way a nagging feeling of being vulnerable; Lisa was proving to be a tireless toiler; willing to work 24/7. Thus Lisa was determined not to be another Boxer to also arrive at an equally cruel, unfair fate; there was also the dream of achieving what an acquaintance had done: a single mother herself she had been able to raise the money for a deposit on a house down the South Coast. There was a state government scheme that allowed her to pay off the house at a rate that would only be a percentage of her fluctuating income; there were times when she was unemployed; in between taking care of her son there was steady casual work as a teacher and stints of Sunday night work as a jazz singer at a country pub. Lisa hoped to also raise money for a deposit, if only for a small unit - whether there was an assistance scheme still in existence or not - it was something to aim for and the prospect of leaving Sydney to kick-off a new fresh life spurred her on. However, it would be on the North Coast where she would choose to live. Living with Dan there had been that part-time work as a checkout girl; now there was additional work as a shelf packer; also stints as a waitress; sandwich hand; cleaning; shop assistant and so forth in a variety of work places some of which was the Paris Express on Oxford St; a vegetarian take-away on Cleveland St; La Vina on Parramatta Road; Grace Bros on Broadway; supermarkets in Edgecliff, Surry Hills & Newtown; a couple of 'garage sales' with stalls at Rozelle markets; even a few shifts as a ticket seller at the Stanmore movie theatre; cleaning all sorts of educational institutions such as local public schools; UTS, Sydney University; [Lisa always remembers with fondness the middle-aged soft-spoken but grizzly academic who preferred to talk to the cleaners and security people rather than

as his colleagues who he felt were less learned on the subject of life and its truly deeper issues. 'You my dear," he once said to Lisa - after having what he termed a 'most refreshing conversation' on Blake's The Songs of Innocence & Experience - while sneaking a cigarette in a stairwell are for more well read than most of the dried-out, wretched minds that I have to deal with!"] as well as cleaning in some high rise offices in the CBD which in a couple of instances Lisa would also work in the day doing temp work as a secretary – (offices she would nickname 'hades' due to the mindless nature of the work, always looking at the clouds hoping she could be one...thankfully Michael gave her a calender with cloud photos which she always took with her to work). Happily, when Lisa was working at Citizen Cane on King Street in Newtown Michael was to obtain an original sixties plaque of his car which which had a grey car with the following slogan on a red rectangle: DRIVE A NEW EH HOLDEN TODAY! Often Michael with Cat would visit Lisa when she worked at an upstairs bar in Kellet Street in Kings Cross. They would play backgammon against a young Peruvian who would regularly beat them; however, Cat stubbornly believed their luck would change – but it never did. However, one night two poets 'crazy and drunk' celebrating their performances at a benefit in a local church hall were being far too noisy and Lisa quickly gave them short thrift; the two 'happy drunks' muttering that they were quickly retreating to a café in Dean St. Although it was not really a threatening situation it revealed a strident no nonsense side to Lisa's character.

"She's got a strong spirit." stated an impressed Cat; he was also fascinated when Lisa worked at the Apostrophe Café in Surry Hills and took the time out to speak to this elderly transvestite who was very religious, immensely glad that someone was willing to look at a photo album of her own life. Lisa was able to organise an exhibition of Gregor's work with the very enthused young café owner – a woman who amazed Lisa with her immense courage to take any worthwhile risk. A steely determination that had Lisa willing to work seven days a week twenty four hours a day and to save every cent that she possibly could. Yet an innate restlessness led her to continually change jobs which Michael could readily identify with; he once told her of an Indian sub-continent observation that he had come across on TV: a man who could not make any roots in the one place and lived a gypsy life was considered to be born with 'wheels on his feet.' Although they would keep in touch Lisa and Michael would also lose contact; however, being of like-mind they more often than not gravitated to the same innercity public spaces: pubs, cafes, shops, cinemas like the Valhalla and Chauvel, street festivals, parties beaches etcetera; in 1988 - after a particularly long duration of not seeing each other - they had sighted each other at the Aboriginal rally against the Bicentenary. (That photo of them there with the lead singer of the Oils in the background crowd). Towards the time of Melissa's birth – apart from her bulging physique - Lisa would have to stop working all together to organise her new life as a mother; thus the frantic desire to work as much as possible while the 'window of opportunity' was still open had turned out to be a wise strategy. The new child was to receive her mother's undivided attention, the sort of maximum emotional care that Lisa herself had missed out on. Lisa had never known her father and her mother was totally ignorant of what Lisa was up to; she did not keep in touch and Lisa did not have her contact details. It was assumed her mother lived in Sydney but she didn't know where. It was only through the obligatory phone calls to her daughter on her birthday and Christmas that Lisa even knew her mother was still alive. As soon as Lisa was old enough to take care of herself her mother – who only wanted to be free from the 'burden of motherhood' – had resorted to totally living her own life. Eventually, after the birth a parcel with garments and trinkets for the new-born came through the mail (but there was no return address). It was surmised that via the

obligatory birthday phone call that Lisa's mother had made to her daughter's last contact number re: Dan's – did she find out about the 'new setup' in Lisa's life. The parcel included a note that stated that Lisa's mother would come to view the new addition to 'the family'; but it was only after a couple more months that this eventually happened: an afternoon spent at Lisa's place where her vivacious 'fifty-something, young' mother seemed mainly interested to see if her granddaughter took after her (fortunately, she thought Melissa did – as for Lisa one reason as to why she had suffered her mother's indifference was for being so much like her unknown father); there were exuberant promises of further visits – but these never eventuated. However, other parcels did arrive and there were a couple of more phone calls. Dan was not interested in seeing her daughter – the child was never wanted by him and since Melissa was 'bruised property' Dan's indifferent attitude had only hardened - but he was willing to provide financial help. His pragmatic decision to at least support Melissa's upbringing and medical care proved to be a godsend when Lisa – despite being on a pension – was dipping into her savings a lot more than she would have liked. Even though Lisa had swallowed her pride and (as well as putting to one side her hostility towards this seemingly callous 'non-father') to accept Dan's money - it *was* really needed, especially with health costs. (The welfare of her child really did come first). Although there was the prospect of obtaining benefits for childcare that could open the way to part-time work it seemed a priority for now that Melissa be looked after '24/7'. After an unexpected large hike in the rent Lisa made the headstrong decision to leave Sydney anyway; in short: the prospect of a more manageable, new life as a mother outside the 'big smoke' was still worth trying out; thus the move north. A move that did seem to bring Lisa 'heaven on earth' until rather recently the first ominous signs of ill health…

Michael had noted that when it was apparent that Lisa would have to go to hospital she became far more frantic; always wanting to be doing something; not allowing for a static life, suspecting what was to soon ensue; Thus to live intensely. Michael could often feel the fear. The phone calls at midnight: *"I miss going to the Hernandez. It was always open. I could leave Cat's place and go to that café. I could be just like Marilyn Monroe in the Café of Broken Dreams. It's annoying there's nowhere around here I can walk off my insomnia. I'd love a miso soup at IKU's right now in Glebe. Drive me to Aba Pastry in Dulwich Hill, or that late night Pakistani eatery in Enmore, or even to Victoria Yeeros-"*

"NO! Lisa-" The phone was slammed down. As if to exist outside time and space. The world stayed still through these eyes; it was without time because it seemed each day was the same.Time passing in a still world.Timeless. In front of the Archibald Fountain. Theseus pulling back the Minotaur's head by the horns. Beside a winged Waverly Cemetery white angel looking over the sea. Black Minotaurs on the cliffs. A large carved wooden totem. Next to a row of six foot high angel's wings - made from corrugated iron - in a park overlooking the ocean. A large wooden horse. A wooden wall. Troy. At Balmoral Beach by the rotunda watching Shakespeare-by-the-Sea. Sprawled on the grass as a drowning Lady Ophelia. DANNY AND THE DEEP BLUE SEA. A comically screwed up face with a fist aimed at DANNY on this Darlinghurst Theatre poster. In Erskineville with one of the motorcyclists who had leapt on stage with Harley-Davidsons in a P.A.C.T play of The Merry Wives of Windsor. A birthday brunch for Caterina in the back garden of the BAR ITALIA. Beside a tiny bubble Fiat with the number plate BIG CAR. Buying sweets with Melissa and Isobel at GEORGIOU'S discount chocolate warehouse on Canterbury Road; in Petersham; looking at the Christmas lights with these same two on the houses in Ashbury. Lisa amidst hundreds of people mingling in an Erskineville street outside a block of red brick flats. Michael turns on a cassette which brings to mind this Christmas street party as Lisa meanders to memories that highlight

her very feisty nature: *"I walked off with a French friend of Caterina's who had returned from the Thai-Burma border; she worked with some French medical group in refugee camps. After a year of living alone this street party felt too big for her also.Caterina and I had met her at that big bookshop on George Street that sold thousands of cheap books and come back to this party on the bus so I'd already got to know her a bit. We went up to this small café on the corner which had these sculptured black bare mannequin heads on display with all these coloured beads on them. While we were talking about Burma I thought of this young journo Michael and I had met at the Town Hall Hotel bragging how on the Thai-Burma border he had encouraged a guerrilla group to attack an army post. Civilians were killed in reprisal. It all made 'good copy.' He said. I'd hit him in the abdomen with a snooker cue. Michael was amused but still he dragged me out of the pub. Luckily, the bouncers thought I'd been touched up. He suggested we go to Sleepers which I wasn't too happy about as it is always crowded on a weekend night. Yet when we turn up at the front bar we gawk at a man next to us using sign language to communicate to several other men. He says hello to us and find out he's their teacher and it's graduation night. Graduation to what I've all but forgotten… this guy gave me a small piece of bamboo on an aluminium stand. He had been handing them out as prizes. I still have it and it's beside the bed now. Michael had spotted a spare table and this prize became an 'altar' for everyone to see as they walked pass us to go to the beer garden. We felt as if we could pass judgement on who we would allow to go to 'paradise'". A laugh. "Will I be granted the same courtesy?"*

Tralfamadore Dreaming. 1.Lisa is paraphrasing from Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse Five;* while Lisa is in a state of deliurium the following radio snippets are being heard by her to which she is responding too: '…IN A LIVE CONFERENCE CALL TO A BOMBER CREW THEY SAID TODAY ALL THE BITS AND PIECES CAME TOGETHER PERFECTLY…[Lisa's respose...*the bits and pieces in my head are falling apart*...etc]...WE ARE A PEACE LOVING NATION. WE CARE FOR PEOPLE. WE WILL DROP BREAD AS WE DROP BOMBS. AS FOR OUR RESOLVE: WE SHALL NOT TIRE…THERE IS NO CLEAN WAR. CASUALTIES AMONGST THE INNOCENT ARE GUARANTEED…*PLEASE SIT DOWN EVERYONE THERE IS A DEVICE ON BOARD WE ARE TURNING AROUND* - ANALYSTS STATE THEY ARE A 100% SURE THERE WILL BE A TERRORIST RETALIATORY ATTACK; OUR ENEMY IS WORKING TO A MASTER PLAN…FEAR, THEY PROMOTE REAL FEAR…CLIENT STATES WHO HAVE PROVIDED 'HOSPITALITY' TO THE ENEMY WILL PAY A HEAVY PRICE…THE TRUTH AND HUMAN RIGHTS ARE THE FIRST CASUALTIES OF ANY WAR. THERE ARE MILLIONS WHO ARE STARVING; THOUSANDS DAILY LOSE THEIR LIVES AND LIMBS. IT IS NO WONDER MANY SEEK REFUGE BY BOARDING THESE FLIMSY BOATS…OVER ALL THESE YEARS MY FAMILY HAS DONE NO HARM TO ANYONE AND NOW MY GRANDSON IS DEAD…LUMBUMBA AS THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE BELGIAN CONGO DESIRED INDEPENDENCE. TO BE FREE OF THE FOREIGN MINING INTERESTS CARVING UP HIS COUNTRY. THIS ANTI-COLONIAL STANCE WAS DEEMED A SERIOUS THREAT BY THE BELGIANS AND THE AMERICANS. LUMBUMBA WAS DEMONISED AS AN AFRICAN LENIN. IN THE ENSUING FAMILIAR PATTERN OF CIVIL WAR AND ARMY COUP LUMBUMBA WOULD HAVE PICTURED AGAIN AND AGAIN IN HIS MIND HIS EVENTUAL MURDER…PRESENTLY THE WORLD IGNORES THE RECENT DEATHS OF FIVE MILLION IN THE CONGO OF THE HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF WOMEN RAPED THERE…WE ASK PEOPLE TO REPORT ANYTHING SUSPICIOUS…WE MUST UPHOLD THE RULE OF LAW. WE MUST NOT RETURN TO THE SHRILL WITCH HUNT...'

Appendix

CAT

Below are 'fragments' of mainly late night monologues that Cat has in his flat with Michael and Lisa in attendance. This inebriated 'philosopher' enters into dialogues with his 'disciples' - or thinks to himself - to seek out what for him is reality in the realms of the spiritual; the material; the social; moral and ethical, and the political (where there is a major consideration of living under the daunting shadow of the American Republic); Cat is conscious that his speculative 'ramblings' follow a philosophical tradition that harks back to Socrates in his last days; to the Meditations of Marcus Aurelius - and with Lisa in mind – through to the 'consolations' provided by Philosophy to Boethius before his brutal end. Other fragments include the responses of either Michael or Lisa to the 'truths' presented to them by Cat. These fragments are not considered essential to the main narrative which attempts to focus considerably on Lisa - but for those interested readers this prose is included in this appendix as in-depth 'background material' to the story; for Cat within the narrative is a sort of inner-city seer who does attempt to make some sense of the tragedy which befalls Lisa. Each 'chapter' is placed in a way next to other chapters so that hopefully the whole piece can be read as one narrative if the reader chooses to do so.

The Myth of Er is a lengthy meditation in which Cat mainly considers – through the prism of Ancient Greek myth - Gregor's journeys and what he experienced. The following fragment sums up the thrust of this chapter:

'Gregor spoke as if he himself had been a prisoner in the Orphic cave of ignorance which Plato had well described. Yet, as it is well known, this cave is our mind. Each departure from this shore has proved for Gregor to be a transmigration of his intellect. Every trip a venture equivalent to Er's myth, the soul purged through different hells, different heavens, to prepare for each return to the purgatories of everyday life. Nevertheless, this life may be enriched incrementally based on what is learnt. To stridently walk in daylight, no longer held back by mundane apparitions.'

Cat holds up a clear glass.

'It is a slow process, to teach the soul, to go from one level to the next, to be educated on multiple realities in an absolute psyche; with jealous gods, on top of Mt. Olympus, marking in dead-end trails, or avalanches, to keep us at some base level, away from a pinnacle where our always rueful human condition may be more insightfully examined, for our just benefit.'

The Myth of Er

Amidst his paraphernalia of Coca-Cola bric-a-brac like coasters, glasses, old bottles which he had bought at an out-of-the-way curio shop in Beverly Hills the mad king comes across his schoolboy FANTA yo-yo.

'The German representative for Coca-Cola was cut off from his American bosses due to the Nazi Occupation so, with Teuton enterprise, he formulated Fanta for the European market. (Awaiting the day American soldiers - refreshed on Coke - would liberate Europe for Coca-Cola). A filthy coin is made shiny when it is left in a glass of Coke. A silver obol for Charon will be under my cold tongue.'

"Penny for my thoughts!"

'Yet, my mind, if isolated from the world, cleansed of its grime, may open up to revelation.'

Cat looks through an old medium size Coke bottle. This thin glass vessel has been replenished with new Coca Cola. Eyes distorted.

'The consciousness of the modern age. A lost soul Gregor met in Shanghai. An old English sailor dressed in a suit whose coat was frayed along the bottom. Bearded. In his fifties. With a duffle bag. Who wanted to see the Three Gorges before it was flooded. To see what will disappear. As if covered by the river of forgetfulness. Nature displaced. Out of sight. Out of mind. No longer remembered. No existence. Our undulating mental topography can face the same fate. What we forget. We no longer know. Yet the unknowing may frighten us.'

"What we cannot comprehend does not mean it is not true! Trust and obey for there's no better way! Be happy in-" Cat looks at his Coke bottle. "We've been Shanghaied! We do what we do not want to do!"

"The past is bulldozed in Shanghai." claims Gregor. "Being replaced with skyscrapers. It's the first 'twenty-first century city'. You find Shanghai's past in all those Chinese antique shops. There's one in Newtown. In Wollongong. There's a warehouse in Alexandria. Our history is also being dismantled but more subtly. To become a 'world city.'" Gregor handles a small bakelite black milk jug. "Our past will - soon enough - also be only found in 'off-beat places.' Like that retro shop in King Street."

Another angle on this meditation.

'My lonely mind. A windswept tunnel. A silver serpent slithers into the high arched chasm. A barren tomb filled with disconsolate souls. Delayed. Freezing. Sweating. On bare bleak platforms. Late at night. Forced to double-back from unwanted destinations. Oh sweet home. To be away from the labyrinths of our self-mutilations.'

"To be cleansed! Cleaned! Not thrown away! I will offer Charon a shiny silver coin! Not a plastic token!" In the reflection of the Coke bottle is a distorted scene of the city through the window.

'It was Perseus, the grandfather of Hercules, who looked upon Medusa in the reflection of his shield to then decapitate her.[1] An invisible Perseus is the human mind in a monster darkness of our own devising with writhing malicious serpents which must be overcome.'

Cat puts down the Coke bottle and heads to the window.

'We know the new city will be as a square of light, no more this glossy decay, this decrepit image. No more this asphalt night. There will be brilliant shining diamond walls, with twelve gates of precious stones opening up to buildings rising like ziggurats made of gold that will reflect the blazing sun like glass. Ancient lost cities of heaven must be our markers. On ruined Mayan walls there are the markings of snakes as circles to represent the cosmos and other serpents grooved as squares to signify the human race. In a perfect order of the universe the square would be subordinate but in harmony within the circle. A mystical geometry which reflects the truths of a regenerative world where in serpent fashion old skins are shed to renew life. Always change. Yet an underlying pattern. The same seasons where after winter new stems arise from fresh soil. Death yet always birth with the emerging curvatures of a new foetus within a thriving womb. Nevertheless no immortality. The new city will be now ringed by a wide band of stars to secure a synthesis between earth and heaven that is broken by our imperfections. Yes, no more of this Babylon-'

"A perfect ZION!"

'A new Jerusalem worthy for those who hate the deeds of the Nicolatians. To worship not Moloch, who devours the first born, nor adulterous Balaam, or any other false god, but the Holy One who has a sword protruding from his mouth, who holds seven stars in his right hand and whose voice roars like the ocean. While four many-eyed creatures in forms of the lion, the bull, a human and the eagle, all with six wings, fall to his feet. The*

Lamb will break the seven seals which will spread war, disease, famine, last judgements upon which only the righteous will survive-'

"Light is both waves and photon particles."

'Above is that starry monochrome snake the Milky Way which leads like a dirt road to the thrones of heaven. While here on this planet after the break up of the one continent who I suspect was achieved by Poseidon the 'earth shaker' there emerged in Australia's Dreamtime the Rainbow Serpent to wind a way like a river across this vast jigsaw piece "To the Four Zoas: COKE'S THE REAL THING!" A sarcastic laugh.Cat is looking increasingly crazy. This maddened seer now shifts his gaze up to the evening sky.

'In this universe which is the dream of some god are many seemingly improbable dimensions. A hall of mirrors. A honeycomb.'

to form the landscape; the spectrum colours that represent the complex, ethereal properties of this mirage we call the real world. In which we learn in Genesis that the rainbow became a sign of God's willingness for redemption of the world and humanity after The Flood.

"Let the light shine! Cleanse us! Open the doors of our perception!"

'Yet, all I see is night. A vast chamber. Void. Time. Chaos. Ether. Mass. Darkness. Light. Sky. Earth. Ocean. In this fluid vault where infinities and finites flow together the world is a raft. The lapping of water. White foam. Star clusters mirrored in the vapour tips of crashing waves. The signature of Phorcys a treacherous sea divinity. The ancients remind us that although the oceans and the stars create life, amidst their presence death also lurks.'

"Repeat after me! SEA SHELLS ON THE SEA SHORE!"

'Nevertheless when we are ensnared only our physical selves are cast away. As Plato keenly reminds us the Orphics state when I die my immortal soul will see two grand chasms while above me will be two enormous holes. (A broken sky). Uncountable multitudes will be ascending or descending from these four passages all moving like ions in positive and negative currents. The unjust would carry a heavy pack loaded with their misdeeds upon their backs while more favoured souls will have on their fronts a token which is their ticket to ride out the next millennium in a heavenly state of bliss.If I am to suffer tenfold for my sins in the Underworld for a thousand years - rather than go to Paradise – I will be directed by the Judges of the Universe to go down into the earth (with obol in hand). At the end of my time I will mingle with other souls who have either descended from heaven or rose like me from Hades to mingle in a vast field. (A carnival of the dead). All purified either by our punishments or our pleasures. We will be led by a pillar of pure light bending through the Heavens and Earth like a rainbow to a vast spinning rod. Fixed at the bottom of this shaft will be a series of vast bowls cupped one within each other so only their rims are revealed. The orbits of the fixed stars, Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Mercury, Venus, the Sun and the Moon all whirling around the Earth. A revolving cosmos. At the end of a stick that twirls on the majestic knees of Necessity – the law goddess Themis. Necessity's three daughters – the Fates who determine our individual destinies – will help to spin the cosmos. At each orbit a Siren will continually sing a note unique to any other that is sung at a different orbit. Yet, in harmony so that all eight notes will create a perfect Pythagorean scale. While Atropos, Klotho and Lachesis will each chant of things past, of things present and of things to come. Time will be gone. Eternity will swallow us. (A thousand years in this mysterious Limbo may only be an hour in the afternoon of some pleasant, earthly Spring day). Unto

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**Revelations 2:6: but you have this in your favour: you hate the practices of Nicolatians which I also hate. [NIV].*

Lachesis who holds the thread of life in her hands this laser beam of pure light will lead me to stand. I will have to make the experience of the life just past to be my only guide. I will snigger. It is convenient for the gods to offer us a choice. They absolve themselves of any blame as to the fate that will befall us. No, their omniscience goes missing in the revelation of what happens to a single human life. They are not responsible. We are each prodded in front of the Three Fates to make our guess as to how we must best fair in the next life. Of course, a soulless Plato, as it seems, befitting of a supposed descendant of surly Poseidon, would cast blame on the human soul for all the misfortune that may befall it. This 'collaborator' of the gods. Who does their dirty reasoning to perhaps find divine favour among them for his own destiny. So he may return as his precious philosopher king. Plato's eugenic 'good Republic' where the weak must die at birth. Where only the strong of mind and body are to be nourished. Children torn apart from their mothers to eventually be graded from the status of Alpha Pluses to epsoloms. Only the knowledgeable few deserve to rule over the many who are seemingly incapable of arising from their ignorance. Women emancipated, yet dutifully used at regular intervals to produce the human grist of this 'perfect society'. What use is your Immortality of the Soul, of the Pythagorean Mind aspiring towards the Absolute Forms and Ideas, of the Mathematical and Abstract Contemplation of Good, of a Universal Education, of liberation from the Cave of Shadows, of the wise Philosopher-King, of your abhorrence to the state persecution of Socrates as well as to the criminalities of the Thirty Tyrants, if tyranny also foully – if unwittingly - becomes your endgame? Did Dr. Mengele behave as a Platonist as he graded the human forms ejected in their thousands from the daily cattle cars? (Here was the 'emotional freight' of a whole generation). Return to your senses philosopher, for as you undoubtedly know, without reason all justice is lost. (For too often the just ideal is corrupted by the reality of a desire for insatiable power). I will grimace as I look up at the whirring wide band of heaven which holds in the whole seen cosmos - like a rope that holds in the tension of a trireme wrapped around the outer skin from bow to stern – and chillingly hear the screams of the man who will choose to come back as a great tyrant yet will have to eat his own children; who are the children that an unhinged Plato will eat? Genghis Khan, Vlad the Impaler, King Leopold, Vladimir Lenin, Josef Stalin, Adolf Hitler, Mao Tse-Tung, Henry Kissinger? Will such maddened 'philosopher-kings' spend eternity attempting to wipe the blood to wipe the blood from their hands amongst the few souls - so mired with human evil -that their redemption cannot be sought? (What ghastly horror awaits a hundred fold for these human monsters? Some of the cruellest despots now at the mouth of hell. In front purified spirits ascend to the meadow all souls must wait before picking their next life. Horrendous screams. An unimagined fear pierces every departing being. A final heart-felt warning from the worse damned who realise they will not be released. Fierce guards drag these wraiths over thorns to Tarturus. The lowest hell. Deep. Chilling. Black. Unforgiving. Another climb. Other tortures. To only face one more weeping future). Yet, I know after my choice I will drink - like hundreds of thousands of other souls - from the river of Lethe to 'wake up' in a shower of shooting stars having totally forgotten my other world experience, to serve once more as oarsman or navigator on this celestial ship we call Earth. Yet as the cosmic sea plies around us there are the likes of Gregor who may or may not have tasted a river of forgetting but has sailed on a forgotten river. An obscure tributary of the Styx. On a discarded ferry of Charon's. Upon it forgotten souls.' Nicaragua…(…the Atlantic...)

"The morning finally came to leave the Mosquito Coast. We walked down the silent main street of Bluefields to catch the 5 a.m ferry to Ramos. We reached the wharf where there were vendors selling food and people milling around the gangplank patiently

waiting to board the ferry. We were able to gain some space on an outside bench. I sat down and watched the vendor nearest to the gangplank selling chips, sweets, drinks, coffee and hot food. The man was in his late fifties and I couldn't help but think what a burden it would be for him to wake up so early three or four times a week to do his job.

The crowded vessel left on time.

Sheets of plastic were tied from the ferry rail up to the overhanging deck so as to give the outside passengers some relief from the wet weather. There wasn't much to do except to

try and sit upright and watch both time and the ferry drift silently by.

When the morning light arrived I went up to the forward deck to stretch my legs. I could see the river was wide and up against both banks the ferry passed the rusting bulwarks of abandoned ships. I admired a tall tree whose streaky overhanging vegetation caressed the water. Close to the river I could occasionally see huts and women who were lighting early morning fires. The ferry was slow and the stillness of the grassland on both banks led to a sense of time stopping. There was the hope that after the ferry would round another bend Ramos would appear and time would begin. The contras had sunk a ferry. I looked at both banks and sensed how vulnerable these vessels were to machine gun fire or a rocket propelled grenade. The river was now safe to travel on (otherwise I would not be on this boat). I went back to where I was sitting for the rain which had eased for the last few hours now soaked the ferry. It was difficult to see beyond the monsoon. Water flowed down the narrow deck and ran along our bench. The old women beside us were stirred from their sleep. The heavy rains continued and it was becoming a strain to stand and wait. Finally, the weather calmed and shortly afterwards the ferry veered around the final corner and docked beside a small wharf. People rushed off the boat, walked quickly over several large rocks and ran up the slippery trails of a steep incline to reach the bus to Managua. People pushed themselves onto the dilapidated vehicle and I was one of the last to board it. Time begged to start. Again. I reset my watch. The bus moved. I then knew this purgatory was over."

Er of Pamphylia had been a warrior who had been killed in battle and whose body had not decayed after ten days. Nevertheless, on the twelfth day it was decided by his father Armenius to cremate his body on a funeral pyre. He then awoke. It was understood he had been sent back to inform the living of what to expect in the next world: the avenues to heaven and hell, a thousand years spent in either state etcetera and how eventually each soul would have to choose their next life and the need to rely on one's own wisdom to make a successful choice. The gods implored Er to say that attaining to know justice is what the living should aspire too in this existence. Gregor's account of this river journey, his wanderings through other twilight zones had put him in touch with the nether regions of this world which also reminded him of the no man's lands in his own psyche.

"Hitching from West Germany to West Berlin and back you noticed the East German speed traps. They fined the West German drivers very heavily as the West German marks were good for their economy. However, you had to carefully watch the signs. A hundred-kilometre-per-hour zone could suddenly change to forty. Also cars were not allowed to stop or move off the autobahn. On the way in I got picked up by this young woman in a Renault. She didn't mind me playing my Aussie music tape. The Sunnyboys, the Angels, Dave Warner. (As it was my brown cardboard BERLIN sign with the hopping kangaroo and little Australia had attracted her attention). I saw forests, old buildings, disused churches, many people on bikes otherwise in cars which seemed to be made no later than the mid-sixties. You knew any new car was definitely West German. The only thing that was new was the military hardware. We saw many truck convoys and - much like my visit

to East Berlin - it felt like that the Second World War had only finished yesterday. (Always this sense of time standing still). As we reached West Berlin itself there were more tanks, barracks, Russian soldiers teeming in their hundreds. We even spotted missiles on mobile launchers on the side of the road.

Apparently we were travelling on a day when army manoeuvres were occurring. At the exit to West Berlin we were each scrutinized by the East German guards to make sure that the same number of people were in the car as when we had left West Germany. (It was the one irony of this whole hitch that once you got a lift you knew the driver had to take you all the way to West Berlin. There was no concern of say being dropped off half way to have to scrounge another ride). Also time was spent checking our faces with our passport photos. The border guard would stare directly into your eyes for a few seconds then check your photo. I remember years later having this happen to me in Minsk as I was travelling through from Moscow to catch another train to Warsaw – it was much cheaper catching two 'local trains' rather than go on a direct international link. Anyhow, the Berlin Wall had fallen but as the guard lingered his eyes on mine for several seconds that old Soviet sense of absolute power came back to unsettle me. On the way back from West Berlin I travelled at night which made the trip especially eerie. I actually saw a car pulled over by the East German highway police. My driver, an engineering student, explained how at the 'iron curtain' itself there were sharp shooters, five rows of mines, barbed wire fences, sniffer dogs, machine gun towers etcetera. As I realised half a continent was in quarantine I listened to Russian techno love songs; to a German rock-punk song about a forgotten soldier on the Russian Front and to Kraftwork's Trans Europe Express. Crossing the border led to an interesting reaction. Udo – the driver – immediately fingered the volume on the car stereo and put his foot down on the accelerator. As we let out a collective sigh of relief I was surprised how tense we had been; from even inside our 'capitalist bubble' we had felt oppressed by the mere spectre of the DDR - if nothing else.

What I mainly remember about West Berlin is bright neon. An electric nirvana at the end of a highway labyrinth. To the East Germans West Berlin must have seemed like an untouchable – even mocking - oasis; yet, as it's turned out for many of them the West has proved to be a false paradise; what is only certain is they had lived through a true hell. As it seemed on my arrival to West Berlin that I had ventured through a land of shadows; I learnt to appreciate human freedom."

Gregor spoke as if he himself had been a prisoner in the Orphic cave of ignorance which Plato had well described. Yet, as it is well known, this cave is our mind. Each departure from this shore has proved for Gregor to be a transmigration of his intellect. Every trip a venture equivalent to Er's myth, the soul purged through different hells, different heavens, to prepare for each return to the purgatories of everyday life. Nevertheless, this life may be enriched incrementally based on what is learnt. To stridently walk in daylight, no longer held back by mundane apparitions.'

Cat holds up a clear glass.

'It is a slow process, to teach the soul, to go from one level to the next, to be educated on multiple realities in an absolute psyche; with jealous gods, on top of Mt. Olympus, marking in dead-end trails, or avalanches, to keep us at some base level, away from a pinnacle where our always rueful human condition may be more insightfully examined, for our just benefit.

"I've always found borders," states Gregor, "the gates you have to go through to arrive at another state, is where I have most acutely learnt about human corruption, power, all those negative worldly forces that threaten what we consider to be moral,to deny a soul the right to move along, to impede the attainment of his or her knowledge is tyrannical,

as every refugee can attest, the denial of human liberty is akin to denying human identity, to make a man or woman stateless is at the core of human nihilism. A moral void. Always filled by the disasters of war. Human oppression. I went to Cambodia when it was still forbidden. At the Vientane embassy the Communist official forcefully interrogated me, ("Are you a journalist?!") then a smile. My visa was granted. Vouched by an aid organization, I was allowed to visit. (On a recent second visit the Cambodian customs was stamping passports on arrival. Tourists and their hard currency are now very welcome). Human sin. "You will know them by their fruits," said the American preacher on my short wave radio as I peered at the war plain beyond Phnom Penh. Other forbidden territory. A man took me on the back of his scooter to the killing fields. This particular day they were officially closed, however, he knew the local guards. For a small amount of money they undid the lock to the gate. I saw the patchwork of group graves on the bushy plain where hundreds of people had been buried. I gazed at the skulls of fifteen year old children which were encased in a high glass tower of skulls built in memory to the deaths of '75 to '78. I read on an outside notice how foreigners were also killed. I saw a photograph of a young bearded man from the N.S.W south coast.

I saw before me the evidence of an amoral universe. Here, in this land of secrets, where there had been secret bombings and a secret genocide. I was naïve of the truth of the deaths at my feet. I have no reason not to believe the skeletons in the earth below me were placed there by the Khmer Rouge. However, it has been said amongst the million people killed in the Democratic Kampuchea many had died from unavoidable starvation. It is said tribal groups, which were only within a minimal sphere of influence of the Khmer Rouge leadership, had committed their own revengeful massacres. It has been said lives were saved by the Khmer Rouge by forcing the population to leave the cities to work in the rice fields. It has been said the genocide figures in the Democratic Kampuchea were exaggerated by the Americans to justify their own bloody incursion against communism in Indochina. I feel the present government would use these deaths to justify a prolonged hold on power. Thus, the memory of this genocide is used to the advantage of the main power players. I wondered if only the people who lived through this suffering care what happened?

However, I do believe the Khmer Rouge are murderers.

However, I do believe the American bombing was murderous.

I turn to the man who brought me here and tell him I find it hard to believe his fellow Khmers could be so cruel. He agrees.

In Phonm Penh I saw elderly Khmer gentlemen speaking exquisite French, wearing black berets, behaving like exiles resuming their lives after surviving a wretched past.

Cinema crowds underneath large billboards of beautiful Indian women and moustached macho guys swirling in and out of the large entrance from which came sounds that ranged from mystical rhythms to cowboy music. Along the pavement would be children playing games which included French skipping, plastic sword fights, hoola hoops, cards and throwing whirling things into the air. At dusk the dirt of the city would swirl up and cover everybody as the traffic became heavier and thousands of people left their daily chores to go home. The one constant sound throughout the length and breadth of Phonm Penh was the blare of horns. From outside the Hotel Sokhali motor scooters and a few cars mingled with hundreds of bicycles and cyclos, carrying goods as well as passengers, but all invariably ringing their bells. Women wearing Peruvian style hats would cling to their husbands on the back of motor scooters. Other bicycles and cyclos would be straining in neat lines waiting for the hand signal of a lone traffic policeman.

A cyclo stacked with Coke bottle crates; the driver could just peer over them to see where he was going. Watching him along with everything else I concluded that the

powerless, those who belong to the under classes of history, must have no voice, (or another voice to speak for them), so as to be no threat, so as to suffer in private hells, so those with power may enjoy their pinnacle paradises.'

Lunch at a large wooden porch of a restaurant which is beside a lake near the outskirts of Phonm Penh. It is a pleasant scene where people – such as the Russian couple with their four year old blonde haired daughter – could gain some breathing space from the city.

It feels like I am dining at some out-of-the-way Elysian Field in this Hades. I think of my Khmer Australian friend who I saw in Vientane. I was supposed to meet him in Phonm Penh with his family. He had been the reason for this trip. After commandeering a plane to leave Cambodia on the very day the Khmer Rouge took over Phnom Penh he had wanted one day to return to see his village and parents after Pol Pot's eventual downfall. He also took his Lao wife who he met in a Thai refugee camp and his two sons who were born in Australia. Yet, there was a pensiveness of going to Cambodia 'alone'. A perception to the possibility of official persecution. It may prove beneficial to have an Australian bystander to witness any problems with the Communist authorities. However, my own more complicated visa problems, the scarcity of flights from Laos – in those days there were no direct flights from Bangkok - had led to me travelling separately. (As it was with no travel guide to help me I had discovered in a small travel agency in Canley Vale – a small suburb in western Sydney - run by a Khmer, that planes to Phnom Penh from Vientane flew only on Wednesdays and Fridays).The plan had been to catch up in Phnom Penh. Yet only on the eve of my final departure in Vientane did I see him - after his own return. I was about to enter hell, as he was receding from it.

"I'm not religious. The Quakers just employ me." My host from Sydney is a teacher. "English has become the premier language to learn," she confirms, "especially now the Russians are pulling out from their commitments in Indochina. Many of my students are telecommunication workers. Telecom is here now. Sydney is the only place you can make a direct call to from Cambodia. Everything else has to go through Moscow…"

Beside us, feasting at a long table is a European tour group which mainly comprises of well dressed elderly people. Their female Cambodian guide had taken them to the Khmer Rouge torture centre at Toul Slong. "After you have enjoyed your lunch we will go to the killing fields."

Another unreality. The backpacker blare of Ko San Road. On my way to catch a tut-tut to visit the Khmer-Australian family. They were going to take me to the largest restaurant in South-East Asia. It was claimed by my hosts it had outside tables for two thousand people; waiters who moved around on roller skates; stages on which dancing female troupes in traditional dress entertained the diners. An Asian Empyrean where our impressions of a humid Orphic abyss were shared.

TRANSPLANTED PARADISE. GUESTHOUSE. Front step. Neon. Ignorance. Accentuated. Cold light.

"I am drunk."

Final. Glance. SOUVENIRS. OPEN. Shades. A young muscly woman. Braided hair. Coloured glass beads. Purple top. Scarlet dress. Gold rings. Jewellery. Pearls. A wipe-off tattoo of a red dragon on the forehead. Looking at a gold wine cup. She looks more like an Amazon maiden warrior rather than a trapped Eurydice. Talking to another of Mars's daughters. Perusing a clothes rack. "I've worn out so many garments. I feel stripped naked. I've been to so many cities. So many countries. I need a whole new wardrobe. My ten favourite cities are London. Paris. Rome. Munich. Madrid. Siena. Florence. Amsterdam. Jerusalem. Bangkok. I had seven boyfriends. My best lay was in Paris. The city of L-O-V-E. I'm heading home because I'm rundown. Some sunbaking at Bondi.

Earn some more money. Then it's off again to London. I'm known as a good worker in all the best hotels. If I was going there now I could have hooked you up to some excellent contacts. Get a copy of TNT. For work. Accommodation. Travel deals. If you want to see Aussie bands catch the tube to Fullham. Last time I saw Mental As Anything. I recommend the Kontiki tour to Scandinavia and the Top Deck Tour to Europe. Everyone on both buses thought I was such an independent traveller. Always thought for myself. Did my own thing. Broke all the rules. Got away with a lot. My nickname was Priscilla. The Queen of Europe. Make a bee-line to Florence. The Italian guys follow people around the town square in a queue copying everything they do. It was so funny. I got trashed at Oktoberfest. Yet Prague has the cheapest beer. With a Eurail Pass I went on my own to the Running of the Bulls. A real fiesta. There's a photo of me in a Pamplona newspaper with other Aussies all on our backs wiggling our hands and feet in the air. I had some real adventures. I took risks. If you haven't been overseas you haven't lived. My only regret is not getting to Gallipoli for Anzac Day. There's next time. At least I've been on the Bridge to the River Kwai day tour. Hell's Pass was awesome. Although they ought to spice up the bridge with a laser show. I should work for Lonely Planet. After you've done your exotic tribal village trek from Chang Mai head down to Ko Samui. It's such a party island. Talk about 'human zoo.' Come with me to the big weekend markets tomorrow. I'll show you how to bargain. These shopkeepers are thieves." A knowing look. "Everyone has to prostitute their culture and country for the tourist dollar." A smirk. "I would. Ever wonder how these people would live if we weren't here? Make sure you only go to Asian bars that are off-limits to the locals. They're safer. I'll haggle for this shirt. Then we'll watch Armageddon in that café across the road. I could do with a smoothie. I can't wait to get home to go to the Darlo Bar! I hear it's packed out with English guys. My girlfriends love their accents. Definitely the sort of people who should keep overstaying their visas-"

"COCKROACH! BABYLONIAN WHORE!"

The Mekong. Where I had reminisced over the uncertainty of this trip while lying in the darkness of my hut. Voices of travellers on the main porch of the bamboo restaurant. A whispering river quietly splashing the rocks sloping down to the water. A lit candle. The slight wind is causing the flame to flicker. I looked at the ceiling to watch the unfocused, dancing shadows. Sometimes in life we see in everyday events patterns unfurl which help give us direction. We will watch these rhythms emerge, ebb and flow and finally subside to allow other rhythms to take their place. We may choose to evolve our decisions and plans on the sequences we see occurring around us. Intuition rather than logic becomes the basis of our willingness to take certain risks. There are moments of pleasant surprise which confirm our intuition. Sometimes the patterns we thought we had so clearly observed and interpreted leave only the bitter taste of ash in our mouths. The candle goes out.

SOVIET IMPERIALISMO. A black silhouette of Augusto Sandino on a blank all red background has one foot on this headline which is at the bottom of the poster. Blatant. Untrue. Propaganda. Rifle shots. Machine gun fire. In the surrounding hills. As no one is concerned, neither am I. Waiting at the Honduran border after leaving Nicaragua. Travellers, locals alike have been escorted across a mile long no man's land in a military Sandinista truck. (The soldiers with us kept their eyes at the road at all times for there was always the fear of a contra attack). Our backpacks had just been checked by Honduran customs. Just before lunch. This was fortunate for me. I had hidden a book on the Nicaraguan Revolution in a small 'secret compartment' below the main space of my backpack. It could only be accessed by a zipper that was concealed by the bulk of the over-filled pack hanging over it. Unless an official was very thorough it would seem as he

finally viewed the bottom of where my clothes were stored that he had done a total inspection. Other books, such as a paperback novel and travel guide had been obviously placed in side pockets so they would be discovered first. (I now well understood how people in Eastern Europe would only read a few torn clandestine pages at a time of any forbidden book). The customs official had been in a hurry. He was more interested in his tortillas than looking for subversive material. A German man in front of me had not been so lucky. A children's colouring book made in the Soviet Union was confiscated. It had been on top of his clothes. Next our passports were checked; although this took time we did not have to wait until the end of lunch to get them back. Nevertheless, I was not equally thankful that my travel details had been typed into a computer. I saw this happening by bending my neck to peer through an open door to the side of the front counter in the main office. (It was here where all the foreigners had to wait). I was presently told by an English female internationalista that the personal information of all Western travellers when they left Nicaragua was passed on to the U.S.A. It seemed like a fanciful rumour but what I knew to be true was that a friend from Leeds who had recently gone home had only been given a three-day travel visa by U.S. border officials - at the California-Mexico border - when it was discovered that he had been on a long visit to the Sandinistas. The three days were only enough time to catch a flight out of L.A. When I reached the U.S. border at Brownsville, Texas I had the clarity to slip a paper clip over two pages in my passport to hide my Nicaraguan visa from the two very polite U.S. border officers. (Minor gatekeepers to this Olympic property of the gods). My U.S. visa was fortuitously on the other side and with the paper clip overlooked it seemed everything was in order. After I replied 'Guatemala' to the apparently innocent question of how far south I had travelled in Central America I freely entered Cat's 'big whore.'

As I waited for a Dallas bus I watched some T.V. on a small coin-operated set attached to my seat in the bus station. THE WORLD AT WAR.

"I told the government man that my neighbour is a good citizen. The schoolgirl was just telling silly stories. I was believed and my friend was not arrested. It worries me I had to lie. Yet the elderly gentleman in the flat above me said if we really lived in a democracy law abiding citizens would not be so afraid as to hide the truth."

"I LOVE JESUS! TRUST IN JESUS! HIS TRUTH WILL SET YOU FREE!" The Guatemalan truck driver trembled as he told me the truth that should not be hidden under a bushel. To stave off any death squad who may mistake him as one of those followers of the Catholic Church who believed that to be a Christian you had to serve the poor; that the government who persecuted the voiceless, who cut out their tongues, worshipped false gods, were the true blasphemers.

"Truly, truly, companero JESUS SAVES! I AM BORN AGAIN!" An American Evangelical tract.[2] *"I FOLLOW THE WILL OF MY PRESIDENT. WHO SERVES THE PEOPLE. WHO IS ALSO BORN AGAIN.HE, LIKE THE ORDAINED LEADER OF EVERY RIGHTEOUS NATION, INCLUDING THE PRESIDENT OF THE GREAT UNITED STATES, HUMBLY BOWS DOWN TO YAHWEH & DOES HIS HOLY WILL. YAHWEH IS A JEALOUS GOD. MANY PEOPLE IN MY COUNTRY KNOW THIS & A GREAT REVIVAL HAS SWEPT THE LAND TO ASSURE OUR SALVATION! You need somewhere to sleep while we wait for the barriers to open tomorrow?" The truckie is out of breath. "I have a hammock that hangs under my load."*

Gregor in mid-space. On the Guatemalan-Honduran border. Another limbo. A cold night. Wet. Heavy rains. Pelting the semi-trailer. BANG! BANG! BANG! Yet, it was open space. Outside any dark cave. (Like the driver was in his righteous cabin). Or paradise. A modern-day Er. On visitations. To little hells. Heavens. Purgatories. At railway stations.

Bus depots. Airports. Hundreds of thousands of souls waiting to proceed daily to their respective destinies. Many happy returns. Gregor could look back to note how the gods would fickly shift and change the truth depending on geography. Or situation. Or temperament. MIND (THE) GAP. (There was that El Salvadorian man who had no arms below his elbows. He had both limbs blown off by a mine when he was sowing his field. Proudly, he could still light and smoke his own cigarettes. Those bitterly quiet FMLN guerrillas who showed that video of their comrade discovered in a shallow grave tortured and killed by a death squad. Yes, spending a night in a guerrilla camp in the mountains which had a ferris wheel brought in for the children who could be seen handling AK-47s. That football game next day with the rifles nestled against each other by the field). On a television at a transit lounge in Heathrow Airport is a demonstration against Pinochet outside Downing Street. A Polish businessman who is sitting beside Gregor turns to him. "I know the Chilean Constitution has been twigged so he has immunity at least for a few years but what shocks me is to discover that the United States terrorizes 'her backyard'. I have always viewed the Americans as the great supporters of democracy, especially when I consider their morale lifting aid in my country's independence struggle against the Russians."

TV audience chant.

"YOU SUCK! YOU SUCK! YOU SUCK! YOU-"

Gregor briefly turns down the volume on his bus station seat TV set. Turns it back up.

"…YEAH! WE PIMP OUR DAUGHTER-IN-LAW! WHY I DO BELIEVE WE'RE IN GOD'S OWN COUNTRY! IT'S STILL THE LAND OF THE FREE! SO WE CAN DO IT! WE GOTTA EAT! OUR GOOD-FOR-NOTHING SON STILL DON'T HAVE NO JOB! SAY HE DON'T WANT TO WORK FOR NO PITTANCE! WELL WE WORK ALL OUR LIVES FOR HIM! HE'S GIVEN US NOTHING BACK! HE OUGHT TO PAY HIS DEBT! GODDAM IT! TO US! WE SUPPOSE TO SHOW COMPASSION? WE WERE'S GOOD PARENTS! YET WE STILL WORKING! NOW WE'S HAVE A JOB WHERE WE CAN KICK BACK A LITTLE! HIS WIFE LIES ON HER BACK FOR US! HE DON'T EVER KNOW IT BUT SHE WAS A WHORE ANYWAYS! SO WHAT SHE HAD NO SELF-ESTEEM! IT NOT OUR DOING! AS THE BOSS MAN OF THE HOUSE! LIKE IT? I PAINT IT WHITE! ALLS' I KNOW A MAN HAS TO DO WHAT A MAN HAS TO DO! I'M DOING IT! PUT MY SON IN A CHAIN GANG! I SPIT ON HIM!"

'The coldest war is in the mind. Lying to ourselves. To each other. All the time. To survive. To second guess the gods. So we may make the right choices. To please them. To avoid damnation. Always to be on guard. Never lazy. We can't afford to be.'

"A question of mind." Cat plays with his Fanta yo-yo.

'Like the fixed stars whose medieval orbits could be predicted, we often establish the one orbit for our consciousness so our lives may run a stable, unwavering course. (I have been perceived as psychic for so easily anticipating what a well-encrusted, fundamental mind will do or say. Pity our tempestuous divinities could not also be so sterile). Never deflected. By morals. Or ideas. Or visions. Or life shocks…yes, oh so…be it…a steady life trajectory that will not be re-aligned. (Has Er told us - nothing?).'

"Where's the PAVLOVA! OR PAVLOV'S DOGS! HOW ABOUT A BOLT OUT OF THE BLUE!"

A galaxy with no stars. This celestial dark cloud. A hydrogen foetus. Could our collective consciousness also be so embryonic? Star child. By the side of a track a dead baby wrapped in rags. The exposed face is half-eaten. At a levelled site the leftover pieces of an adult human rib. Vultures.

"Normally, a corpse is sliced into small pieces. Makes the whole body easier to digest. The whole canopy becomes the domain of the spirit as the birds fly around. A sky burial is more efficient than burial in the ground. The Tibetan plain is so hard." The monk looks up. Gregor also views the spiralling vultures. The spinning bowl that is the sky. Colliding galaxies. Ovum and sperm as one. (The Cosmic Egg impregnated. Dividing cells. Stars). A human body as the universe. Or visa versa. The music of the heavens vibrating inside every organ. As the body and soul entwine, to give each other sustenance, the universe and I do likewise. The stars my eyes to look into eternity. To guide me. The sun my soul. The earth my heart. The sky. Deliverer of water. (I am water). Yellow. Red. Blue. Primary colours sustaining life. The rays of the firmament warm my blood. The heart of Dionysus Za'greus.

"He was the son of Persephone and Zeus who slept with her in the form of a snake which would have represented life slithering into the tomb and overcoming death's power. As it was Persephone was Zeus's daughter, who had slept with Demeter her mother." Cat speaks to Michael, Gregor, Lisa, Margaret and Melissa at The Gap on the South Head. A magnificent blood-red sunset sprawls across the sky. "Zeus made him ruler of the world. Dionysus Za'greus on his throne was guarded by the Corybantes. They are the male priests to the Asiatic goddess Cybeles. As well as making a woman's womb fertile, Cybeles can bring on the wild forces of nature and cure - as well as bring - on disease-"

"Sounds like this old pensioner Master and I met when we went to pick up some mulch at the Addison Road nursery." interrupts Lisa. "This woman was there shovelling it all in a council garbage wheelie bin." A smile.

"It's really easy for me to wheel it back and forth across from my place. It's only across the road. I've been renting there for six months. It was barren when I arrived. Now I've got all sorts of vegetables growing in garden beds that run alongside the side of the backyard. I only throw in the seeds from the food scraps and the plants just spring up. You have to let life run wild."

The woman stretches out her hand to the pumpkins and tomatoes growing right beside her. She had taken Lisa and Master back to her place so they could have a look.

A mindful look. "We all make mistakes. We all want our second chance." A prolonged glance at the wild garden. "Yet, everything can sort itself out in good time."

"Consider the lilies of the field…" muses Cat. A reflective look at the sun. 'Apollo, you shine on every field, a god worshiped by nomads who can see you from anywhere as they search for fertile soil. Every local god would have been as if encountering a foreigner; much more preferable to look up to you or your sister if not Zeus or Hera or even Hermes who will guide us to the underworld where we must all journey too; in this sense we are all nomads. We will walk amongst fields filled with the flowers of the dead; the same asphodels that Odysseus saw at the feet of the many wraiths he spoke too when he too marauded the earth. Agamemnon, Ajax, Achilles, may consider bygone days when they controlled a vast acreage tilling the land; while peasant farmers with their small land plots may have looked up to Demeter or Dionysus Agamemnon and the other Greek kings would have put their trust in Ares for the ultimate agricultural exercise: war; while offerings would also be made to Hephaestus who would provide the armies with the 'hoes' needed to till over other men; especially the 'lesser peoples' of the nomad tribes. All empires need energy to sustain themselves. War is a good producer of such fuel. Yet, the likes of Agamemnon would now realize his power-plays; intrigues and skilful human machinations were mere incidental details for what was truly being achieved: to serve up evermore grist to the divine Hades who will always remain the largest landholder of all…'

"Overall, the life energy of Cybeles is a liberating force yet Hera was jealous of

Dionysus Za'greus. Apart from his pre-eminence, he was a living reminder of her husband's adultery." Cat is staring at the sky. "She had the Titans, who whitened their faces with chalk, lure the horned child away with toys and a looking glass. They seized Dionysus Za'greus, tore him apart with knives and then feasted on the child like vultures. Dionysus Za'greus tried to escape by transforming himself into different living beings and was eventually devoured as a bull. Except the heart which was saved by Athena. Given back to Zeus this life sustaining organ was used - by this supreme god - to re-create his son who was placed inside Semele to be re-born. Zeus obliterated the Titans with lightning. From Titan ash arose human beings. We are rebels to the gods. Yet there is a divine residue in us. Immortal essence. It originates in Zeus, yet we are also imbued with the Underworld, for Persephone, the wife of Hades, is our original mother. Hell. Heaven. Even Purgatory. All are inside us. We visit ourselves - as much as anywhere else - as we feel cursed. Or blessed. Or wait."

Lisa stands in the centre of a small sandstone circle. This ring is the part of the remains of a World War Two gun emplacement. Sunrays on her face. "Do you think it was ever used?"

"The Japanese actually had midget submarines attack Sydney Harbour." states Gregor. "An elderly woman I know in Glebe told me as a girl she heard shells from the mother submarine whiz over her auntie's place and land in the golf course."

"Would have just been down the road here in Dover Heights." remarks Cat.

"She is a very interesting woman who let's us have our Guatemala human rights meetings at her place." continues Gregor. "About eight people – including Caterina – turn up every second Wednesday; there is always a very good selection of tea and biscuits to have after the formal proceedings. Most of us had travelled on a 'road to Damascus' in Central America to become involved. The President of our little committee is a Guatemalan lawyer who escaped with his family from the death squads. 'Victor Hugo' works now as a cleaner. Our host is involved with the theatre, she helped to set up New Theatre in Newtown; was a documentary film maker for a waterside union and used to live a bohemian life in Kings Cross. Still is a bohemian. A 'grand woman' who really inspires us to see that if we reach our eighties we could, even then, still live full, engaging lives. You ought to meet her Cat."

Lisa stretches out her arms. Shouts. "My voice is echoing."

Everyone has a go including Melissa. Yet, no one can offer an explanation.

"Lifeline has it's phone number here." Michael is examining the white railing that runs along the cliff top.

"Telstra are thinking of getting rid of the free call service to them." comments Gregor.

"A dolphin!" exclaims Lisa. All eyes look out to sea. A dolphin is jutting out of the water followed by others. As if aspiring to touch the sky. These extremely intelligent sea mammals disappear under the sea.

"A surfie mate of mine was off Shelley beach at Cronulla when he saw a dolphin nearby make a whirlpool with his tail." nonchalantly remarks Michael. "These fish got caught up in it and the dolphin grabbed a few with his teeth to eat."

"The kidnappers of Dionysus." comments Cat while gazing at the dolphins. "Semele was also the mother of the more well-known Dionysus who was also fathered by Zeus. She was the daughter of Cadmus. A Phoenician who was the founder of Thebes, which would one day have Oedipus as its king. He was the brother of Europa who had been taken away by Zeus to Crete when he disguised himself as a bull and approached Europa who was swimming along a seashore. Europa somersaulted on the laidback bull's back. Zeus took Europa by sea to Crete where as a man he fathered Minos and Rhadamanthus to her; their mother taught them how to leap Zeus as she had done and it became a revered

skill amongst Cretans. Although the brothers squabbled as to who would rule Crete Minos was to become king.[3]

Minos was a just ruler. Along with his brother, Rhadamanthus, Minos would become judge over the dead in the Underworld; they would choose both the punishments and where the dead would go according to their deeds and misdeeds achieved on this earth. Aeacus was the third adjudicator of this lordly triumvirate that would direct the eternal destinies of mortals; he was a pious man who would sire Telamon, the father of Ajax the Greater and Peleus, the father of Achilles. Zeus was also Aecus's father and his mother was the nymph Aegina which was the name of the island he ruled."

"Was the Aegean Sea named after Aegina?" inquires a very curious Michael.

Cat shakes his head. "After Theseus's father whose name is Aegeus. Although the Greek word for storm is supposed to be agis. Can you enlighten us…"

"Na…my Greek vocabulary is no good…"

"You are so useless -" laughs Lisa. " - MICHAEL!" Comes the shout so as to hear the echo in the gun emplacement.

"On Aegina Aecus's people were wiped out by a plague but Zeus repopulated Aegina by making new people out of ants. It seems a Greek word for ants is 'myrmekes' which explains why this new race was called Myrmidons who according to Homer were ruled by Peleus and Achilles. Aecus, who convinced the gods to end a drought on mainland Greece, is worthy to share with his half-brothers their prodigious judicial duties in Hades. Yet, this is all a digression from considering Semeles and Dionysus.As I said Semeles's father was Cadmus who was encouraged from giving up his search for his sister Eurydice by the Delphic Oracle. This esteemed seer had Cadmus follow a cow for where it lay down he would found Thebes. Hera was said to be 'cow eyed' so these animals were held in high regard." Cat lifts back his cowboy hat. "Cows may allude to female, maternal universal forces while bulls correspond to this creation's male aspects. Zeus is meant to be 'broad-faced'. I imagine like Taurus. Yet, as I have mentioned earlier Semele - the daughter of Cadmus - was the mother of Dionysus. At last, we come to the main subject in this broad overview of ancient legend." Cat grins. "I often wonder if the gods had me as Ovid - who wrote Metamorphosis - in a previous life. Zeus slept with Semele and Hera, insufferably jealous, disguised as a human, convinced Semele to ask Zeus to visit her in his full godly splendour. This king of all the deities reluctantly visited this mere mortal – who at most could only hope to become a minor earth goddess - as a massive bolt of lightning. Semele was vaporised. However, the unborn child was saved from the ashes was still fiercely jealous made Ino and her family become insane. Ino's husband was killed by Zeus. The melancholy thunder god placed Dionysus in his thigh. After his birth, Dionysus was handed into the care of Ino, who was a sister of Semele. Yet, Hera who his son and Ino drowned herself in the sea with another son." Cat glimpses a pensive Lisa - who is staring down at Melissa - from the corner of his eye. "Yet, there is some hope in this tragedy as these two were both transformed into sea divinities. Thus Dionysus was given over to the nymphs of Mount Nysa where it is said he was named and where he first cultivated magnificent vineyards. With a band of followers, Dionysus travelled throughout Europe, Asia and to India - where I am certain his wild spirit is still instilled in the Bollywood musical – those who accepted him were blessed with wine and those who despised him were driven hysterically mad. Those who doubted his divinity bullied Dionysus, but he overcame all his foes. In Thrace, Lycurgus chained the bacchantes and satyrs as he had rejected Dionysus. Dionysus from the clutches of Hades. Disconsolate with life, Orpheus was absent from this world in both mind and spirit as he walked with a Thracian band of Dionysian women known as maenads. So the story goes this distraught figure would

preach about the Dionysian mysteries and what he saw in Hades. Indifferent to all other women, these wild maenads finally turned on our sad musician when his apathy led him to ignore some orgiastic rite they were performing." Cat's knuckles go white as he tightens his grip onto the white wooden rail. "Perhaps Orpheus knew what he was doing for these Dionysian 'whores' were angered and tore him to shreds; these jealous, murderous creatures would be turned into oak trees but not till after they had thrown the head of Orpheus into the water where it was heard yelling out 'Eurydice!'" Silence.

The audience is pensive. A distant look by the storyteller out to sea. "Orpheus…also sailed with the Argonauts…"

A red sun.

"A Homeric hymn tells the story about Dionysus being shanghaied by Tyrrhenian pirates who shoved him on their ship and went out to sea. Dionysus who had magnificent long black hair and a purple robe that hung from his strong, broad shoulders was assumed to be a royal son. Surely a king would pay a hefty ransom for his return. Yet, the ropes that tied the regal prisoner soon hung loose about him and he smiled with his dark eyes at his captors. Only the helmsman realised that they had kidnapped a god. He pleaded with his comrades to set their captive down on a nearby dark shore. The helmsman feared that the wrath of Dionysus would whip up a hurricane storm that would sink the ship and drown the crew. However, the ship's master gave the helmsman a tongue-lashing, calling him the true madman, that he should watch the wind so they could set sail to Cyprus or Egypt or to some far place - wherever their prisoner was heading – he would be forced to tell soon enough, then they may go and parley with his friends, to release him for a high fee. "He is no god but a god has favourably sent him to us." This captain was pleased to see his ship take on a full sail. His crew tightly pulled the ropes as the vessel fiercely whisked across a 'wine-dark' sea. With such smooth sailing there was no need to pull the oars and so the sailors were very pleased – except for one. It was the helmsmen who first saw a sweet fragrant bubbly wine stream across the deck, then to notice a vine coil around the mast and spread along the top of the sail to release clusters of grapes. Flowers were also blossoming and tasty berries, suddenly along the rowlocks there sprouted garlands. The crew had been amazed, yet were now fearful, and rebuked the helmsman to now take them in to the shore. Yet, what had now appeared as wonderful, would be overtaken by the horror of a god transformed into a lion. A roar. With royal mane, Dionysus stood up on the top deck, glaring threateningly at the crew. Everyone ran to the stern, where the panic stricken crew surrounded the helmsman - a man who Homer says had 'a wise soul'. Huddled together the frightened sailors watched the lion jump on their master. The captain had stood his ground, his fantasy of divine favour, his unlimited greed, blinded him to the miracles occurring all around him, for what benefit were they to him? As it turned out, no benefit at all, and as his body was devoured - with pieces of his flesh flung overboard - the crew became hysterical, as they dreaded the same doom, all jumped into the sea – except for one. The helmsman watched in amazement as these once panic-stricken men now chirped and laughed in the splashing waters around the boat, for they were dolphins. Without a care in the world. Dionysus was back to his old self and applauded the helmsman for his charmed life, he told him to take courage, for his wisdom had already tamed a lion, no harm would come to him for he sought not to harm a god. A strange god, but a divinity nevertheless. "I am Dionysus, the roaring god." As Homer tells it. Yet I see him as a divine gypsy." Cat muses. "Anyways, the wine god spoke with impeccable grace, befitting his beautiful face, of his genealogy as he helped the helmsman set sail to shore, a fortuitous mortal who survived his adventure with this wayward god, to tell the

tale..."

Lisa tilts back her head. "Dan told me according to his mother he has some gypsy blood in him." The others were then told of Dan's family folklore which involved a Spanish sailor marrying an Irish woman in Elizabethan times. The Spaniard had survived a shipwreck while thousands of his compatriots had died when many vessels of the Spanish Armada while heading home had smashed onto the rugged Irish coastline. Despite their best navigational efforts these particular boats had still drifted uncontrollably in the strong North Atlantic current.

Cat interrupts by repeating his Japanese haiku about drifting boats.

Lisa continues. "One descendent from this Spanish-Irish mix was a great grandfather who fell in love with a village woman when he too was shipwrecked but on an island in the Mediterranean Sea." A laugh. Lisa looks out to sea. "When he was being picked up he had her dressed up as a sailor to get her onto the boat. Dan's great granddaddy even had her use a flask and tube to urinate over the side to convince everyone she was a man! It's mainly because of her that Dan has that swarthy look. If nothing else, his whole family background may explain his hot temper." Lisa looks whimsical. "Maybe she's out there now…"

"My dead husband could be!" muses Margaret. "His nickname was Flipper!"

"40,000 years on my mind…that mural outside Redfern railway station has that big Rainbow Serpent running along the barrier wall…yet what few people know is that the dolphin is apparently the actual tribal totem for this area…" Cat is looking absentminded. "The followers of Dionysus were exhilarated to lose their identity in divine ecstasy." Hands still on the rail. 'To the gods our whole bodies are masks. We must clothe our transforming soul with ever new disguises. To reflect continuing change.'

"Get the best suit that fits!" Cat winds up his yo-yo. "Don't hire one for $89. Buy one for the same price! Try out our new factory shop in Erskineville!"

Trying to eye the old Quarantine Centre on the North Head. It was the abode to many dead. There were also ghosts of suicides and shipwrecks in the water. This harbour was a watery divide between the living and the dead. As the sun continued to sink over the horizon it was certain this group would soon be departing Cat thought of the murky nether region between daylight and night where along the last shore of the last stream of the river Oceanus, beyond the wild coastline of Persephone's Grove, was a haunted spot where two tributaries of Hades met. The fiery waters of Pyriphlegethon as well as Cocytus a river of lamentations a branch of the Styx. The waters from both these rivers then flowed into the Acheron which was the second great river of Hades. A large rock pillar marks this spot in a land of misty shadows where the Cimmerians lived. It was the very edge of the world. In perpetual darkness. A dreaded eternal night. Odysseus carved out into the ground a trench a cubit square in height and length and breadth in which the sacrificial blood of a ram and black ewe was poured. This mortal of Ithaca then held up his sword as a multitude from the dead appeared from the black void beyond the large rock, with the water of both hellish streams crashing on either side of it, to then meander around the ground in front where Odysseus stood behind the square pit of blood, as if at the very tip of a pointy island. Thus Odysseus, along with Er and Orpheus, was the only third ancient mortal to see the shades while he was still alive. A loud murmur. Odysseus held back this ghoulish crowd made of all the dead that had yet been. It was if their faded faces would float in the dark air to greet this living being with whom - by approaching the sacred blood before him - they may converse and hear news from the world of life. All had to be held back, including Odysseus's own sorrowful mother and unlucky Elpenor, a young sailor who had just died on Circe's island, until the aim of his visitation was accomplished. Odysseus had just come from Circe who advised Odysseus to go speak to

Tiresias the blind prophet to find out about his future. As it was only Ajax the Greater - still so embittered by losing the right to own Achilles arms to Odysseus - had no desire to speak. Lord Tiresias, there he was, with a gold sceptre in hand, a man but once a woman now a man again. Who tasted the blood set down by Odysseus to then speak of Poseidon's wrath towards the Ithacan for blinding his son; of the certain death that would befall his men if they ate Apollo's sacred cattle and of the lonely wanderings and trap that awaited Odysseus from the suitors. These were the warnings to this royal Ithacan in his present life. Although it was not said in so many words Odysseus is to consider that wisdom rather than human strength is the avenue by which true leadership and achievement can be attained. Polyphemus, who belonged to a lawless tribe of giant Cyclops who, despite their brute strength, had no real knowledge or ability to take advantage of their tethered lands, was outwitted by a much smaller but more intelligent being, while it was the Phaeacians, a wise race who exercised control over their natural surroundings, who will provide the Ithacan stranger - who has fallen on hard times - with hospitality and a sanctuary, as well as the means by which he will be able to continue his journey home. Odysseus will die peacefully in old age, on dry land, surrounded by his well-endowed community. Yet it was Achilles, with his weary blackened eyes, who bade him excellent advice to any new existence. "Thank you. I am full of joy that my son fought so bravely at Troy. However, my news to you is that no matter how much family glory can be bestowed upon a noble warrior as myself, it would still be better to be alive as a slave to a landless peasant than as lord over all in this land of the dead."

It would seem that it was advice well taken. For when the time came for Odysseus to stand in front of Lachesis and pick the form of his next life, this resilient warrior chose to come back as an ordinary man. It was so unlike the choice of say Agamemnon who, tired of the treacherous world of men, desired to be an eagle. Still a regal creature. Ajax would return as a lion. A royal beast but one who would not humanly recall foregoing his mighty cousin's armour. (More contemplative, at least, was Orpheus who chose to be a swan).

"You looking for the Quarantine Centre Cat?" inquires Lisa. "Over on the other side of this 'Swan Lake'? Ever been on the ghost tour? You ought to go after I'm gone. Might meet up!" A cheeky snigger.

*A wistful look. 'Who was the extraordinary ancient spirit that would choose to be clothed by this ordinary, fateful woman?' **

Time to go.

The Good Thief

The top of *another* bottle of Jack Daniels is unscrewed. "We must hope friend that Lisa will ascend to heaven like Dan Cooper."This prophet sculls his whiskey.

"Who *is* he?" Michael is exasperated; he is scouring Cat's videos.

"The good thief who hijacked a Northwest Boeing 727 in 1971. He had two hundred thousand dollars strapped to his waist when he parachuted over Ariel, Washington State. Cooper has never been seen since!" The shot glass is slammed onto the coffee table. "Four parachutes he asked for! The FBI thought this was so he wouldn't get a dud one yet I know the other three weren't for any crew members but for the Father, Son and Holy Spirit!"

Resistance

"I want to have a look…" slurs Michael who is by Cat's videos. "I wanna see something that would please Zeus. He's the god of hospitality."

**This exact question is repeated in the main narrative.*

"While Ronald Reagan is a centaur!" screams Cat. He looks affectionately at his friend.

'Here is a pawn of a hierarchy that was only deeply concerned with its 'little empires'. With its inevitable 'little purges'.

CV World

"Cat…" murmurs Michael, "…seems to be a growing corporate culture in schools these days. The real needs of students sometimes come second. I've seen ome teachers tailoring lessons to suit their promotion chances. It's just like Colonel Cathcart in Catch-22 who wanted the Assyrian Yossarian and his mates to wear neckties into battle and come up with tighter bomb patterns so as to impress General Peckem who could make Cathcart a general. I mean, look at the crazies in power now. Any outspoken 'Yossarian' who wants the right thing done is crucified..."

Social Security

Cat continues to watch Michael peruse the videos.

'As for me, in my public service job my department had once refused to demand back the money that was overpaid to some of our poorest clients. We were stood down for six weeks and sickness and disability payments were stopped. '

A mad flash of the eyes. "War Communism! Remember the Kronshdat sailors who fought for liberty in the Russian Revolution! Lenin's crack troops! When they saw they had only fought for slavery under another name they rebelled! Defended hard but were finally massacred! The just betrayed by the betrayers of justice! Yet I say unto you better to die on your feet than live on your knees!"

Moral Deregulation

Another film clip with policemen on horseback wielding their truncheons at demonstrators outside a desert detention centre.

"Gregor told me that scenes like this remind him of a soccer riot he once got caught up in when Chelsea lost and couldn't avoid being relegated." states Michael. "There was even teargas all over the pitch. People risking life and limb over a football match. Said it was a miracle he got away unscathed. He stood with some Germans while the fans all around them tried to fight off the police who were rampaging through the crowd on their horses."

"Welcome to Thatcher's England I quipped to the Germans as I saw truncheons smashing down onto people's skulls."

Holy U2

"A downed U2 pilot believes the Holy Spirit - who as a glowing light in the pitch black night - kept him alive in enemy waters! He was blessed for doing his spiritual duty to spy on the godless! Who had also righteously flown missions to parachute angelic advisors who would help freedom fighters liberate their downtrodden nations from the Beast! ALL to only become martyrs for the LORD!"

Walking the Dog

On an Eat Carpet video segment is a short film of a medieval girl having visions of the twentieth century. A falling bomber. She is frightened. "WE ALL FALL DOWN! Here

we go around the mulberry bush! The mulberry bush! The mulberry bush!" Cat rants and raves around the living area.

'Michael and I once saw a woman on Enmore Road with a kelpie which had a green cap over its snout. Every time it barked it made a big squeaking sound.'

"SQUEAK! SQUEAK!"

'(Michael knows what that sound means every time I make it). The woman was struggling with her shopping bags and holding onto the leash. A bus went by but wouldn't stop for her. We saw her starting to hitch. She hailed down a taxi just as we were walking up to her to offer her a lift. You never know when the angels are watching you! Yet I and another woman and her wild-eyed kid with the big Mickey Mouse knapsack once got a lift to Glebe off a bus inspector at Central when he saw the bus we wanted to catch did not see us! Alas find me just ten good people for God to save all of us! Who will help the poor!'

Philistine Generation

New music on the stereo. "PURGATORY!" 'Jimmy Little is singing a Go-Betweens song! King Crimson! No…let's put on some Kinky Friedman. Bruce Cockburn. Phil Ochs. Lloyd Wrainwright III to drown out this PHILISTINE GENERATION! Those Judases at Politics in the Pub! A Koori woman was explaining to Kim Beazley how she was of the Stolen Generation when a few middle-aged male loud mouthed Labor 'disciples' at the very back of the Harold Park Hotel shouted her down by yelling: 'What's your question!'"

The Great Judas

'At a 2SER Bob Dylan birthday night at Master's place where I helped Michael to convince the announcer over the phone that he had met Dylan in the toilet of the blues den where Muddy Waters had once played. A Judas stormed into the living room, rubbing his sweaty neck. (Judases everywhere!)'

"Community is being lost." states Johnny Patmos who is sitting on the right side of Master at a large wooden table not far from the barbeque.

"Yeah, you're right." agrees Michael. "It's a real pity you can't go to Belmore Oval anymore to see the footie. I used to like how the whole crowd would watch the Bankstown train slow down every time it passed by the game."

"The world has to move on," states a dissenting voice. "Progress involves sacrifice. Tradition is important but new traditions can arise when others are lost."

"Yeah…well…the Cypriot Club used to be Newtown Leagues Club, but at least that building was not converted into apartments…the other day I saw a Lebanese wedding couple have their photos taken at the fountain outside the Canterbury Leagues Club. People strongly identify with the places they get together. We see how the psychology of the Aborigines has been stuffed up when they lost their meeting spots. We can't let this to also happen to us. It's healthy that the Aborigines are fighting to get back rights lost over their land, especially from all those mining interests-"

"What are you holding in your hand?" asks the same voice who is sitting on the first chair on the left side of Master.

Michael refuses to answer.

"Listen Mick-"

"Judas!"

"Give him a go!" announce some of the others.

"Proceed." Master waves his hand at his offsider.

Judas grins. "You're holding a fork Mick – a knife and fork to hoe into that delicious steak you're eating. That steak probably comes from a cattle station which employs some of those 'Aborigines' and the cutlery you are using comes from the minerals on the land the mining companies are digging up!"

Michael recalls a young Aboriginal woman with a forlorn looking elder outside the High Court at St. James. Three black limousines with Chinese flags fluttering from the hoods of each car drives by. Power. Hypocrisy. Remembering when Gregor had told him he was with an Aboriginal female friend in a Cairns pub and two policemen came by and ordered them to leave. Jabuluka! He embarks to tell the others of a David Bradbury documentary it was claimed enough radiation could be released from this uranium site which is in a world heritage park that it could spread to Sydney (and as an aside mentions how at the Nicaraguan benefit at Balmain he heard that Bradbury who had produced the classic documentary on Nicaragua No Pasaran had been refused entry due to the burgeoning overcrowding and ignorance as to who he was by those on the door); considers how from a spiritual point of view the land and its sacredness enhances society's overall understanding of what it means to be a human being; and motivates each individual of the need to take care of the land and to take care of each other to uphold the sanctity of life.

Michael fidgets. "Yeah there's work for Aboriginals on cattle stations but they had to fight to gain this employment and for the right to gain equal pay."

"The Archangel Michael is providing us with the usual theological overview." dryly remarks Master.

"Not having the national interest at heart is definitely un-Australian-"

Michael's temper simmers. "Na, na…" He thinks how 'Australian' Don Bradman was to the rebellious likes of Bill O'Reilly, Keith Miller and Ian Chappell; as a Scottish guy had once said: '…this whole country is stuck in Iconoclasm Room 101!' The Archangel works himself into a rage: in a tele-drama a redneck Anzac at a French town called Poziers had shot a surrendering German soldier in the back; Australian cricketers sledge their opponents; backpacker louts sleep amongst the graves at Anzac Cove…"NO RESPECT! YOU WANT 'AUSTRALIAN'…? THAT NUN WHO WAS KILLED BY THE SHINING PATH WHILE HELPING POOR PERUVIAN VILLAGERS WAS A REAL AUSTRALIAN! YOU GOING TO BE LIKE HER?"

Cat suddenly looks over at his painting of two women in a pub dancing while they are holding spirits glasses on their heads: a tequila drinking contest. It is a large artwork that he bought off the Dutch owner of the Sanctuary Café. He suddenly glances at Lisa's awry painting of Kings Cross. "The Mouth of Hell to consume the Unrighteousness!"

'In a gallery in Darlinghurst the amateurish pictures were over-priced, but, the owner who I still remember had a pencil thin moustache and wore navy blue and white pin striped trousers said lots of 'human traffic' walked past his shop. "If you do pictures bring them in." Yet another little prostitute. A little Judas!'

"Devil hipsters!"

'Chechnyan freedom fighters trace down - through the serial numbers on the Russian fighter planes that bomb their families - the names of the pilots who fly them. Thus the pilots - to protect their families in case they are ever tracked down by the Chechnyans for revenge killings - sand off the serial numbers. God's enemies cannot be saved from any divine vendetta for their names and serial numbers will always remain exposed to such eternal vengeance!'

Cat slams the coffee table with his fist. "We live in the Great Judas! E-X-T-E-R-M-I-N-A-T-E It!" A far away look. "RAGE! RAGE! Oh Johnny O'Keefe: RA-GE!"

"Bill O'Reilly! Kerry O'Keefe! Stuart MacGill! Shane Warne! The FLIPPER!" giggles Michael. He throws a small plastic brain. This spongy grey toy fits neatly into the palm of his hand. Cat calls it The Brain of Morbius which is in reference to a Dr Who episode.

"COME IN SPINNER!" Cat has a laminex cartoon wall hanging of a Latin woman wearing fruit covered head gear like a Copacabana dancer. A comic bubble beside her shows what she is thinking: *Come On! SPIN ME A 7!"* "YES! SPIN ME A SEVEN! GOD'S PERFECT NUMBER!" A whiskey is sculled.

'Ashes to ashes! Dust to dust! We are made of the stars! We should play with the stars! Knocking on heaven's door!'

Cat puts on Paint it Blue by Living with Robert. "A BLAST FROM THE PAST!"

'I once helped a fifty something Afro-American woman carry a door through Kings Cross which she was going to use as a table at her gallery opening. I met her out of the blue on the street. It was one of the many inexplicable, strange unexplained moments of my bizarre existence like seeing a bearded woman walking down King Street, she was wearing an old blue singlet and King Gee shorts and I wondered even then what would some intrusive Judas say to her? Or to the one-legged elderly man in Glebe who with his cane is always cursing and lashing out at the world? We are all Judases! We have no right to speak about injustices unless we do something for the poor! What we say will hold no moral sway. All will ring hollow! Yet we often only think of our own security at the expense of forgetting; ignoring; not caring or exploiting the insecurities of others! To think no further than to live within and to sustain our own cocoons! God forgive us for our lack of acts of human kindness! For our hardening of our hearts like Great Pharaoh! Oh Lord we will say we know You but You will say where were you when I was in prison? When I was living on the street? Oh Lord forgive me when I ignored that braided haired Jamaican man in King Street who asked for a coin, who sweetly spoke of the goodness of humanity. (Yes, I had a black angel forgive me on a train when I could not give him a cent. I am still very thankful for the Lord's messenger who I met outside Aporto's Portugese chicken place in Enmore Road. 'Zorro', long haired and bearded, was riding his Malvern Starr bicycle and his shoulder bag filled with tracts to hand out to the lost souls of King Street fell onto the road. I picked it up risking being hit by a council truck. Zorro thanked me, said he was a follower of the Lord. Praised Jesus; asked me if I knew God. I instantaneously said yes. Zorro inquired if I needed prayer for anything. I told him of the hardening of my heart. Along that desolate windy concrete footpath with bowed head, compassionate hand on my constricted shoulder, I felt the warm, thriving spirit of Yahweh lift the burden of my callousness off my heaving chest! Yes, the kindness of strangers! Yes, I still succour this 'chance encounter' with Jesus's loving active servant). Yet I went with Michael to prison with a woman we met along Darlinghurst Road; her tanned face was all dried up like a prune from over fifty years exposure to a harsh sun and as she stood there in her smart jeans and cigarette hanging from her mouth and flicking her frizzy hair from her face we were told how she wanted to visit her son at Long Bay jail. We drove out and saw him in a white 'monkey suit' where there were no pockets in his overalls that were zipped up from the back."Be a good boy, stay a good boy."The mother pleaded to her young son."Do what they say and you'll be okay…"

'Lisa, Michael and I went with Gregor to a Balmain gallery for an exhibition opening of paintings by a woman prisoner who was allowed to attend this special night. Lisa – 'our prisoner' - was attracted to a work entitled Moonwalkers. I stood beside her looking at the faceless geometric figures ambling over a sparse ochre field. "You like this one Lisa?"

"Yeah," whispered Lisa who faced me. "Cat I'd really like to escape to somewhere tranquil."

The two of us took a quiet walk up to the Balmain Watch House where other exhibitions were often held. Outside this sandstone building. Under a crescent moon. Lisa wept.'

Anti-Terrorism Happening

'At the Addison Road Gallery I joined with everyone else stomping their feet and reading out the refugee poems painted on the walls. "A WAR ON ERROR!" I howled out from the press release in which a Vietnamese born artist with her other painter compatriots had stated that the way we maltreat outsiders shows how we also may treat 'insiders'.

Skull Duggery

Cat's large Middle Eastern hubbly-bubbly pipe in the kitchen. "Remember Michael when we searched for one of these! There was that petrol station on Canterbury Road in Bankstown playing and selling all that Arab music!"

'I saw a man and woman dressed in old worn-out clothes outside Neeta City in Fairfield. This straggly couple had all of their worldly possessions in two shopping trolleys. Human garbage walking their rubbish on the streets of the Great Society who hoped these two would just disappear into the nearest, largest council bins. The forty-something moustached man, tall and lanky with a cowboy hat was getting far behind the obese woman who was way ahead of him.' "Wait! Wait!" *'The man despairingly shouted out in the suburban wilderness. '*

"We wait for little gods!"

Yet an Asian beggar tells me after I give him a few coins that God is inside of me, that God is inside us all. He added: "Thank you, I will not be forced now to rob your house!"

"A monk once said that the empty space of a begging bowl is sacred because it can be filled with gifts like food or money which is genuinely needed! Yet look what we have done with the sacred! Look! LOOK! The swastika! It meant good fortune! Now it means overwhelming slaughter!"

'Yes, evil persists when good people do nothing. Michael, Gregor, James and I turned up to the church in Pitt street, whose woman minister was advocating an end to racism, for some neo-Nazis were threatening to disrupt the service. There was only that one big guy who turned up afterwards looking at the parishioners as they left. Michael mentioned he had walked past this church once with Dan who gave his sandwich to an old beggar wearing a storm hat who was sitting on the steps. We went down to the Marigold in Chinatown for yum-cha and Gregor informed us that some of these restaurants were started by enterprising Chinese sailors who were trapped in Sydney due to the Japanese invasion of South-East Asia. However, after the war, even though some of them had married Australians, they were forcibly deported. In this barbaric age I saw outside a chain store while at a sausage sizzle protest that was against the standing down of some of its casual workers, a bald muscly thug, who was walking by, push pass the woman holding up a Green Left newspaper, to grab from a man wearing a fez one of his precious copies of the U.N. Charter of Human Rights. He punched the man, calling him a communist. Oh impotent bystanders! We offer only neon gods for our skulls of death!'

Vanitas

'Hans Holbein's The Ambassadors has in the foreground a diagonal skeletal apparition which if the viewer walks towards the right flank of the work shapes up to be a skull. The lute with its broken strings also signifies death. 'Amidst the realm of human power as

seen in the regal presence of both men there abounds this greater force which negates all life which even ravaged the body of Christ. Holbien's portrayal of this dead 'divine ambassador' caused even the spiritual likes of a Dostoyevsky to consider there may have been no Resurrection, so as to lose faith in any immortality other than in a blank nihilism. Our spiritual hanged man…(a hanged God)…victim too of a depersonalized omniscient beast…'

Cat rifles through a pile of Russian videos. Lifting up copies of Battleship Potemkin, Ivan the Terrible and Russian Ark there is underneath Andrey Zvyaginstev's The Return a packet of tarot cards.

'No Phoenician…the Wheel of Fortune…The Man with Three Staves…here is The Hanged Man…'

The card is held up over the holder's head. Lisa and Michael see a man wearing a yellow skirt. A blue tunic. Red short sleeves. Buttons down a white band. Blue shoes. Red stockings. Both hands behind the back. Out of sight. The man hangs by his left foot from a blue beam held up at either end by two yellow trees. Nature's supports each have six red branches reduced to stumps having been cut close to the trunks. Lastly, the man's head - which has blue hair - hangs down a hole which is surrounded by grass. Cat tucks the tarot card into the leather band around his black cowboy hat which he wears. Stalks the room.

'Yellow is the colour of intelligence, red for creative energy, blue for will, white is for purity. The hangman, the card for sacrifice. He hangs underneath the zodiac Aries. The Ram. The animal traditionally used for ritual sacrifices in the ancient world.'

Cat taps the card.

(Yes, if I was the hangman my will would be supported by my intelligence, while my creativity may lie dormant. Yet, I will keep a pure heart. To journey within myself to achieve the necessary psychological reversal, led by the spirit and the unconscious my life will remain a worthy witness to the LORD).

A finger over the blue haired head.

'Spirit descends into matter. Life is bestowed on earth. Yet, a life in which the cosmic spirit is restricted by the material form in which it now resides. (Gnosticism. Platonism. St. Paul). Spirit also loses touch with a cosmic superior intelligence, yet all is not lost. There remains a continuity between the Eternal and Spirit but it is not direct but distant. (I am a tent for the Holy Spirit). Involution - this dispersal of Spirit into Matter – also leads the way to Evolution – the bringing together of all Material Form to a Cosmic Unity. An ultimate, eternal consciousness may be moving away from a spiritual centre but while dissipating through the infinite possibilities in the manner of form in which living beings exist a synthesis is aroused which culminates in uniting Life with Universal Soul. 'Love one another. All things work to good for those who love the LORD.' (When I die the soul will be released from the body, this dead shell in the material world will thus, through its very decay, be the evidence of an after-life that can only exist through the spirit. Holbein's dead physical God is therefore actually 'a sign' of a more profound spiritual immortality, whereby my own identity can continue to live when it is outside this physical world. There is no need for physical resurrection when life is retained through the soul. After all, Christ's new body was ephemeral. Hope. Holbein shows us how that death may only overcome the material and not the immaterial realm).

The card is turned around.

The hangman maybe upside down, is descending to earth away from heaven, but this is only a mortal point of view. The truth is the reverse to what is seen. We must not wholly rely on surface appearances. Our hanging friend is actually entering into perfect harmony with all reality. The seen and the unseen corresponding through this human

*Venn diagram. He is well-balanced, in control, centred within God and his own self; we are misguided in seeing him upside down when in reality it is he who stands upright, a true visionary who sights our shortcomings, who can see all things as they really are, perfectly and well. '*Cat goes over to his VCR. *'...an illusion. See but do not believe...'*

"We end Asia-Pacific with some clips from a very innovative Asian video exhibition presently on at the Australian Centre of Photography. Mirror Worlds. In the brochure we read: 'Counter-terrorism, consumer subversion and visual mischief. Mirror Worlds presents the work of eight artists who reinvent the world and play havoc with reality. 'Reference is made to cyberpunk author William Gibson who in his recent novel Pattern Recognition coined the term 'mirror world' to reference human objects which may appear different but still serve the same purpose. e.g. dial tones, electrical plugs have their 'twins' in other parts of the world. What is also mentioned is mirror matter theory which proposes that our world of matter even mirrors an anti-matter – 'dark matter' - world which we can only detect through its gravitational effects on whole galaxies, stars, planets as well as down to individual microscopic particles. It begs the question: which world is more realAs this exhibition intimates: it is something which even ancient mythology considered where mirrors were also used as devices to help open up our comprehension to alternative realities – Narcissus staring at his own reflection in the pool to eventually die best serves as an apt warning to present-day,self-indulgent 'misconstructions' on reality. So we come to the consideration of the mirrors in our modern world, reflecting not only populist political realities but also populist consumer mythologies-

FF

The tape arrives at a tower with a silver sphere at the top which bends out of the way of an oncoming airliner. There is an aerial shot of a giant hand placing a car below it into an empty car park spot. This visual trick is followed by an assortment of other video collages such as a man who is wearing a beanie who first with an apple is then bouncing a red ball and appearing to glide up a wall as if he is flying in defiance of Newton's laws of gravity As the camera zooms out it is seen that this scenario is happening on a portable TV. The viewer is especially intrigued by another clip which has a man getting out of a bed parallel to the bottom of the film frame to walk into a split screen behind him. In the left half is a large alarm clock at the back of a long empty room which the man turns off and as he returns to the foreground he bends over into the other half of the split screen to turn off the portable tv to then light a cigarette and move a pawn on a chessboard; back to more silhouettes of jet airliners bouncing off a tower (one turns into a missile after passing through a tower), exploding into jigsaw pieces, stopping beside different towers or fading away.

"In Shensu twenty six people a day lose their limbs in industrial accidents." states Cat as this video sequence suddenly gives way to Dr Who's offsider Romana standing with a group of teenagers in jumpsuits who are to be sacrificed to a Minotaur to save a whole world. There does not seem to be any escape as they are trapped in a labyrinth whose inventor has designed with moving walls to change the maze.

PAUSE

Cat in his very drunken state looks terrified. "WHO IS WORTHY? WHO HAS NO SIN?" Melancholy. Anger. "I AM NO 'MERE PLAGIERISER' BUT A GREAT VOICE REGURGIGATER OF HUMAN HISTORY!"

Video Mind

Staring into the void. A mind as a video tape.

'There's nothing wrong with me! There's something wrong with you! I shall trust no one's judgement other than my own.'

Pointing generally towards a window. As if in silent seering conversation with the outside world.

'…yes yes Rahab a prostitute who hid Joshua's spies in Jericho she was worthy the universe is our eternal womb a storm prevails outside a storm in my mind King Lear yes he went insane when the public claims of loyalty to him were proven to camouflage private treason the 'good tyrant' had his world turned upside down and in this topsy-turvy upheaval of the natural order his mind was unhinged the genius of Shakespeare to reflect the inner turmoil of a king with a mighty storm yet our society also faces a similar holocaust we will fall into madness MAD absolute power must be dispersed do not allow the oppressed to simply become the new oppressors hearing on AWAYE! of an Aboriginal open air play in Fitzroy the seahorse is a symbol of power and strength associated by the ancients with Poseidon and would give sailors a safe passage to the underworld or to whatever the soul's final destination would be writing is a necessary contrivance live by principles no matter the cost Einstein is famous but not so the inventor of the silicon chip a school principal in western Sydney had a refugee child under her care stay at school to finally do medicine love is above knowledge to rise above tragedy self-reflection is vital to self-maturity my mind a Pandora's Box Michael Caine states on Parkinson that nowhere in England is the coast more than 50 odd miles away Hagia Sophia means Divine Wisdom the novel as artificial edifice Edward de Bono's approach to lateral thinking what is love? William Blake says there is a moment in each day that Satan cannot find in Cooks river those bright white sparkles of sunlight looking like stars the cosmos in the water Dante and Beatrice to walk along the river Shakespeare's English attests to intelligent rhythms of the mind YAHWEH is a hard god the ancients were clever to invent gods of war and love and jealousy to pin the blame on them for every human wrongdoing suburban insularity the ancients better understand human reality labour is being taken offshore because it is cheaper Russia Georgia strife to cause new cold war Cheetah was born in the 1930s and outlived Tarzan and Jane by many years the Defence Secretary wants war on the cheap but forgets the first principle of shopping which is getting things for cheap is false economy the church says the law must show compassion to the mentally ill the Grim Reaper still bowls us over bush turkeys pile up compost to incubate their eggs junk food decreases anxiety Frenchman chases storms to photograph spectacular lightning bolts a Thai man schools monkeys to collect coconuts 20,000 people starve to death each day 30,000 children die Brazilian children forced to juggle at road stops to help bring in money to their families sea cucumbers are used in the fight against malaria coffee is not good for pregnant women the Amber Room Leo Berrys Richmond Boxing Club takes a knock a theatre benefit in the boxing ring Dickie Bird was a great umpire the old large flower clock at the zoo with flowers on both hands opportunities presented to us by incoming messages which travel along the electronic avenues of the labyrinth of modern communications the Ancient Greeks recognized along with seeing what is beautiful also perceived the possibility for tragedy Indonesia and Australia sign security treaty it impedes West Papuan human rights American Gothic hospitable Baptist preacher with ten gallon black hat with the skinny black curly haired wife with the rolling pupils could spit out black chewing tobacco right across a room and have it land in a spittle-

"LIVES AS IN *LOONEY TUNE CARTOONS*!"

'…linear time meeting various points of circular time all at once the professional Chicago couple now living in the Mid-West inhaling a spliff in front of their two children with the wild Vietnam veteran friend had to ring up for permission before you could shoot Charlie who was sneaking up onto the perimeter a few good guys were lost that way sweet tasting water in the Australian desert Cat the oracle through whom the divine speaks Ecclesiastes states there is a time to be born to die to laugh to mourn etcetera the U.S. to use a missile to shoot down a malfunctioning satellite which has toxic liquid women reclaim the streets a former Bosnian boxer patrols Adelaide streets helping the homeless we must have our mental constants two thirds of the world relies on rice Paul Keating's landmark Redfern speech admitting to the wrongs committed to blacks Australia needs to cut carbon emissions by 80% a free lawn bowls morning at Ashfield an Aboriginal benefit for Letty Scott at Addison Road Fidel Castro who survived so many U.S. assassination attempts stands down as Commander-In-Chief to become Commentator-In-Chief American teachers recruited during NSW teacher shortage in the seventies Jews kept alive to be used as human trading chips to be swapped for captured German soldiers were

eventually killed Indian 20/20 player auction sleep disorder pills make people drive their cars while asleep tapeworms may explain ancient myths like Medusas snakes we must have the courage to live by our convictions Dali was influenced by science the atomic theories of Einstein and the psychoanalysis of Freud Dali crucifix cubes combine art religion and science his melting watches based on melting camembert cheese the DNA helix proved the existence of God Ulysses and the Sirens by the Pre-Raphaelite John W. Waterhouse at the NGV WARHOL at QAG to die not understanding anything a nickname for Warhol was Dracalla made up of Dracula & Cinderalla his 15 minutes of fame for everyone comment apparently came from taking photos of kids in working class Harlem who all wanted their photo taken Warhol commented how they all wanted to be famous an offsider said maybe for 15 minutes they could be Warhol then formed his famous eternal archetypal 20th Century quote Battle of Brisbane between Australians and Americans negro soldiers shot at by own white troops a U.S. sailor rapes an Okinawa girl laying of hands the Holy Spirit's CPR African music at Music under Moonlight at Sydney Olympic Park Dick Tosser Turner the Godfather of the Maroons old Chinese men singing English nursery rhymes in honour of the man who saved them over the mountains in WWII sometimes a love seems to good to be true we may attempt to actually sabotage it Thomas Edison said he never failed he just found different ways that did not work NASA spent a $1,000,000 developing a pen that works in space the Russians use a pencil to find spiritual sanctuary an African man smiles tells me respect the feelings of others as we all see the world differently and live and behave differently what is illogical to one person is logical to another Ocams razor states accept the simplest solution what we are attracted to in time may also repel us later the dark matter of a human soul bubble froth perhaps produced the first chemical bonds of life creation of other probabilities in our mental space I seek to find the vortex of my cortex to consider unpredictable directions in the usual sequencing of our daily experience that we have originally mapped out in our heads the continental drift no one timeline always outside forces invading the mind confluences of multidimensional mental time being pinpointed like incoming mortar within our present physical space to switch chairs on the Titanic -'

"LET'S ORDER SOME GREEN CURRY BEEF FROM THE THAITANIC!"

'…modern constructs of time in touch with eternity is a blessing and a curse fiddlesticks give us today our daily bread emotional trough work in the real world not illusion there is only one law the law of compassion we pressure our brains give us today our modern text with our hand held letter sticks the imposition of mainstream American culture a new radical Australian $10 silicon chip global poverty vanishing seafood stocks the nomads of Gorum-Gorum Gregor says go see world before it is all just slabs of reinforced concrete apartments and mega-shopping malls Malacca is losing its colonial charm cultural diversity to monochrome neon world thought patterns speaking my mind like throwing pearls to swine NASA advised for the Star Trek series Sydney CBD stiletto race stagflation do not worry about what to wear what to eat for the LORD even cares for the sparrows superconductive magnets to be used for all spaceship radiation shields a central tenet is the righteous suffer wicked prosper rock songs sent into space maybe mistranslated by aliens as declarations of war human skulls have denser bone density so last longer in the ground a baby is dropped 12 metres from burning building to live a Latino woman in the U.S. recognises a young child at a birthday party as her long lost daughter who was feared to have died in a house fire it turns out she was abducted by a distant cousin the mother had the foresight to snip a lock of hair for DNA testing thousands of Sydneysiders skip meals due to increasing high rents Zeno the first Stoic was from Cyprus a worker living in a caravan park wins $275 million in Georgia lottery violence is the last resort of the incompetent stated Asimov Petronius in his 1st century work Satyricon says it is fear that first brought the gods into the world our carbon based industrial economies which have lasted 200 years must now transform themselves into accommodating renewable energies fish is good for the brain all of us to be renewed I am here in body but somewhere else in my mind-'

"MENTAL *GRIDLOCK*!" Hands on temple. "IN *MY* BRAIN!"

'…all those Russian writers in Stalinist times who wrote knowing they would not be published but to sustain their own human soul Gregor saw Diego Maradona's Hand of God on television at the Managua Intercontinental Hotel a new solar system is discovered Hollywood had a racket monopoly over the Australian film industry for decades cinemas showed mostly American films otherwise threatened with

closure few Australian films were made Australians were 2nd per capita in world to see movies free phone calls for ordinary people between NY and Iran to promote cultural understanding what else did I read in the newspaper the other day? The daily chronology of chronos time versus the ancient notion of kairos event time our lives should have a sense of continuity amidst the random events to see there are connections to make sense of everything the stretching and compressing of travel time what about 'non-event' time? To meditate to consider we must think beyond the tiny mental confines of the times we live in to deconstruct narrative scramble my brain to be ahead of time and the times to know what one is doing we do not live forever Palm Island an Aboriginal prison colony the gods test us to see if we believe in ourselves flour throwing in a Greek village Lou Reed's Sweet Jane by the Cowboy Junkies FDR said Somoza was a son-of-a-bitch but he was our son-of-a-bitch do not live in fear it is claimed the Turkish military have done a deal with the U.S. to turn a blind-eye while they attack nationalist Kurds much like a deal was done when Turkey invaded Cyprus environmental protesters pretending to be viewers of British Parliament have defied House of Commons security Motown Records systematic African corruption is destroying the Continent in 2003 when Kenya made primary school education free an 84 year old man with his walking stick went to school conversely both teachers and children have learnt much from 'Mzee' it is a modern malaise to not believe in the gods orange throwing festival in an Italian town the oranges represent the head of an evil landlord beheaded as he desired a saintly beauty Australian Statistics Bureau says Cyprus is in Asia Indonesian traffic police on rollerskates to cast a forensic eye over everything I am weary I have outgrown everybody a pen with kangaroo head and retractable red boxing gloves artists and writers should integrate life not research it culture a mirror it is said in some aspects of his social agenda Ishmael is metaphorically saved by death at the end of Moby Dick in a coffin which becomes a life boat after the Pequod is sunk by the great white whale with all other hands drowned Starbucks a name in Moby Dick some people raise expectations to only bitterly dash them Rudd follows Blair care for the homeless Time Team shows Blair Saxon settlements of Roman occupation in his seat Hegel history canned laughter arts funding further slashed blockbuster movies winning $50 on pokies a female teacher decides money to go to a poor Sierre Leone student two old girlfriends who have spent many years apart meet again on a plane to London community cabinet meetings corporation of childcare is a sin low fertility rates in Australia expect others to respect you Loudon Wainwright III is right we all have regrets he was on MASH Bradman was active against apartheid growth comes with pain ferry Nº 8 at Wiseman Ferry decommissioned disrespectful English tourists abroad a bank wants to kick out a family which has many physical disabilities and having problems with their mortgage repayments insane French King Charles of Agincourt thought he was made of glass the English brutally betray medieval code of chivalry by ending it with slaughter of its noble prisoners a military atrocity avenged by God through Joan of Arc high ideal vs reality NQ python eats pet dog a Bangkok coup bikies stop thieves in a RSL steam is used to bring back male hair Saudi man beheads child in supermarket will be beheaded the Taliban and the Romantic poets like Byron through to punk all wear black Guatemalan poor forced to sell their babies now a new art discipline known as neuro-art history naturalistic cave paintings converging lines in Ancient Greek and Florentine architecture inspire perspective chiaroscuro Caravaggio neural plasticity Matisse said black was a favourite colour John Billingham photos of discordant domestic life in the time of Margaret Thatcher a bogus astrologer was hired by MI5 to foresee Hitler's defeat a landslide on Mars guerrilla gardeners of the world unite using rugby league information as a conduit to educate less motivated male students is working everything is not consistent Lisa is a human being stripped down to the bare minimum in soul and body huge psychic forces like tectonic plates work underneath every soul and can erupt a heart full of grief a broken soul the President thinks he is Yul Brunner who can go into any village to kill all the baddies then be loved by villagers is love an evolutionary trick? We must take necessary risks to overcome politics of fear overcome politics of selfish aspiration delink the high carbon growth in human expectations re-orient to organic principles what is going on? The Universal Truth must be sought and penetrated to the core ignorance is strength televisions on mobile phones what do the gods play at with each and everyone of us? Darleks versus the Cybermen on Planet Earth-'

"TIME TRAVEL!" Wide-eyes. "MOBILE TIME MACHINES!"

'Here I stand said Martin Luther we oppress God the sterile emptiness of experience in cloistered lives my mind a big cliché humanity can adapt to apocalyptic crisis some people are like the darkness bourgeoisie mediocrity phoney gallery art what would Duchamp think? DADA where is Dada today?-'

"WE MUST REGENERATE! TO HAVE LAYER UPON LAYER OF FRESH HUMAN EXPERIENCE!" A gulp of air."FROM CRISIS COMES NEW LIFE!"

'…the death of culture jackboots psychotic zombies -'

"WE WILL GO MAD!"

'The signs are all there on the television-'

"STOP! YOU ARE GOING THE WRONG WAY!"

The storm troopers crush every sane face Orwell saw the end of humanity a mad king-'

"CINDERELLA!"

"..only the openly up front honest daughter who was abandoned by Lear stayed loyal Jayasuriya bowls Lee for win games people play psychological leashes shimmering light through the trees the end of days-

Jogging on the spot. Arms swinging. "RUNNING ON EMPTY!"

'The midnight hour shining light Pissaro an anarchist an enlightened Descartes time is a river says Marcus Aurelius flowing at different speeds sweeping everything aside keep your eyes on the road your hands on the wheel Australia finally signs torture treaty Jack Lemmon is a hero in The China Syndrome-'

"SOME LIKE *IT* HOT!"

'…the corporation is insane the U.S.A must know that UGG boots are Australian a crazy old man in Baghdad always spoke the truth and always got away with it yet on the whole we kill our prophets some things not meant to be steel hardens as it ages Peter Garrett we are to be discouraged to grow anything in our hearts India beat Australia in 1st ODI on December the 6th a hawk can pick up a turtle and from a great height drop it to smash open its shell for food Ramos-Horta was shot there is so much to do in life and so little time the King of Rohan athletes to protest about genocide in Darfur at Beijing Olympics a billion people will die from smoking in a 100 years a background flash in tunnel proves M16 killed Di February 13 ABC 2 Sorry Day in federal parliament it is on the same day as Hilton bombing anniversary Polaroid ends making instant film an Indian man marries his dog El Cid was so respected that when his dead body was placed on a horse on the eve of battle his enemies still feared him 60 % cut for Australian greenhouse emissions by 2050 is needed for only $300 per annum for each household less than a dollar Greek priests smoke a house with incense to bless it Aboriginal smoking ceremony to keep away bad spirits twilight is the time for dogs to communicate if the Kaiser had only attacked Russia and not France England would have stayed out of the war FLY EMIRATES the new PM is like a 19th century English reformer von Braun designed Disneyland the Russians needed missiles so finally there would be space rockets and Sputnik the Americans had their B-52s and bases in Europe beware a fading empire it will violently lash out variety is spice of life naturally frozen water spray sculptures at Estonian waterfall the conservative Opposition has introduced a cardboard cut-out of Prime Minister Rudd for sake of a friendship sometimes we must place our considerations second the need for mutual trust wisdom in the house of suffering life is illusion an Ancient Greek philosopher critizised for living in rags one time proved his business acumen by buying all the olive presses as he knew that next year's olive harvest crop would be big he sold the olive presses for a big profit as they were in demand so proved that if he chose to he could have a prosperous material life Afghan camels in the NT Flintoff shows true grace in victory the cricket goddess of centuries smiled on India 7-702 declared at SCG Shiva the cricketer 800 trees a year cut down for per person to meet paper needs the irony of children from war-devastated countries playing hangman young disabled man doing wheelchair back-flips hostages released by Columbian rebels Elephant Man inspires Paris fashion hat show eating that

special Supreme pizza in that little Kingsgrove pizza place feeling like an urban gypsy Satan tempts seduces with riches power so as to sell out and leave the wilderness Zeus deceives Ixion to leave this tormented king on a wheel of fire apparently there is no either/or dichotomy in Near East thinking I have learnt the simplest way is often the best way there is a whale larger than the dinosaurs whose heart is as big as a car culture not just to reflect the real world but transform it so many people pass away before their time to be a sage a lack of anti-snake venom in Papua pigeon owners in Damascus entwine jewellery on their revered birds the promise of Obama to bring CHANGE to U.S. credit card debt hysteria a man asks can you kiss your eyes? Thus he can never change his beliefs the Enlightenment argued we can have control over our lives and so not be left to fate in Erehwon a man hanged for attempting to kill himself ninemsn.com Frank Zappa said all Christian 70s women band the Shaggs better than the Beatles the Block in Redfern which was originally an out-of-twon Aboriginal settlement is now prime real estate there are mirror neurons of the brain an internal mental matrix for empathy and disgust green collar jobs mafia once meant beautiful thing Prince Harry secretly served in Afghanistan with Ghurkhas nicknamed Bullet Magnet indigenous Siberians genetically related to Indians of the Americas helping to prove that human beings once crossed the Bering Straits a memorial statue of Zappa in Vilnius a friendship of endless disappointment Marquez said he had to stop writing or he would never finish a book Baba Amte a humanitarian to lepers of India Michael's uncle advises him to let people think he is stupid a Balkan man had lived in Australia all his life but never became a citizen so was deported back to Serbia to live on the streets William Buckley inspired President Reagan all those history books on Ancient Greece and Rome by English scholars the U.S. prefers appeal over competence another Gilchrist six art deco is a sixties term at My Lai girls were also raped termite hollowed branches used for didgeridoos Newton and his coach driver once swapped places whereby the driver gave the lecture as he had heard Newton talk so often and even directed Newton to answer a difficult question saying even his coach driver could answer it Dante wrote out of spite to put those who he despised into a vicious Inferno while eloquently portraying Paradise to show what they have missed out on the Pope had Michelangelo paint the Sistine Ceiling hoping he would fail a baby chimp makes a public debut at Taronga Zoo unexpected guides leading us to unexpected paths casual teachers traipsing around schools like gypsies Arsenal defeat AC Milan in Champions League Bjork brazenly yells out Tibet! Tibet! at end of a song about independence at her Shanghai concert Viva Obama! sing mariachis Obama slogans for change while Hilary Clinton soldiers on Gorky means bitter roundup resistant weeds due to human manipulation of plants the MacMansionisation of outer suburbs the Republican McCain was a POW in Vietnam for five years Nick Cave says let love in Robert Mitchum as a wandering detective in a B&W 40s movie said he knew she would be there that she knew that he knew and that it would be like a coincidence when they met that night in that Mexican bar beware of your love as the gods can be jealous and strike down who you love more than them Prophecy Trumpet the Nicolations may have been gnostics internet porn filter for families T.S. Eliot writes humanity can only handle so much reality that other wheel the cross why have you abandoned me? It is finished the Son had nowhere to rest his weary head only a foxhole to follow heaven's compass human forgiveness the source of hope the gods affect us in strange ways and so we do strange things dispirited Aboriginal youths dancing traditionally in a backyard the shopping mall car park is the modern world to keep on an even keel the Antarctic explorer Shackleton says the greatest human failure is not to explore at all-'

"GOD *MUST PROVE* HIS EXISTENCE *TO ME* EVERYDAY!"

'...to be buoyant stoic Aurelius says we contain particles of Zeus which he gave to us: mind and reason when we can identify how others have expressed universal aspects of the human condition especially in a crisis mountains produce scholars says Cervantes it was believed to take your eyes off the gods was to be in danger be careful when cleaning silver as mishandling causes cracks over time don't wrap it in newspaper as the print will etch on the ornament the English see themselves as the heirs of Ancient Greece and Rome Tendulkar scores man-of-the-match 1st ODI century in Australia carries bat in emphatic finals win mortgage stress pirates in the South Seas towed drifting Vietnamese refugee boats to coastline they were going to rob them but pity overtook these merchants of death there is a long starry bar in the centre of the Milky Way twirling our spiral galaxy a handle bar for angels the world of tomorrow a mushroom cloud over a desert Dirty Harry asks do you feel lucky petrol always best to buy on Tuesday the Man Mundine had a tough fight against a part-time taxi driver Sir Humphrey Davy instigated the invention of gauze safety lamp in the early 1800s desired no profit from his invention via a patent was far more satisfied by the fact his safety lamp would save lives especially

those of miners a noble soul to paraphrase him his sole object was to serve the cause of humanity and if he succeeded he was amply rewarded in the gratification of having done so Australian cricketers have refined the art of sledging chain stores can in the end be more expensive to buy from Susannah Place at Rocks has a video talking of bubonic plague in Sydney in 1900s Jack Mundey's green bans save the Rocks in 70s first act of urban environmentalism more people converting to electric cars Patrick White seemed to have both a contemptuous and compassionate view of Australian suburbia the universe provides the English Premier League no longer on free-to-air television lucky I am with AAMI Belarus Free Theatre samba music rises above the ghettoes the poor feel dislocated Petra Kelly was right Dr David Kelly weapons of mass destruction not found that dead priest in Karamazov the pure soul of a dead Tibetan monk stopping the decay of his corpse power must keep flowing or it will harden and corrupt as Augustus from Emerald City points out is my bed burning Thomas Effing? The moon is a palace television as oracle thick barked trees are more insulated from fire school bus crash shows seatbelts are needed foods with a low glucose index help weight control two faced Juno the Gospel according to Luke 12 the truth shall be found out no matter how secret do not fear what will happen to the body but what could happen to the soul guy standing dressed as a clown outside the service station holding a carwash placard an old dumb-deaf man in Newtown showing a poem to people walking by the Archibald Packers Prize an 86 year old Danish Nazi in Germany to be convicted for the 1943 murder of an anti-Nazi journalist the Duckworth-Lewis system for rained out cricket matches the star of the British comedy Office mistaken for de Niro by elderly Swedish tourists and is chased down street Steven Speilberg resigns as artistic director of Beijing Olympics due to China's Darfor policy music too loud for old rock n'roller in next-door hotel room Iraq war costing $US3 trillion war profiteering escalates Kissinger wins Nobel Peace Prize killer electric blankets Russians treat their writers as more important than their leaders treating them as their guiding spiritual fathers 1,000,000 people displaced by Beijing Olympics CCTV Iraqi interpreters betrayed by the coalition women Spitfire pilots a friendship of hurried conversations during chance meetings Aboriginal children still being taken away in underhanded way by young middle-class caseworkers thoughtlessly making decisions based on middle-class life expectations Kalahari bushmen an advertisement with the Sydney orchestra with VB bottles Australian cricketers will not tour Pakistan humidity is water vapour in air during the Argentinean economic crisis some people's lives totally collapsed others showed resilience and stamina and developed community support for each other adapted grew vegetables pulled through cowboy diplomacy the urgency of now as Martin Luther King proclaimed bag snatch at Marrickville Woolworths Lufthansa passenger jet buffeted by strong winds while landing the digital highway banksia only open pods in bushfires let out seeds to reproduce thus sleeper buds come to life only after fire rhapsody is a word which refers to the ancient song stitchers who wandered around singing and reciting the many parts of Homer's epic poetry which they would put together co-creator Gary Gygax of original fantasy game Dungeons and Dragons liked hearing from fans paper money began in 11th century China VC steal mines laid down to kill them in Stalingrad some German and Russian platoons swapped cigarettes and liquids from one floor of war-torn building to another in hour break during intense house to house fighting fortunes turn in the twinkle of an eye Richard Widmark as a mercenary Yanqui cowboy watches Charles Bronson as a revolutionary guerrilla calmly shoot Mexican FDR troop prisoners who had killed defenceless women and children they pleaded for mercy while goaded out by Bronson one by one from a prison pen who matter-of-factly tells Widmark it is always best to really hate such men when you kill them we must distinguish illusion from reality petrol collusion morality is a psychological counterpoint to our senses it is embryonic at birth and develops thank the love of your mother an indecisive Hamlet tarries the tortured mixture of guilt and loyalty of Lawrence of Arabia-'

"NOTHING IS GOOD OR BAD BUT THINKING MAKES IT SO!"

'Mermaid party in NY the rap singer said on FBI that those in the main society group would never feel or understand the prejudices conveyed to those in the minorities and so are always surprised when there is a violent escalation in tensions Machiavelli's morality is based on power storm the Bastille! *Jangaweed* means devil on horseback neo-con foreign policy in the Middle East is a geo-political extension of the Monroe Doctrine in which the U.S's backyard Latin America has always been subjugated to serve its interests you often can't win in this life just roll along with the defeats and make the most of it rise to the occasion big business sells products on the cheap to run the small competition out of town then puts the prices back up the brain in all its complexity mysteriously forms

in the embryo to gather shape it is time for new stories in our lives I am a temple I AM unique Creation of Adam by Michelangelo Eve residing by the bosom of the Lord the human intellect resides within the love of God our mind meant to be a right reflection of the divine in this Sistine fresco I too see the outline of a human brain in this anatomy of the birth of the human soul the end the beginning the Alpha and the Omega when so many millions do not reach their potential become just human grist alas wasted lives as chaff to the winds of history arise above the mundane enter into the zone of life to fight battles suffer but also achieve glorious victories I have read that we reach Mt. Olympus via the star celebrity supermarket magazine we may have wisdom when we realise that there is little that we really know and admit that they we don't know are no longer sure ever changing emotional contours bitter disappointments other undue mystifying circumstances may lead us to the other side of a river we thought we knew so well to discover a totally new unknown world to experience new surprises unexpected events etcetera to be blown away by life to encourage us to keep living Warhol said he was deeply superficial the snake with its cyclical shedding of skin is a regenerative being as Northrop Frye points out in Matthew 10:16 the serpent represents wisdom in Numbers 21:19 is snake as healer as in Ancient Greek mythology Pluto the god of the Underworld has his planet downgraded to dwarf status Cat Stevens grew up in a restaurant named Moulin Rouge his insightful songs came after nearly dying in hospital from tuberculosis the United states liberated Western Europe while persecuting Latin America the black lawyer said he just wanted to get a black girl into school and didn't realise he would help jumpstart a whole civil rights movement police dogs in Dusseldorf to be given blue plastic fibre shoes to wear the RBA raises interest rates again Russia wants respect so has bombers back in the sky to live a life unresolved a whisk of a fine line between genius and madness on SBS on new years eve there is always that comical B&W film of a very charming fumbling old waiter serving dinner to an eccentric aristocratic lady Australia invited to observe G8 by Japan flamenco says I exist George Burns said too bad all the people who know how to run the country are driving taxi cabs and cutting hair cigarette butt litter in Sydney CBD on the rise supposed to be the N°1 world tourist destination American/Soviet generals in the Cold War did not understand the significance of metal objects in outer space until satellites were actually up there monkeys threaten Buddhism's oldest holiest tree Sri Lankan double hat-trick schoolboys lift up a friend with their fingers an exercise in mind over matter Prophecy News Watch NY Philharmonic in North Korea cleanskin wine four French tourists killed by terrorists in west Africa strange but true Chinese woman gives birth to boy while trapped on snow covered bus for three days he will be named Born In Crowd a PNG woman accused of sorcery gives birth to a baby while trying to free herself hanging from a tree man killed in fairy cake contest a blind man sees with help of son's tooth set in eye socket with lens inside it housing shortage crisis no rental accommodation available people desperate ever higher interest rates the homeless increase Palestinian twins next to Israeli babes in same hospital an island of sanity Bangladesh ferry death toll rises N.Z. had faced the prospect of an economic blockade when it refused to let in U.S. nuclear warships a ban on foreign cartoons in China if for nothing else the Soviet Union will be remembered in a 1,000 years for launching the 1st man Yuri Gugarin into space Dr Who in Paris goes to visit Leonardo no more love dolls you can't serve both what is Holy and what is Material that long scarf too long a long time ago Mr. Tom Baker time-lord a community driver who after so many years quit as an ambulance officer seeing too much tragedy earning so little money a suffering mind can shutdown the conveyer of warm water to British isles that is the Gulfstream will stop Greenland's freshwater ice melting causing Europe to freeze Wilde's Reading Gaol Dame Edna Everage Simon Katich the Sheffield Shield a wise Zulu chieftan observed don't pen your enemy in but always make sure there is a way out for them to escape otherwise in the long run you will have to deal with their sons who will come after you to righteously avenge the ruthless killing of all their fathers Norman Mailer writes of a Japanese soldier's face of fear and disbelief caught by an American searchlight seconds before his death Warhol's 15 minutes of fame for all of us the Mona Lisa with a moustache De Profundis Oscar Wilde said we can know too much we kill what we love with a kiss love may kill us we all live in the gutter from where some of us look at the stars-'

"EVERYDAY THERE *IS* YET ONE MORE BIZARRE NEWS ITEM." Eyes glaring. "TO BE DRIVEN INSANE!" Eyes water. "IT *IS* SO HARD TO STAY ON THE RIGHT PATH! HAVE A TAKE-NO-PRISONERS ATTITUDE TO LIFE TO GET BY! BLACK HUMOUR *IS* LIFE'S TONIC! I DESIRE AUTHENTICITY!" Cat grabs his head**.**

'…Kienholzs Statue of Liberty holding up a red neon sign IT'S NOT MY FAULT insight versus hindsight Genesis the Gospel of John in the beginning was the Word & the light overcame the darkness where is the universe? Am I the universe? Are you the universe?'

A final, questioning look. "IS EVERY HUMAN BEING A MULTI-VERSE?"A bottle of Cabernet Savignon is uncorked.

The Life of the Party isn't Money

"WHY SO DOWNCAST OH MY SOUL…?" In the other hand a NIV New Testament is opened and placed on top of the video which serves as a mobile pulpit. Matthew 6: 19-24: *"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth & rust destroy, & where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth & rust do not destroy, & where thieves do not break in & steal-"* The video pulpit is thumped. "WE *CANNOT SERVE* BOTH GOD AND *MONEY*!" *'Money must serve us…'* Continuing the reading: *" -For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes & bad, your whole body will be full of darkness."* Another thump. "IF THEN THE LIGHT WITHIN YOU IS DARKNESS, HOW GREAT IS THAT DARKNESS!"

"LAUGH-IN!" Michael. Lisa. Hysterical. Joyous. Belly laughing. Both kneeling beside each other to do a little Mexican wave between themselves; kow-towing with arms outstretched in praise of their oracle friend."*You C-A-T* are God's gift to Him! Praise To *He* Whose Name Cannot Be Said By Human Lips! Eternal Truth! The Journey of Life!"

Another thump. "To *repeat*…" The oracle whispers: *"No-one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one & love the other, or he will be devoted to the one & despise the other. You cannot serve both God & Money."* The Holy Word is closed. A glance at Lisa. Another 'holy word' is suddenly picked up. Peter Carmenzind by Herman Hesse To work as a mental circuit break. A 'touchstone' in which to consider that less often spoke about but inescapable reality: *"…Once again I saw my mother dying, watched the sober labour of death on her face, ennobling it. Death appeared harsh yet as strong & as kind as a father fetches a lost child'.*

Now I realized that death is our wise & good brother who knows the right hour & on whom we can depend. I began to understand that suffering & disappointments & melancholy are there not to vex us or cheapen us or deprive us of our dignity but-"

The oracle raises his voice: *"- TO MATURE AND TRANSFIGURE US."* This book is also shut. Other obtuse mental distractions oscillate inside the oracle's mind. A return to previous condemnations. "YET HOLY DEATH! OH HOLY JESUS! I SEE FOR MANY OF US NO MATURITY IN THIS 'HOLIER THAN THOU' SELF RIGHTEOUS CORPORATE AGE!"

"IT'S *MY* PARTY! *I'LL* CRY *IF* I WANT TO!" defiantly screams Lisa.

Rings of Fire!

A thoughtful Cat; almost looking crestfallen - his mind twirling.

'We wake up…and live…through the day…with our delusions. Yet…there can be…a perpetual…sadness…to feel…every misfortune…that is encountered…is an injustice…that pang…in the heart…brought on…from an unfair circumstance…we desire…counterbalance…by way…of some worthwhile experience…that will bring…a return…to our mental equilibrium; (oh to repeat 'a good day'…to be included in it if we have missed out…) for many of us…see ourselves as good, who treat…thy neighbour…as

thyself…as equal…without desire…for authority…over anyone else…to seek out…an organic…thriving morality, ever changing in differing contexts, yet…where we…remain…as equals…beyond the structures…and chains…that are self-imposed…or manacled…upon us, in which we may hinder…and suffocate…our hearts; yes…we strive…to comprehend…and secure…an underlying, stable…foundation…in our human reason…that goes beyond the fluctuating honest mistakes…and misjudgements…which we make each day, to weather…any psychological destabilisation…to essentially recognise a life-long philosophical direction…which involves a sort of absolute 'unseen' code of values…which we individually 'see'…in what we perceive…to be eternal, long-lasting (rather than temporal, shallow) benefits in our lives …and in the lives…of others…that works to a personal…and common good. For there is…already too much ill-human judgement…misconceived…mental disintegration.'

Pause for a refreshing gin and tonic.

'*Yes, there is…human belief…but what…can matter…is human action. To act…out of a mutual respect…for each other…and the many differences…between us…to work at arriving…at the full potential…of each person. To care. When another person…falls – or suffers – we may go down…with them. Mutual support. To share…in one's human cost…so as to get up…together. No more depression-'*

The philosopher is now more animated; dances a little ditty. "Oh there will be enough rest for all of us when we are dead. The livin' must arise from their 'rest' and keep on living! The Devil has his ways with us but the LORD has better ways! It is a great sin to deny the LORD his lovin' victory! Damn those who desire a self-gratifying power; who wish upon other people only the end of days for the obtaining of their malicious aims! NO SLOUCHING ON THE COUCH! MAN THE TORPEDOES! ALL HANDS ON DECK! DO NOT BE DOWNCAST OH MY SEARCHING SOUL! LET JUSTICE PREVAIL!"

'It was the great Johnny Cash who chose to sing to the prisoners of St.Quentin jail...Yes..we are mortal...we are hurt...everyone .will be gone...in the end...a world of dust...sing Hurt...yes...what will I become?'

"YES! LET US ALL LIVE LIFE TO OUR FULL POTENTIAL! *STOKE* - IN EVERYONE OF US - *THOSE RINGS OF FIRE*!"

Golgotha

"A BLACK SUN!" The preacher again looks maddenly at the surroundings around him. "The unchecked doctrine of prosperity is a blasphemy!"

Mad Scientist

Cat stands like a madman in front of his Roy Lichenstein Pop Art poster: a headline above an old craggy face with manic eyes staring out - duplicating Cat's own frenzied bug eyes – that reads:

"WHAT? WHY DID YOU ASK THAT? WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT MY IMAGE DUPLICATOR?"

A soft drink bottle thrust-fully held up. "WHOOSH! BLAST OFF! FANTA-SY!" *'Our minds are the fodder of this western celluloid world! Our brains are drained of real life as we sit hypnotised in front of our television sets like doomed kangaroos in front of headlights! I sense streams of thoughts shaped like barcodes in my head! As the DNA helix provides the script to our cells so they may duplicate within us; we have on our television sets other scripts which we may duplicate in our lives. '*

"The picture tube: our image duplicators!" Cat goes over to his goldfish bowl. Madly screams. "EVIL EYES!" Eyes his old sci-fi posters.

'We are like those poor tragic souls, screaming in sheer dread, thriving, lying, netted in those fish traps, under those towering Martian tripods, waiting to be picked! Their bodies drained of blood! Brutal carnivorous beings! The inhumanity! Our technological advances do not display some heightened sense of a superior moral integrity! The ancient philosophers of centuries past would be aghast. Would recognise the downfall of their own blood drenched empires in the everyday display of the cultural barbarities of this present age.'

A rueful look at his world atlas. "WORLDS OF STARVATION!"

'Starve or be starved! Cannibals run this planet! We see 'the fruits' of 'their labour' in the overwhelming exploitation of billions! In the never ceasing massacres! So many lambs! ALL to the slaughter!'

A grimace. 'To be sliced!'

A smile. "QUIXOTE'S WINDMILLS OF THE GIANTS ARE TODAY THE HELICOPTER BLADES OF ANOTHER COLOSSUS!"

The smile lingers.

'Some would call what I say: outrageous-'

A frown.

'Where is the 'superconsciousness' that Thomas Manne aspires us to magically reach? We are dumb animals waiting to see shopping ads on digital TV sets! We fill our houses with refuse to keep 'it' all going!'

A shaking chin.

'This obscene, butchering system! Hans Castorp - Manne's young, hopeful, naïve hero came down from the alpine mountain to be butchered with so many other frightened men in the trenches! Charred! So many…churned…human beings…like blood corpuscles indifferently wiped out by disease. Greed! Hatred! Jealousy! Gluttony! The seven deadly sins – our sickness! Oh to have love mount the magic mountain top!'

A sudden quizzical look at the night sky.

'Moonstruck! FULL MOON MADNESS! Looking at shadows…'

"F/PHANTA-SMA!" Heavy breathing followed by a soft whisper.

'An old Greek man once sung, while playing his violin, that his mind became like water…he looked everywhere for a lost, loved one…I am only an instrument that will die, love lives…'

A maddening look. "MY LIFE IS NOT A COMMODITY!" A fist suddenly slams a wall.

'Oh to have peace in our throbbing hearts…tranquillity…a blood…red…peace! The command to love came down from that other spiritual…desert mountain…and is always butchered! Moses, Manne, us hope for LOVE! To love one another! As we love ourselves! Our only salvation! Saving. Amazing grace! Yet…'

Palms outstretched. "There is blood on our hands! If my limbs! My eyes! My cerebral cortex! Offend Thee. Cut it off! HOLY CENSOR! CUT IT OUT! The Thing! IT CAME FROM OUTER SPACE! Look out! Beware! Watch the skies!" Shaking hands. "OH JESUS CHRIST! Yet! He too – a lamb! OH HOLY JESUS! Oh - to duplicate the Second Coming! Trilobites to spaceships!" Cover tearful eyes. "Fodder…ALL IS FODDER!"

Osiris

'Oh God! Our minds are empty bowls that we fill up with what is putrid! We turn the whole world into a shopping centre! Look what's now on the TV! Seinfeld, Elaine and

Jerry (where is Kramer?) are in a Chinese restaurant waiting for a table, when nothing happens, we are nothing!'

"Nirvana is emptiness!"

'I've seen a street urchin lapping up the water in a baptistery font. There is your river of life! I have seen the Tiber that river of life to the Eternal City from a park at dawn where I slept beside a water tank with the other gypsies of the street! I have seen the sun the giver of life to our world worshipped by the primal multitude while at the Druids' stones.'

Cat rubs on his temples some Anti-Bad Mood Massage Oil. Glances at the label of the bottle with its pair of theatrical laughing and crying mask-faces. "The metaphysics of existence!" Slams the top of his old fridge with his fist. "Thank goodness for the Glebe fridge man!" He points at Michael. "Brother sun!" Points at Lisa. "Sister moon!" At an icon by Gregor. "St. Francis! I have seen the poor, the unemployed, the disabled and the infirm lined up like the damned or yelling abuse - despised and betrayed - in social security. I have helped the charities to feed the poor, the homeless in the backstreets of Woolloomooloo. There the Minotaurs sulk…we must go out, defeat them to delay death, provide a chance to purify the heart so - like Theseus - save ourselves!"

"Save *this* city!" exclaims Michael. "Give us some Status Quo! I saw them at the Hordern Pavillion! The concert was sold out but I got in with a pass out I found on the ground! I then went back out and got two new ones off two different door people so a schoolmate could also get in for free! AC DC was the support band!"

'Hercules was given the Twelve Labours to clear the frontiers for a new world. Like Tempe, that northern gorge, (the original site for the stand that happened at Themopylae), that was considered by the Ancient Greeks to be the penultimate border point between 'civilization' and 'barbarism'. Yet, barbarity is also there within the supposed bounds of human civility: Socrates was granted an opportunity to review his fate (for there was always a stay-of-execution while the annual mission to Delos - to give thanks to Apollo for Theseus's victory - was away); yet, a recently sacked Athens still performed the criminal act of scape-goating this thinker. The Athenians debased democracy through the Delean League in their ultimately failed quest for a lasting empire.'

"Who's afraid of the BIG BAD WOLF!" screams Cat. "He'll HUFF and he'll PUFF and-" A loud handclap. "KABOOM!"

'Socrates harangued his fellow countrymen for their political hypocrisy who in turn brutally turned on him. Yet, his wisdom would lead to an empire of the human mind. Athens would redeem herself by becoming a great centre of learning for the world. Consider, as well, the humanity of that balding, long haired, bearded beat poet Ginsberg - accused by the American Empire of also corrupting the young; who tried to calm America's youth and police force by sitting cross-legged and chanting OM as the violence of the 1968 Chicago Democratic Party Convention riots occurred around him - I learnt of his death when I bought my City Lights pocket copy of Howl in Amsterdam - who said in his Uluru poem that it only takes a raindrop to begin the universe; when the raindrop dies worlds come to an end!'

"White Man's Uluru wants the top of the Rock sliced off! So 747s can land! Wants the inside carved out for shops! Pockmarked with double glazed hotel windows; with escalators for the damned tourists who still want to climb it! Many will scream at the end of the world!" Cat drinks.

'All matter is made of buzzing regimes of subatomic particles. It is hopeless to deal with the myriad infinities of this universe. Consider we may only be some cosmic froth amid a trillion-trillion multi-universes!'

Cat's beer froths.

'Captain Kirk! I AM an instrument of the gods! The spirits; the spirit of the age speaks through me! The end times! Hal Lindsay gives us The Late Great Planet Earth! The Discovery Channel. A dream set on the spaceship Discovery:

"HAL…"

"…yes…Lisa…?"

"The President is Gog."

"…it is he who leads Magog? Lisa…my memory…banks…Megiddo…Armageddon…the…Don…river…daiseeeecutters…daisieee s-"

I saw the unrighteous as outcasts in the thousands on Enmore Road as the Rolling Stones played to the elect in the Enmore Theatre! A three-piece Trinity playing Hungarian gypsy music at the old pre-renovated Gladstone Hotel in Marion Street! Gough Whitlam reading out aloud in the Great Hall Dante's portrayal of Brutus and Cassius suffering in the mouth of Lucifer on Easter Sunday! In the Eternal City of emperors I shared a cheap room with an undercover neo-Nazi major who had long straggly hair; who always wore a leather coat; who proudly had a photo of Hitler taken by his grandfather; who said he was in Rome 'on business'; who said the Turks in West Germany would be scape-goated as the 'new Jews' to initiate a far right unification of the two Germanys. The young 'major' was moody: "Not Marx!" he shouted. "I said I like MARS bars!"

Democracy to be tampered.

'Tampered' at the Bat & Ball Hotel at 5 pm on Saturdays.

Tampa.

A Florida nurse who I met at the Stonehenge rock festival which gave star billing to Hawkwind had given me a dry flower which was in between two small rectangles of amber glass sealed with leadlight. She was stationed on an U.S. Air Force base near Brackley outside Oxford where they had practise drills wearing gas masks just in case there was a Soviet nuclear attack, she once asked me: 'Who is Jesus?' That High Court Judge who picked me up on the way to Hastings - who always when he returned from overseas made a beeline to a country pub that had his favourite local beer - told me that he had fought in North Africa and was a paratrooper on D-Day. He told me that many of his fellow high-ranking officers treated human life as cheap. A veteran smashes up his precious toy soldier collection when asked by his grandson what is war like. Onward Christian soldiers! Marching as to war! A Salvation Army band with the homeless in Central Park! The Lady of Snows soup kitchen feeding the HOMELESS! Yet our bodies are tents! To have new homes! The Rapture WILL come! We will be new creatures! Everything will stay fresh! To encase our souls in spiritual tupperware! Time will be defeated! To see all that has been in your life and all that is in the universe at the same time! A burly poorly dressed migrant man with a sun-baked face and with a vinyl trolley at the Newtown Festival endlessly cutting out in one minute silhouettes of people's faces on black art paper at two dollars a go to make a living.'

"Sophocles inquired through Odysseus in a play called Ajax if all living things are merely phantoms shadows of nothing!"

'It may come to pass that the immortality of the soul will be verified through the analysis of some radiograph soundwave; much the same way the x-ray art of Arnhem Land records the internal organs; these unseen body parts keep alive the beings in which they are contained, proving their existence. The traditional owners have been amongst the first to understand that there are realities the eye cannot see. Humanity's advances must be seen in the context of human mortality. Although we aspire to put on the armour of Achilles we must be prepared to suffer the fate of Patrochulus – who died in battle

wearing it. The Ancient Egyptians stated that Atlantis existed near narrow straits. Troy. The Women of Troy at the Annandale Hotel. The Hollywood Hotel next!'

"A shadow!" Cat looks drunkenly at Lisa. "At least people can stay alive in my mind!"

'Yes…Super 8 film nights at the Hollywood…to be inflicted with an imperial madness…Roman soldiers picking up English seashells for their demented Emperor…unrequited desire…the love song of Prufrock-'

"Let us go then you and I when the evening is spread out against the sky like a patient etherised on a table!"

"Will you miss me when you're sober?" The Deborah Conway lyrics are recited by Lisa with a soft, chilled voice; this stalwart performer had become Lisa's favourite since seeing her recently at a free The Rocks night market concert. More lyrics are recalled: *"You might remember me when you're not overcome, with bloodshot eyes and breath stinking of rum…With you're whiskey tears and feeling close to numb…That you'll give me a thought, well I was taught, the hard way not to fall for drunks like you, experience has torn my brain in two…and I don't think so clearly now…but I wonder how I let you get away with murder all the time, it must have been some crazy state of mind…it's only the beginning-"*

"On invisible wings, even fools can fly, for dreams are made of water, and clouds are made of sky!" Cat has interrupted Lisa with this ditty that is by a cabaret group called Mikelangelo and the Black Sea Gentlemen that included Rubber Man who could fold his body and limbs like Gumby.

"Hey Cat," smirks Michael, "that from that gypsy movie Black *CAT* White *CAT* or Underground?"

Cat glares at Michael, then stares back at Lisa. "We live alone, we die alone!"

"The Lone Ranger!" screams Michael. "TONTO!"

Cat looks back in anger at his Greek Cypriot friend. Puts on Allegri's Miserere.

'Odysseus the lone wanderer in the sea wearing his Greek fisherman's cap. The straits of the Hellespont – this geographic topography of the east - are the templates to our western mindset. With the universal human geography of the birth canal the flow of water through this eternal passage has affected the flow of history. The Great Flood that cleansed the world occurred here. It has been claimed that settlements have been discovered on the floor of the Black Sea; through an opening of the Bosphorous the water levels rose. The cultural shock from the huge displacement of refugees that followed this 'flood of heaven' stays in our collective memory. This canal brought on the birth of a new world from what seemed an end-of-the-world catastrophe. The to and fro of human history…of civilisations…can be equated with the rise and fall of the tides of the sea.'

"Yet we are all part of a great river going somewhere." coolly remarks Cat. He crawls on the floor on all fours. The music runs through Handel's funerary Sarabande in D Minor, Marcello's Concerto in D minor, Pachelbel's Canon in D, Vivaldi's Gloria in excelsis Deo followed by a glorious rendition of Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 with the Ode to Joy.

'It was Arthur Miller, the great playwright who said these words. In an act of cosmic miscarriage Osiris was murderously cut-up. Yet this god of the river was then lovingly restored to represent the miraculous renewal of all life. The Nile is a mighty waterway and the Ancient Greeks learnt much from a great river nation. This knowledge has helped to form the foundation of what is still good in 'civilisation'; our modern culture is a by-product of a river that annually resurrected the land.We form a small part of the whole of this great river-'

"How-how-how much time *is* left Mr-Mr Wolf?" Michael mimics Porky Pig. *'Two men in a leaking boat!*'

Next time you get to the stereo put on The Cruel Sea!" He laughs. "Remember when we'd all go to New Year's Eve beach parties down at Green Hills and watch the sun rise over the waves at dawn?!" More laughter. "In Darlinghurst. I seen him. Brooding. Big. Quiet. GIGANTOR. Bigger than BIG! Saw him at the Mali! Tropfest! Performing at the Metro. *TEX*AN COWBOY!" A guffaw. "COW-BOY CAT! LET'S GO TO THE EL RANCHO IN NORTH RYDE!"

Rebels With No Cause

"We can all be rebels Cat!" yells Michael. "All we have to do is buy for ourselves some corporate sports gear! REBEL caps! NIKE shoes!"

"Rebels without a cause friend – except to service our egos; our IDS-"

"The Wizard of Id! That's you CAT!" Laughter. Hysterical. "Remember when we saw Alice Cooper at the airport? Leaving in his limousine! We yelled: SCHOOL'S OUT! FOR-EV-ER!"

Performance Space

"MARINE BOY! CREATURE FEATURE! ASTRO BOY ON HIS WAY!" Michael is hysterically overcome with boyish joy; he stomps around the flat. "SQUEAK! SQUEAK!"

"Let's walk the dog!" Cat starts to do several yo-yo tricks on his knees.

'The incorporeal molecular halos of my consciousness spread apart. I must bring them together for I do not want each single thought which forms mysteriously from different points in my brain to enter into some new Babylonian exile…I will not let the world make me mad as Lycurgus went mad…as the Assyrian king went mad…I want to have one mind for one God…Father, Son and Holy Spirit can quantum mechanics solve the mystery of the Trinity? My Three Sons. In this series the star actor Fred McCallum had all the kitchen scenes shot in one day then spliced into each episode…could Einstein's Theory of Relativity explain the interface between the singularity of the speed of light and the multi-dimensions of television time…? Yes…I saw The Absent Minded Professor on video with Lisa and Melissa…there was Fred McCallum in his flying flubber car attacking Washington!'

"The LASSOO!"

"You're God's cowboy Cat!" cries out Lisa. "You *are* GREAT!" She furiously peddles on an exercise bicycle; taking off her top because of the sweating heat to reveal her skinny torso and white bra; looking away from Cat gyrating with his yo-yo to now be attracted by a bright orange poster of a poetry night that had been at Webba's Café in Stanmore; viewing some small-theatre posters: The Performance Space. Milk Crate Theatre. Nimrod Theatre. Shopfront Theatre. The Promised Woman by Theodore Patrikareas at Sidetrack Theatre. Newtown Theatre. P.A.C.T Theatre. A Fellini like poster of a play called: Death's Waiting Room with references to car crashes; cancer deaths; lightning strikes at passers-by. Lisa reads along the bottom: FREAKS OF NATURE! Laughs. Stares at Cat."This flat is your great PERFORMANCE SPACE! Your cabaret!"

Cat raises his hands. "BERLIN! DECADENCE! JUST LIKE THE VIETNAM YEARS!" Another mad look. "EXTENDING THE OLD FRONTIERS!"

Michael laughs. "*You* should have played Cat in All Quiet on the Western Front – not Ernest Borgnine!"

"OUR GREAT *UNCLE* CAT!" exclaims Lisa. More hilarity. "*Here's* the theatre of life not somewhere like…like…Surry Hills." Lisa giggles. "Strawberry Fields! Forever! We all live in a yellow submarine! Oh Cat- "

'Yoko Ono manufacturing her coffins of the indigenous victims of New World massacres with trees of regeneration growing from them. Fluxus. What is human progress? We see through a glass darkly!'

Cat waters a rose in a measuring cylinder.

'Here is a symbol of revolution for Joseph Beuys.'

The rose is smelt.

'Multiple objects for multiple lives! What is for certain with our mundane formula-driven 'creative acts' is the compilation of cliché on top of cliché. 'Tie your kangaroo down sport! says Rolf Harris as he walks with three legs and looks down the barrel of a television camera to make you feel like the most valuable person on earth.'

Eyes closed.

'What else is on the television?'

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THAT'S RIGHT! PHONE RIGHT TO GET AN EXTRA CUTLERY SET FOR FREE!

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'THAT'S ALL FOLKS! HURRY ON DOWN TO HARDEES WHERE THE BURGERS ARE CHARCO-BROILED! FOOTBALLS! MEAT PIES! KANGAROOS & HOLDEN CARS! DAIHATSU NOT SO SQUEEZY! ONE DAY YOU'RE GOING TO GET CAUGHT WITH YOUR PANTS DOWN! RING NOW THE NEXT TEN MINUTES TO GET HALF-PRICE! SATISFACTION GUARANTEED MONEY-BACK GUARANTEE! BUY ONE RECORD IN THE NEXT TEN MINUTES GET ANOTHER ONE FREE! IT'S BACK TO SCHOOL AT LOWES GORDY! GREGORIAN CHANTING! TOUCHDOWN! FOR CRYING LOUD! BEAM ME UP SCOTTIE! GO FORWARD! IN FORM! ON SONG! BUSH TELEGRAPH! BACKYARD FOOTIE! LIFE! BE IN IT! NORMIE! NORM PROVAN'S FURNITURE STORES! THE GUYS! PUT A TIGER IN THE TANK! THE FLICKMAN! ONE FLICK & THEY'RE GONE! YOU ARE A VALUED CUSTOMER! SUPERSIZE ME! KIT KAT HAVE A BREAK! KEEP UP WITH THE JONESES! WHAT ARE THE STARS DOING NOW! BE A REBEL! GET A BETTER DEAL! FOR CRYING OUT LOUD! THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH! AT OUR HARDWARE STORES WE KEEP OUR CUSTOMERS HAPPY OTHERWISE THEY WON'T COME BACK! FLASHBACK! WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP SCRABBLE! SAFE AS THE BANK OF ENGLAND! PUT ANOTHER SHRIMP ON BARBIE! SIR PUT THE PAINTBRUSH IN A PLASTIC BAG SO IT WILL STAY MOIST WHILE YOU HAVE A BREAK! DRAMA! SUSPENSE! MYSTERY! RADICAL BREAKTHROUGH PIONEERING TELEVISION FOR YOUR SATURDAY NIGHT! THE CUSTOMER IS ALWAYS RIGHT! WE ASK THE STUDIO AUDIENCE TO PUT UP THE CAPSICUM OR THE TOMATO CARD FOR THE BEST REC OF THEIR CHOICE!MIDDAY MOVIE! COUCH SLOUCH! IT'S A BEAUTIFUL DAY! SPECIAL PRICE! YOU SMASH 'EM! WE FIX 'EM! MATE AGAINST MATE! STATE AGAINST STATE! CITY VS COUNTRY! KAROAKE! EUROVISION! A NIP IN THE AIR! EL NINO! FOR THE PUBLIC RECORD! KEEP YOUR HEAD DOWN! EYES ON THE POSTS! EL MASRI MAGIC! ZOOM! ZOOM! ZOOM! OH WHAT A FEELING! NEVER BEFORE SEEN FOOTAGE! DON'T COME RAW PRAWN! ETERNAL VIGILANCE! AMOCO! HURRY! SALE ONLY THIS WEEKEND! MURPHY'S LAW! THE PRICE IS RIGHT! WINNERS ARE GRINNERS! THORPEDOE! IT'S THE BEST WHITENER TOOTHPASTE? WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU DON'T SLEEP? FLASHBACK! DAME EDNA EVERAGE! HAVE FAITH IN PEOPLE POWER! ALL CREDIT CARDS WELCOME! WIN A WEEKEND AWAY TRIP TO THE GOLD COAST! ALL EXPENSES PAID! I SAW THIS GRAFFITTI THAT SAID FORCEFEED THE SKULL DIM SIMS! TALL POPPY SYNDROME! THE WORKERS UNITED WILL NEVER BE DEFEATED! REBEL SHOES! HOPE SPRINGS ETERNAL! WRIGLEY'S SPEARMINT! HAWKEYE! LINE BALL DECISION WORD-OF-MOUTH! THE BALL IS MISSING OFF STUMP BY A GOOD SIX INCHES! HIDDEN CAMERA. MAKE MY DAY! WATCH THE WAY YOU SPEAK! RING NOW & MEET YOUR PERFECT PARTNER! THAT SPECIAL SOMEONE! WHY WAIT!PICK UP THE PHONE! THE LOGIES! CHUM! GOOD MORNING AUSTRALIA! MOONFACE! NUMBER ONE PROTECTION! THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME! ONWARD RODE THE SIX HUNDRED! THE TURKS IN THE THIN RED LINE SAVED BRITISH AGAINST THE RUSSIANS! THE SOLDIER WHO SPOKE AGAINST

OTHER SOLDIER NOT INVOLVED IN MY LAI MASSACRE WAS NAMED BUNNING! FLASH DRIVES! SHOP HERE ALL YOUR GROCERIES BUY $30 & SAVE 4 CENTS ON PETROL! SHOW YOUR DOCKET! GOLDEN GLOBE AWARDS! FLY BUYS! SAVE! SAVE! SAVE! RED SAFETY MATCHES! HEALTH FOODS! HIROSHIMA! THE TRUMAN SHOW! THE MOTHER OF ALL BATTLES! A GREAT FOUR! ONLY $19.99! LOTS OF KNOWING LOOKS FROM TV CHARACTERS TALKING LITTLE & LOOKING WORLDY! NEW RESORTS WITH OLD COMMUNITY STYLE WAY OF LIVING! ETHNIC HATRED ON RISE IN RUSSIA! COMMUNITY TENSIONS WILL BE ERASED IF WE ALL JUST SING THE NATIONAL ANTHEM! PLAY TENNIS! GOLF! B&D ROLLER DOOR! SURVIVOR GUATAMALA! CULTURE PIMPS! REVOLUTIONARY OPTIC FIBRE CABLE! TELE-SURGERY FROM OVER A HUNDRED KILOMETRES AWAY! HAPPY HOUR! ALL SCHOONERS ONLY $2.50! FROM 2 PM TO 6 PM! DAVID BOON CRICKET TALKING DOLL! PHAR LAP A NATIONAL TREASURE! BOONIE FOR PM! THE NEW OPEN CHAMPION! ACE! BREAK POINT! IT'S STOSER'S P.B TO STOICALLY TAKE HINGIS TO A TIE BREAK IN THE SECOND SET! THERE ARE ALWAYS TWO SIDES TO EVERY STORY! THE MINISTER WAS ASKED TO APPEAR TONIGHT FOR AN INTERVIEW BUT WAS UNAVAILABLE DUE TO OTHER COMMITMENTS! AWB IRAQ WHEAT SCANDAL! WET T-SHIRT COMPETITION FOR THE LADIES! I WANT TO LOSE THE KILOS! MAKE MY KIDS PROUD! TO FIT INTO MY WEDDING DRESS! WHO WILL BE THE BIGGEST LOSER! WATCH WHALE IN JAPANESE AQUARIUM BLOW BUBBLES! THE TWO WOMEN HONOURED SAINT FROM SAVING THEM FROM THE PLAGUE IN THE MIDDLE AGES BY PROCURING HIM THE BEST HORSE AND FILLY THEY PROCREATED AND EVER SINCE HERE IN THIS LITTLE SPANISH VILLAGE WE HAVE HELD AN ANNUAL HORSE FESTIVAL GOD BLESS! A COMPUTER MISTAKE SAID FINAL PERFORMANCE OF THE CHILDREN DEFY AUTHORITY! THE INSIDE STORY! HARD YAKKA! LOCKDOWN! THE SOUND OF MUSIC IN MELBOURNE SOLD OUT ONLY ATTENDED BY TWO THIRDS OF THE POTENTIAL AUDIENCE MCDONALDS WARNS IT WILL GO TO NEW ZEALAND FOR BEEF DUE TO INCREASING INDUSTRIAL PROBLEMS IN AUSSIE MEAT INDUSTRY TOKYO INFORMS THAT NIGHTCLUB GEISHA GIRLS AND PILOTS ARE ON TOP OF JAPAN'S WAGE SCALE A WORLD RECORD! GO AUSSIE! OI! OI! OI! OI! OI! WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK ALL OUR GENEROUS SPONSORS! YESIREE! HALF PRICE SALE ENDS TOMORROW! BRING YOUR MONEY WITH YA! WE SHARE 50% OF OUR DNA WITH BANANAS! AUSTRALIAN UMPIRE HAS FALSELY ACCUSED AN INDIGNANT PAKISTAN CRICKET TEAM OF BALL TAMPERING! BAGHDATIS BEATS HEWITT! AGASSI BEATS BAGHDATIS! ANOTHER CONTROVERSIAL REFEREE DECISION IN THIS WORLD CUP! FOOTBALL PLAYERS TAKING DIVE AFTER DIVE! ARGO MEANS SWIFT! SYDNEY SWIFTS WIN NETBALL GRAND FINAL! THEY WERE WARSAW!NELLY'S MAN EATER NUMBER 4 ON THE CHARTS!AIR SUPPLY! HUSH! SHERBET! SIMPLY RED!A SEQUENCE OF HUMAN DNA STRETCHES FROM SYDNEY TO PERTH! BUY A CHEAP DRILL DON'T WORRY ABOUT THE HARD WORKING CHINESE FACTORY WORKERS ON STARVATION WAGES EXPLOITED TO PROVIDE SUCH HARDWARE SPECIALS! ROCK THE CASBAH! TECH NOIR! AMERICAN INDI FILMS! HELTER SKELTER! A DROP IN THE BUCKET! THE DEVIL'S CHOICE! CRANSTON CUP! THEATRESPORTS! GOLDEN AUSSIE COMIC REVOLUTIONARIES! AUSTEN TEYCHUS! NORMAN GUNSTON! KATH & KIM! THE CHASER TEAM! MAVIS BRANSTON! PAUL HOGAN! WENDY HARMER! JACKIE 0! MO! GRAHAM MCDONALD! THE KRANKSY SISTERS AUNTY JACK! THE SANDMAN! VINCE! SORRENTI! JOHN SAFFRON REG REAGAN! SAM KETOVICH! BAZZA MACKENZIE! RODNEY RUDE! RON QUINTOCK! JOHN CLARK! ROY & H.G! STROP! LUIGI THE UNBELIEVABLE GRAHAM KENNEDY! ALWAYS FOR THE UNDERDOG! UNDERMINING TELEVISION! OH AUNTIE! I'LL TEAR YOUR BLOODY ARMS OFF! GO FOR THE JUGULAR! THE DEVIL IS IN THE DETAIL! YOU ARE DAMNED IF YOU DO DAMNED IF YOU DON'T!FROM LEFT FIELD!BHUTTO KILLED! MILLIONS OF WOMEN IN ASIA INFECTED WITH AIDS BY UNFAITHFUL PARTNERS! BOLLYLINE! WHO'LL BE BIGGEST LOSER! ELECTION AD AUTHORISED BY LABOR! RENEWABLE ENERGY NEEDS MORE FUNDING! TRY DRIZ-A-BONE! BACK CHANNELS! DON'T MISS NEW SPY THRILLER! BRING BACK 3 PM GRAND FINAL! TAKES TWO TO TANGO! SCHOONERS ONLY $2.50 IN HAPPY HOUR! SPECIAL RATE FUNERAL PLAN! HEY SERA SERA DORIS DAY! WHATEVER WILL BE WILL BE! THE FUTURE'S NOT OURS TO SEE!WHATEVER WILL BE WILL BE!HEY SERA!SERA!WHATEVER WILL BE WILL BE!HEY SERA! THAT'S ALL FOLKS! FOOTBALLS! MEAT PIES! KANGAROOS & HOLDEN CARS! DAIHATSU NOT SO SQUEEZY! ONE DAY YOU'RE GOING TO DON'T GET CAUGHT WITH YOUR PANTS DOWN! RING IN NEXT TEN MINUTES TO GET HALF-PRICE! SATISFACTION GUARANTEED! MONEY-BACK GUARANTEE! BUY ONE RECORD IN NEXT TEN MINUTES GET ANOTHER ONE FREE! IT'S BACK TO SCHOOL AT LOWES GORDY! GREGORIAN

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HEY SERA SERA! HEY SERA SERA! HEY SERA SERA! HEY SERA SERA! HEY SERA!
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'Life goes on! The ads go on! (As well as the slogans! The headlines!)The news never stops! '

"I *L-I-K-E* BING LEE!" Eyes bulge. "Always has special, NEGOTIABLE prices…Everything can be a commodity! Everything is for sale!"

'*I saw at the Performance Space in the Tony Schwensen videos A FATWHITESTRAIGHTBALDGUY staring at himself in the mirror wearing his green Aussie cricket supporter's cap! Dancing with streamers on his nipples in a parody of a high school dance! He is the target audience upon which the commercial future of this nation rests! Channel Nine's hero that will launch a thousand sport, reality & renovation shows! In a digital world of split screens there are also split minds! The d-evolution of human thinking: OI! OI! OI! -'*

Fury.

'Stand up! Stand up for your rights!'

A blank look.

'Our weekends are a sort of trick to put up with the week! Too many token protests! Let off some steam so we don't have no r-evolution!'

An off-hand read:

'The one hundred and seven year old Roman pimp who ran the bordello wisely told Nately that Italy was winning the war by losing it. Young Germans and young Americans were dying conquering Itaty while Italians profited from both sides. They would continue to live in Rome while the naïve likes of nineteen year old Nately from an affluent American family would leave in body bags. It was a shock to Nately to be told that the humble frog had outlasted empires such as Greece, Rome, Persia and Egypt and would also outlast America's…yes, no empire could last…for the earth itself would pass away…in the meanwhile the residents of the Eternal City would survive one way or the other long after the stars & stripes will have long faded.

(BOOK OF QOUTES).

"We prefer artificial drama to real life!" Cat yells: "MAKE-BELIEVE NOT REAL BELIEVE! PLAYSTATION! PUT YOUR HEART & SOUL INTO IT! TO BE A SHAMAN NEW YEARS' EVE VENDOR SELLING WHITE NEON ANGEL RINGS! FLASHING COLOURED SWORDS! GLOWING PURPLE RINGS TO PUT AROUND YOUR NECK & WRIST! FLASHING COLOURED PLASTIC HARBOUR BRIDGES WITH DIFFERENT COULOURED STARS ALONG THE TOP!

Picking up an Edgar Allen Poe book of murder mystery stories.

"STALIN KEPT THESE BY HIS BEDSIDE! WHAT DO WE KNOW? WHAT WERE THE SONGS SUNG BY THE SIRENS? LILE MARLENE! WHAT WAS THE NAME GIVEN TO ACHILLES WHEN HIS MOTHER HID HIM AMONGST WOMEN? WHEN HE WAS BETRAYED TO ODYSSEUS BY THE SWORD THE ITHACAN

GAVE HIM? WE ARE ALL BETRAYED! BY S/WORDS!" The book is put to one side as a balloon atlas of the world is blown up. Kicked up into the air. Twirled. Juggled from hand to hand.

"THE GREAT *MAD* CAT-TATOR!" laughs Lisa. "*MAD COMIC*!" Claps. "He's got the whole world in his hands!"

The world is thrown over to Lisa who also twirls it on one finger above her head. "Here! God's ma*d*erick!" It is thrown back to Cat who has lost interest in this world.

Looking out the window: "A CAT-ASTROPHE!"

'In Mona Hatoum's MCA exhibition Over My Dead Body we see a row of toy soldiers entitled Horizon and other toy soldiers placed in the shape (of Ben Casey's famed sign for those baby boomers) of Infinity. In some of her more provocative photos there is one of her stamping a footprint with UNEMPLOYED over the footpaths of Sheffield, not stopping until the actual number of stamps reaches the same number as those human beings on the town's so called scrapheap.'

(BOOK OF QOUTES)

Book slammed shut.

"GOD *IS* CRAZY! HE MADE ME *CRAZY*! SAMBA! WE – the WORLD - *is* CRAZEEE!!!" reveals God's cowboy.

'How can you really trust any belief system?'

A grin.

'This is cause for concern…& 'off the record' with God.'

Anxiety. "CHESTY BOND!" Fist into chest. 'OH *ZEUS!* THE FIRST HUMAN BEINGS WERE MADE FROM CLAY! DO NOT FORGET: GUMBY IS A *CLAYMAN*!"

'We are GUMBYS!'

A hand is skimmed down a row of free Avant postcards stuck on a wall. *'EVERYTHING is a work-in-progress – including the universe, including US!"*

A silkscreen poster of Tiny Tim with his ukulele is viewed. "TIPTOE THROUGH THE TULIPS PERSEPHONE!"

Human Perception

Cat rubs his temple.

'Human inquiry as a mental trick. Deception. Prejudice. Are mental tricks.'

Slapping the top of his head for tremors to pass down to his brain. "*BEEP!* CENSORED!"

Fiddles with a small transistor:

'Speaking on behalf of Wendys even though we had to contend that a human finger had been allegedly found in a meal it has only been a simple matter of perception overcoming reality in regards to people's short-term memories. People still need their sugar fixes. As it was the woman had planted the still unidentified finger to get money out us.'

'As desire can succumb over what we know, as if we are ignorant, the clutter of our knowledge also hides truth. The contradictions of our times.' "Two heads are better than one!" '*What did Gregor see in Papua New Guinea? A still-born two headed village baby who had died downstream from where there had been mining…human progress at such a cost…dismembered minds…so…at the end…we will believe that the cost of peace is war'.*

Tinkering with a dog whistle.

'The Reverend Billy Graham naively allowed himself for a time to be a godly guide to a criminal of human history who thuggishly manipulated democracy so that God would be on the right side for the pursuit of Mammon. Mr. Nixon. The delay of the Paris Peace until you were elected. Vietnam. Cambodia. Watergate. These were your obvious crimes. Less remembered is your large election handout from McDonalds in exchange for lowering the lowest pay scales…' "It is said that if there is no experience of slavery we will never know what is liberty…"

A sardonic laugh. 'That Chinese man who stopped a tank at Tienemann Square while holding onto his shopping bags! The archetype of this age! Yes, we have to risk 'taking the blow' to gain our liberty like that old veteran in OZ who explained to a much younger prisoner how in his WWII generation when the doors of the LCDs came down to land on the beaches men knew they would have 'to take the blow-' "To die for this 'civilisation'!" Trawling with both hands through a dusty shoebox filled with old cassettes. The selected tape is placed into the cassette deck. The 'prophet' speaks:

"The 'low-labour-cost-fast-food-virus' incubated in southern California in hundreds of Big M fast-food outlets now mutates like malaria in the bloodstream at a rate of two thousand extra outlets a year throughout the world. At the present rate there are thirty thousand Big Ms on the planet. It is followed by mutations such as Hardees, Wendys, Mr Chips, Pizza Hut, Beefburger King, Hungry Joes, Starbucks and KFC. Michael once took me to the KFC in Earlwood where there is still a by-gone practice of using a hand pulley to pull the drive-in meal down a small shaft. Michael would pull the money up on the same tray and then wait for his change. An antique practice for an antique regime; the low cost-low quality virus spreads throughout supermarket chains like Wal-Mart and its clones, devouring the small businesses of towns; planting themselves like castles on the outskirts of population centres to suck these local economies dry. Human leeches. Resisted only by the likes of small Italian towns who refuse to have supermarkets and fast food stores so small local businesses can still thrive.

CHEAPER EVERYDAY PRICES! So are the daily wages.

MADE IN CHINA!'

Cat goes over to his fifties hand operated juicer to crush a few oranges. Takes note of a TV Soap magazine cover with Ridge and Brooke from the Bold and the Beautiful dressed in exotic Mayan outfits exchanging wedding vows in a jungle. "Oh Taylor! You were such a wise, compassionate wife to Ridge! Why did Sheila have to shoot you! Accursed madness!"

'Tayorlism as typified from the mass production and mass consumption of the Model T-Ford to the hamburger may have pleased Plato who would possibly see the modern corporation as an exemplary model of his Republic ideal. As to the low wages for all those thousands of teenagers who feel like they are smiling with the proverbial loaded pistol pressed into their backs it would be rationalised as a logical extension of his 'pragmatic policy of infanticide' which also seems to be so often glossed over as a 'minor aberration' by many of Plato's modern-day apologists.'

"T.V. Reality."

'The reality was that the pyramids were built over a period of twenty years using an Egyptian labour force based on free men and women. They were well fed with expensive cattle meat and fish. They were also provided with the best medical aid available at the time. These labourers were a privileged skilled workforce which cut the blocks and used ramps to drag the heavy stone blocks to where they would be placed. A mere twenty thousand labourers were used. The technical ingenuity of the Egyptians was such that no

more workers were needed at any one time. The lost city of the pyramids found only recently testifies to the privileged status of the people who built the mighty pyramids. The miracle was in the high level of social organisation which produced the first nation-state. The Greeks would not only steal the technical knowledge of the Egyptians but would also surely also take note of their advanced social history. The lost city which lies very close to the pyramids had people buried in their own little pyramid shaped tombs. To aid Pharaoh to reach the heavens also meant that they also would reach heaven. In four thousand years time if the white sails of the Sydney Opera House are still standing will the archaeologists say slaves were used to build them?'

The radio is tapped**:**

'…we round off the news with a story about a granny who had her thirty year old Holden Monaro stolen. It was finally found but trashed…'

'…there is no justice…we store up our faith only in what we want to believe - much like misunderstanding or mistranslating many of the statements made by the Egyptians to Solon regarding the whereabouts of Atlantis. We assume it existed somewhere beyond the Straits of Gibraltar towards the Americas rather than in the more probable vicinity of Gallipoli. Yet, we subconsciously believe that our modern world is Atlantis. Humanity thrives on wishful thinking. In our memory is incorporated the suggestion of situations which did not really occur but become as vivid as the recorded memory of real events; yet as we enter towards a state of fatigue – not only as individuals but as a whole civilization - our minds are kidnapped by hallucinations that seem as real as this world appears as a fantasy.'

"I WAS KIDNAPPED BY ALIENS!"

'I met two scriptwriters in a Cuban restaurant in L.A who said they would scribe about a spaceship powered by metaphors.' Cat pours the orange juice into a glass. *'While on 'the road to nowhere' we often diverge onto the byway of Emmaus to receive visitations from people we do not recognize until they are gone…we stay mutually connected through common memory…a cosmic unity that encompasses everything…(…inescapable…like the information strips that run along the bottom of every news bulletin, that our eyes cannot avoid…)…that also keeps our individual consciousness automatically in tune to ever new everyday trivia. '*

// MIND TRANSMISSION//

HE1327 with it's low iron content is the oldest star ever discovered & was found by a 24 year old female German exchange student in Australia consider not the content but the process a lyre from Ur is replicated with cedar wood from the region by a British harpist bemo madness Ron Barrassi remembered as coach who famously resurrected Carlton from dead in 1970 Grand Final with passing game Spiegel music tent Greek island of Kefalonia maybe Homer's Ithaca where Odysseus resided once cut off by sea channel now filled with rocks over the millennia $3000000 for 30 sec SUPERBOWL ad debt stress 300,000 to lose homes truckies recover truck under ice Nikipediai wafer thin laptop in Bogotá after seeing Of Mice & Men Gregor saw off-duty policeman on motorcycle run over street kid asleep under large cardboard piece Woolworths try sell girls bed called Lolita IKEA builds superstores in Australia in line with world-wide large outlets policy crazy cat loves aper Reg from Bill attempt suicide slit wrists calls for help after sacked only original member from 1984 left Noel Coward sings Mad Dogs & Englismen standing under the hot sun Chinese NY crisis snowstorms strand millions at train stations Rosalie Gascoigne's found art at AGNSW vultures die due to painkiling drug in carcasses 25p to save a life on August 8 the likes of Zapata Peter Weir Dustin Hoffman born dog accidently shoots hunter Thai tribespeople with gold necklaces around women's long necks kept in refugee camp for tourists to take photos a human zoo Columbian festival with talcum powder Sir Francis Drake defeats Spanish Armada on this day Napoleon left after Waterloo defeat for St Helena Hayden practices spin in India drug cheats in Tour de France TPG Olympics baseball track& field Polish man spots wife in brothel Kenya woman on kidney machine deported from UK will die NSW nurses English test wounded Aust soldiers in Iraq Afghanistan may have HIV contaminated blood Tharunka Honi Soit Microsoft offers Yahoo $50 billion pensioner dead for year still paid direct debit rent 50 homeless die in Iran snow Walt Disney Joan Didion born Dec 5 is also St.Christina St. Day King of Thailand born Dec 5 Imogen Max ST. Nicholas Day Heath Ledger overdoses after acting in Joker man throws his 2 small children over balcony so can go to heaven packaging companies make millions Yamba man crushed by circus elephant Jonathan Coleman on radio family stay in Seattle Christmas Eve George Moore Cottonfingers the Bradman of Australian jockeys Group One with TJ Smith as trainer wins Asia has 49 % of world population & over 20 % of world trade plastic bag ban New Hampshire primaries crucial Armidale to be a refugee zone 2 Asian Stanmore kids put

callously in Villawood detention centre President can nominate a judge for the Supreme Court best to go around Paris in a Citreon euthenasia is Greek for beautiful death broadband 3,000 times faster internet makes a flat world flying priest to fly aound Australia to raise money for East Timor old man dies in Villawood detention study shows wine tasters go for high price India was robbed in Sydney test 08 only 1 team played in spiit of game says Indian captain Kumblai 1918 attempt on Lenin's life unleashed Red Terror ungentlemanly hypocritical dobbing behaviour of sledging Australian cricketers political youth movements on rise Dickie Bird concilitary umpire Hollywood writers strike actors boycott ceremonies like Golden Globe & Oscars riots in Kenya over election rigging red blood cells have no DNA 125,000 Russians killed by Finns Stalin read Mein Kampf Operation Heart Sydney heart surgeon team go to thirld world Suharto's organs fail Gatorade Amata a desert community Alexi Zorba couldnt understand why his learned friend wouldnt travel 1,000 kilometers to see gem he'd dug up campus gunkiller Australian doctor will help rebuild a destroyed shed hospital on the Thai island of Phi Phi which 10 years ago saved her life from cholera words for the Spanish anthem in a warning given to the Administration are 3 serious immediate threats to the US are a terrorist attack on New York a hurricane breaking the flood walls of New Orleans & an earthquake in San Francisco Katoomba blues festival sandwich board quotes outside suburban shops by Oscar Wilde Plato & Martin Luther King mosqouito plague in Sydney Orange Revolution in Ukraine story of a king who would behead each virgin after deflowering her one woman survived by never telling the end of a story and finally becoming the mother of the king's heir Neutral Bay furniture shop sells to tennis star through word-of-mouth a woman is shot out from a cannonball to make a living cocaine drug trafficking leads to crime & human rights abuse that first world drug users in their hedonism don't seem to care human corruption justice sells out hope sells out sing rappers in Bogota 80 per cent of 23 million refugees are women & children of the world's 1.3 billion people living in poverty 70 % are women in Africa women have 6 children in Asia have 4 children in Latin America have 3 children & 12 children in industrialized nations in Africa 6 women have AIDS to every 4 men convicts knew an arrow insignia signified government property Gold Coast schoolies sex crimes on increase 1968 in 1 week in Vietnam U.S. lost over 500 men what Australians lost in 10 years of fighting the Tet Offensive My Lai in the Parthenon was the towering magnificent statue of Athena the Virgin covered in gold & ivory around the wooden core in her right hand was a statue of Nike of Victory on her helmet was a Sphinx & on her breast an ivory compensation for Stolen Generation with this climate & energy crisis humanity may wake up one day to a new Stone Age Medusa Aristotle said happiness was the exercise of a man's vital powers along the lines of excellence Kitty Kantilla once had a Cypriot curater dancing Zorba call centres: payback for 500 years colonial rule guest workers underpaid by their own kind minority groups may try to appear homogenous but this hides inequalities that exist within migrant community green snakes in Vermont harmless but due to global warming deadlier snakes in south moving north 2 Sea Shepherd protesters kidnapped by Japanese whalers Guatemala thousands of women & girls being raped Joyce Mayne furniture Bali bombing Australian uni students would go find teaching jobs in Zambia or Iceland to escape conscription to Vietnam war carbon nanotubes that are billionths of a meter wide can be used for bone growth and are very strong the part that is inorganic is a type of calcium crystal small arms are the real weapons of mass destruction globally firearms are used in 40% of murders in South Africa a woman is shot dead every 18 hours in a domestic situation 15 new guns are made every minute a person dies of gun wounds sport legends call Aussie team bad sports in Canada 5 billion dollars are spent on gun related injuries even though homicide rates are four times lower than in the U.S zoo bear eats cubs in Latin Amrica 14% of GDP is spent on health costs related to guns there have been 13 million deaths in wars in last ten years since 1994 9 million of those in Sub-saharan Africa $1,035 billion was spent on armies in one years 47% of this by the U.S. Bertrand Russell once said that war doesn't state who is right but only who is left man cut in half when walked into helicopter McLibel was a win for David over Goliath the Philistine middle-classes the Battle of Jutland was a draw although the German fleet resorted to submarine warfare afterwards and Gunter Grass reckons eels feasted off the corpses of many sailors Palestine bakers want to attempt making the world's longest sandwich campaign to revoke Nobel Prize from the inventor of the lobotomy Roma player Toto wears name of Italian captured journalist her captors are impressed a man going to every Starbucks café in the world a documentary will be made about him a sense of purpose in his life to arrive & have a coffee in every café Nana Mouskouri's glasses she sings at the Opera House on Sunday September 4 rag trade fair deal tag campaign stability over democracy U.S. foreign policy Al Gore eco-warrior Brazil defies pharmacy companies to produce cheap generic A.I.D.S drugs Stones of David used on Goliath immigrant detained for 7 years Tibetan nun tortured in a fishing boat off Portugese coast the end of the world during Live Aid the burghers of Calais sacrificed themselves to the English after an eleven month siege to save their townspeople Rodin's portrayal meant to be seen straight on at ground level Balzac terrorists use the internet as their main communication and information weapon mind experiments on blacks in the 1950s Nicholas Hope's autobiography of Bad Boy Bubby fame the President said a tidal wave of destruction will be followed by a tidal wave of compassion but really there is a tidal wave of criticism over 60% of people unhappy with the state of things in the U.S. of the Republicans much dissatisfaction with oil companies raising petrol prices after natural disaster hard-line Australian Liberals do not value individual rights the sanctity of life bash the battlers who vote for them to know about sport is a good survival social mechanism in Australia kabuki beggar theatre high temperatue grilling on barbeques heightens cancer risks an Australian Filipino woman with spinal damage wrongly deported like a piece of rubbish Garuda senior pilot accused of killing a human rights worker on flight to Netherlands Tolo TV in Afghanistan India is in uproar as media wildly discusses the bad umpring in Sydney as their batsmen unfairly dismissed Maradona miracously loses 41 kilos rugby league members of the Coogee Dolphins see a pod of dolphins come right up to the shore during an anniversary event a moving tearful experience Bali is Hindu Michael had an English teacher who would drink up at the Hurlstone Park R.S.L and after lunch speak eloquently about Shakespeare another strict teacher was a bookmaker at the Harold Park trots and would use a speed reading machine which would flick up sentences onto a screen to get students to improve their reading he would cane students if they spoke a Kiwi guy Gregor met in Mexico City had a choice between going on a scenic Boeing 747 flight to Antarctica or go to Mexico he went to Mexico while the 747 crashed into a white blinding wilderness the genetic code for rice discovered will help bolster food production a genetic code in our minds 80,000 die in Tokyo bomber raid by U.S. firestorm burns houses like matchsticks flesh can be smelt burning from low flying bombers a National Party Senator from Queensland initially defies the Liberal sell off of Telstra and the industrial law reforms and end to university unions he wants guarantees

hundreds of thousands at Live 8 Jerry Springer lost family to the Holocaust whole migrant ship he ws on quiet when Statue of Liberty sighted NY murder rate at all time low a Malaysian at Auckland airport during a general strike suddenly woke up from his sleep on several seats took off his eye patches & said he had an idea to organise a delegation so passengers would be numbered in order of their arrival & waiting time so if any available seats to fly to Australia there would be a fair procedure to who would get on be a dobber at the cricket Muhajaddin throw acid into women with uncovered heads 1968 year of the student riots in Paris and much social change Chrissie Amphlett locked up in Spain for 3 mths for singing on streets devestating bomber raid on Japan after atomic bombs dropped is forgotten first nuclear fusion to imitate sun's energy low bionic arm invented robots lead way to tele surgery a U.S. war propaganda film has Nazi agents in South America transform continent into German soldier bayonets U.S. replace soldier with Latino Leftists nothing focuses the mind better than a hanging finding four Aboriginal kids robbing a house in Redfern from getting into the top attic while the owner is still at home 2.5 cm tilt in the earth's axis after tsunami the COOEE! WW1 recruitment march two cowboys from Young in the big smoke go to Royal Easter Show confused how to go there on the train talking about feeling out of place wondering where to change trains seems to other passengers they're being set up by Candid Camera TBA click your fingers every three seconds and another African person dies Bob Brown a stalwart Green a monitor that can detect how interested people are in a telephone conversation is being developed women are more interested in mood and who they are speaking to and men are interested in the topic U.S. rock singer in DDR many children kiled in terror blast Barnaby Joyce a honest broker a Cypriot airliner crashes near Athens tragically 45 children included in 100 odd fatalities King of France inquired before his beheading if any news of La Perouse who had disappeared in Pacific Swedish nuclear plant in 2006 had near meltdown cause still unkown a former U.S. veteran can prove with face imagery that he is the sailor kissing a nurse at the end of WWII in Times Square he always respected the nurses who tended the battle wounded powercuts in Gaza falling bodies from burning skyscrapers unbearable to watch it has been said that the National Parks bureacracy are more interested in landscaping and maintaining their authority than natural conversation and do not like their power usurped by other environmental departments there are landscape architects who do not like the bush highly paid bureacrats like to appear to be doing something when it could be the foot soldiers actually achieving things hundreds of years ago Arabs would have certificates of recommendation from Christian prisoners that will serve them well and keep them alive if ever caught in Christendom the some pirates who took pity pulled the Vietnamese refugee boats to safety when their engines broke down so these robbers became saviours rather than be merchants of death rent designer dogs in Tokyo in Ancient Greece Herodutus and Thucydides greatest historians the former lived in Asia Minor and had contact with foreign peoples they wrote about Greeks fighting external enemy in Persian Wars and amongst themselves in Peloponnesian wars Captain Jams Cook discovered east coast of Australia and called it New Holland maybe Sydney should have be called New Amsterdam and be sister city to New York there are many types of maple syrup due to way it is distilled globalization equated with attacks on workers rights even in first world countries 53310761 was Elvis Presley's army serial number cut-throat global reality tv toned down for Chinese audiences Brian Gore was imprisoned by Marcos saved by Archbishop Sin the Lourdes holy water at sanctified outdoor altar at the large white Earlwood Catholic church Keno bingo L-shaped ambush attack rugby league players standing flat-foot with no running onto ball in Gomel thyroid cancer is 10,000 times more likely since Chernobyl people wake up taller so do astronauts in space Chines mines very unsafe due to corrupt practices thousands of miners die every year Kurnell sand hills where 40,000 Horsemen filmed African athlete will name his son Helsinki after winning 5000 metres race Helsinki peace accords for Aceh medical students volunteer to help after terror tube bombings monkeys who want to lead often lengthen their hair the behavior is likened to bosses who will make sure they have the largest company chair Su Xinping's lithographs are at the Fire Station Gallery Rozelle 111 space huttles have landed since 1981 & 2 have exploded an old Cypriot villager on a jetliner for the first time tries to open the window Qantas holiday strike UNIYA Jesuit Refugee Service 1,500 Lithuanian women per year are forced to bcome sex slaves there are cases of childhood friends duping friends to the mafia Curtin a great war leader U.S doesn't have an empire but a string of client states Exchange newsletter fsupports Vanunu Australian homebuyers commit 30% to service mortgage compared to 18.7% in mid-90s real house prices risen 70% balmy army music replaces bells at many schools the fine line between life and death is indiscernible meditates Thomas Manne in the Magic Mountain a grandmother waits six days in New Orleans promised somebody will come to pick her up every day but on the Friday drowns it is feared the New Right has won the culture wars left handers are of the Devil a tomato can is a weak fighter who makes another boxer look good Steve Diver the guy dug up at Thredbo akin to Christ raised from the tomb Australian ice skater wins gold medal when other skaters fall the young Rockabilly couple with child get out of their truck in Crown Smoky Dawson a country-western legend met Hank Williams Kerry O'Keefe has beer with Mick Jagger at Lords Channel 7 news bumps up numbers at Tibet demo a brass band festival in Serbia is now the largest tourist attraction he was in Zurich when his friend was in Sydney missed each other by half a world lovely East German punk woman hitching with her Alsatian named Trouble hypnosis overcoming mind the WW1 term diggers from Australian wits who said they were soldiers not diggers to make trenches watching the rozellas playful on a large native tree behind a large glass at Rookwood crematorium a hotel fire in Paris human pettiness at times the instigator to an act that leads to human magnificence Christian computer games to provide an alternative to cyber violence we would fall apart into dust if it were not for the kinetic energy of life popular website called craiglist Debbie Spillane says Taylor Dent son of Phil Dent adopt him when all Australians knocked out a typical terrorist cell makes sure all members are in the dark as to what each member is obligated to do the Last Emporer of China reduced to a gardener Voltaire would appreciate that Williams sisters play against each other some western travel guides serve as a form of low-level cultural imperialism in the 20s and 30s unionists in the States often shot or beaten by the police black Jews in Israel are not recognized a Latino woman in Washington believed her baby daughter did not die in a house fire but was kidnapped so at a birthday party she believed this girl with dimples was her daughter she stealthily took a hair sample for DNA was proven true and reunited with her missing daughter industrial relations education going back to the 18th century nanotubes restructuring broken bones Glastonbury Canadian killing seal cruelty Langer & Johns comebacks show never-say-die attitude of Origin Goring said culture can only be found through the barrel of a gun a Bangladeshi supporter wearing a Tiger's costume the inventor of the micro-chip Jack Kilby dies the faster you travel the slower time is around you traveling faster than light means

time goes into reverse but there is a paradox however quantum mechanics says super positioning or quantum probability would conspire to stop the past from changing Ted Glossop was a premiership winning coach in 1980 for Canterbury Bankstown phone line rental fees increase Billy Graham endorses Hillary Clinton the Earlwood News says in England when scratch marks were found inside dug-up coffins strings went in new coffins to be attached to bells placed beside the graves the term graveyard shift came when a person had to stay at the grave overnight in case it rang only 23 children had the necessary heart operation the 7,000 other children affected by Chernobyl the same way so they will die 600,000 people affected scrawny French traveller guy with frizzy hair & earrings was very witty selling paintings done by others door-to-door in suburbs a pecking order in society the Greens Petra Kelly says power must keep moving around otherwise it will corrupt Dr. David Kelly WMD Inspector in Iraq hounded by English government to his death when no weapons leaked information to the BBC he discovered biological weapons in Russia NewsRadio puts up a link to a Chinese dissident's allegorical short story first road fatality in 1899 in New York Erikson's 8 stages of social & personality development 800,000 Australians suffer from depression Saudi women will have women sell them underwear all women universities give freedom on campus but still they only obtain low class jobs in the Soviet Union an engineer had higher status many Russian women doctors in Canterbury England there is a tree on the cricket field education is slanted toward middle-class expectations the Chinese see countries around them as vassal states the Chinese are at the centre of their empire this conservative Prime Minister appeals to base human prejudices to stay in power welfare cuts so crime will rise along with gated communities factory labor is so cheap in China that garment factories can produce their products for a few cents which threaten textile factories in the rest of the world in the Guardian are Sebastio Salgado's Genesis Project photos of gorillas & volcanos state of the art full size sex dolls all in a row body parts comets can carry bacteria which are good travellers through space one theory is they bring life to Earth can survive landing here Sydney Lib shock jock tries to get elected asks Michael's uncle about the Greek vote in Earlwood Churchill calls Hitler a guttersnipe sending off his panzer legions to new fields of slaughter in the summer solstice invasion of Russia he had warned Stalin but what does the bulldog British Prime Minister think of Bomber Harris? The monarchies of Europe ganged up on the French after the 1789 Revolution the Napoleonic Code echoes the European Union Michael thinks the living between 2 cultures in multicultural Australia can at times be overstated teachers threatened in Northern Territory communities Woodie Guthrie & Johnny Cash were the eternal champions of underdogs such as itinerant workers & the North American Indians & the Running of the Bulls we asked these two chain smoking priests if we could leave our luggage in their church at a time when no accommodation was available & pick-pocketing was rife babies in a maternity ward in Slovakia with earphones on their heads listening to Mozart all Swiss males keep rifles in their houses & have gun practice regularly Japanese woman wrongly convicted of heroin smuggling in Australia tricked wanting to clear her name performance art by George Gittoes at Royal National Park in England it is said asylum seekers are let out but sent back when they are sent to a different house to the one they have been staying & placed unawares on a plane sent back and if they die their claim must be genuine much like the defence of accused witches who drown to be proven innocent spending years in detention centers not knowing when getting out is like the psychological limbo akin to Dante's medieval purgatory there should be books printed on demand from catalogues in bookshops domestication between animal & man in stone age times would have occurred through mutual co-operation for survival Guedjieff writes that in centres of civilization like Berlin you cannot directly beg but can be availed of charity & not be disturbed by the police by entertaining from the footpath such as grinding an old barrel-organ he passed a crippled German soldier who he had once seen in a café called the Black Rose in Constantinople the husband of a lady who had been sent to him for medical treatment Qantas is outsourcing more jobs overseas 1,500 Lithuanian women per year fooled to become sex slaves a childhood friend betrays one woman the aristrocratic women in Proust amazed by the invention of the phone still thought it was only a fad Prague popular for English male stag parties Wik Mabo resisted by neo-conservatives covenant of security brevity zoo tiger escapes kills vsitor Yul Brynner says don't smoke the Jacobeans even had a new calendar time itself would change for the revolutionary regime John Eales rugby Senator Harradine retires on his own terms Robert Louis Stevenson died in Samoa it was easier to travel between the islands now we just fly over them Andy Warhol exhibit in new contemporary art gallery in Brisbane burning Indian wives a letter forged to forgo extra fees my cheerful gnome Barry with his guitar has more personality than a lot of people I meet in Kazakhstan there is a fifty year celebration of the beginning of the Soviet space age Yuri Gugarin sputnik which indirectly led to the eventual development of the internet which first had a military application in case of nuclear attack David Gilmour from Pink Floyd sells his millionaire house to give money to a charity for the homeless a Rodin statue stolen in Chile found in a field Chernobyl is a nuclear Pompeii Anne Bancroft of Mrs Robinson fame has died what are we going to do with Maria in the early twentieth century a black man in the old Confederate states could be lynched for just looking at a white woman answer strong threat with quiet voice Berlin Cabaret decadence mirrors U.S. at the time of Vietnam some old-timers in the RSL who fought in World War Two do not think Vietnam was a real war upsets some Viet vets Bank of England set up by William for war money Glasgow prospered after union with England overweight Bangkok traffic police forced to lose weight 35 hour week in France has led to higher employment and productivity monkeys will forgo food to have a picture of a celebrity primate in their clan Greenpeace warns about global warming gonzo journalism the military cost of the war on terror has passed one trillion dollars but could be more due to outsourcing in Africa storms linger over Lagos in Cairo for the filming of Gallipoli David Williamson had to give a quick Aussie Rules lesson to a host of international extras why didn't they take to court forty years ago the Mississippi murderers of three white civil rights victims? asks a ninety year old black civil rights advocate American brides in search of a lucky number in a giant wedding cake worth fifty thousand dollars Foolish Games is a song by Jewel in the Indonesian ferry the English ate with their hands the Germans were equipped with forks and the resourceful Aussies scrounged utensils I'm Jana Wendt that was Eric Bib singing A Ship Called Love to end this edition of Sunday Elton John watches his Westham lose the F.A. Cup Magna Carta the Doomsday Book 666 birth defects have increased 250% since Chernobyl Aussie Rules has its roots in an Aboriginal game called marngrook that inspired Tom Wills Australia harpoons Japan over whale quota 500,000 U.S.mental casualties in WW2 Uzbekistan's abusive government in the area of human rights is a friend to the U.S.A in the war on terror give the SAS only 100 days funding like work-for-dole the English are war-like in turn have beaten the French at Agincourt and Waterloo and the Spanish Armada the German Lufwaffe

Shane Warne's miracle ball to dismiss Mike gatting in his first ball of Ashes series in the eighties Patti Hearst in 1977 Star Wars filmed in Guatemala when massacres reaching crescendo not guilty of all ten counts ecofootprint for each human being should only be 1.5 hectares yet we average 7.5 hectares human consumption needs four planet earths Gordy and the boys as pirates blackxploitation movies popular in the seventies Shaft S.H.A.F.T. U.N. embargo in Iraq killing thousands of children umbrage comes from the word umbrella which has put you in the shade casting doubt on you umbrage borrowed from Latin and comes from Middle English and a tree can take umbrage over you Hemingway said a writer should only write about what he or she personally experiences anything else is a lie a Hemingway bust is outside Pamplona and in the bay near Havana where the Old Man and the Sea is based downshifting is preferred over consumption Babe the elephant with two eyes on the back to ward off attacking magpies mythbusters asks can ping pong balls be used to raise a sunk ship DJ adoration technology refusenuks are luddites Jane Fonda meets Robert McNamara at a Welsh book festival she says it was a mistake to sit in the seat of a North Vietnamese ack-ack gun in Hanoi tai chi in Federation Square an innocent Ronald Reagan unjustly hung for political expediency compassionate rebel Liberals MPs find no resolution with PM over hard line immigration policy whistleblower says many hardline prejudicial incompetent decisions made by detention regime e-bay Paper moon Stormy Weather the music of Harold Arlen floods in Australain countrysidede wet season then bushfire season Bush snubs Crowe the Indonesian judges said the accused Australian drug smuggler was guilty and a twenty year sentence was handed down did a dingo take the baby? Queen celebrates her birthday when the weather is warmer social engineering with television a surgeon can complete an operation while being half a world away Pink Floyd reform for Live8 Karin told Michael that in a school in Brixton there were two security guards outside her classroom and the door was chain locked to make sure the students did not abscond she was only there for the legal reason of duty of care the Verve have beautiful haunting music Elvis Presley who was in the army once played a serious movie role as a Comanche martyred Joe Hill founded the modern protest song movement a cocky young German Herbet Voigt was taken by a shark on a swim to Rottenest Island only the armies of the U.S.S.R and Australia had specific surveying units the human brain is not fully developed until the age of 23 it is said 30,000 children die everyday there was always a small group of protesters outside the South African Embassy for many years demanding Nelson Mandela's release from prison the Americans with their defeat of the British also took over their imperial mantle laziness is good says a study: The Joy of Laziness by a German health scientist professor and his daughter people who relax in hammocks rather than run marathons have a better chance of reaching old age a woman sailor at the Anzac Cove dawn service came from the H.M.A.S Achilles young people are weaker as they belong to a generation which has only eaten processed food an Australian doctor in the Sudan says if we lose our ability to empathise with those who are suffering then we lose our humanity a society not an economy here's two guys pretending to lift up the Opera House in this photo being in England during the Falklands War gave you a taste of WW1 jingoism eco-warriors use mind bombs the thousand odd Australians who died on the death march of Sandarkan must be remembered tourists killed in Luxor Greek Easter on Anzac Day satellites can read newspapers post-traumatic stress the U.S.A has to deal with its twin peaks of the current accounts deficit and the federal budget Americans have to start living within their means it will be painful not only for them but also for the rest of the world Collingwood magpies to sagpies DOCS fails kids an English life has been measured not for what Prufrock's coffee spoons cost but on average as $AUD4,000,000 Leif Garret many third world people try to live on one dollar a day Agent Orange still deforms Vietnamese children only 1% of shopkeepers kids go to uni another pots and pans Latin American demonstration Australian society is a mixed salad not a melting pot American Gothic is a mid-west Baptist preacher wearing a ten-gallon hat with his doting wife he spits out black chewing tobacco across a room to land in a spittoon like in a Looney Tune cartoon Australian consular staff uncaring full body protection for U.S. troops Stayin Alive by the Bee Gees was played during the pre-dawn entertainment at Gallipoli Sheila that witch on Bold and the Beautiful never receives hatemail the major labels try to fend off the downloading of music via the internet someone in the administration has been teaching and authorizing these people how to carry out these torture techniques however small indy bands are gaining a voice which shows that the web is helping to democratize avenues for music shark bites board in half but surfer survives bumblebee numbers increasing with warm weather hitching rides to Tasmania on cargo ferries country music for Aboriginals is their jazz and blues the drought is forcing up the price of beef Ernest Borgnine plays the WW1 German veteran Cat in All Quiet on the Western Front Fanny Bay goal NT stays closed despite cruise ship visit Angels I heard Noam Chomsky say at Sydney Town Hall that after Mussolini's fall the Italian Communists had to be wary of their allies war–weary American troops from Texas the barricades are the public throne cricket can be unfair like life Rasputin-like Brazilian wandering spider in England survived being micro-waved freezing and boiling water freedom's not free said the U.S. soldier who had survived Normandy with its bloody Omaha landing at Normandy someone has to pay the ultimate price remember the League Olympics at Wentworth Park finding out who was the fastest winger or the strongest forward the deepest hole ever dug has been 12 kilometres yet in north-east South Australia in holes only 3 kilometres deep rocks have been unearthed hot enough to produce electricity Michael's mum came here on a British passport her hair described as fair a South African white farmer throws a black laborer to lions ten years after the end of apartheid what will the neighbours think John Pilger calls Susan George's new book The Lugarno Project the Catch-22 on capitalism tanks were guarding supermarkets during the L.A. riots Art Haus on Flinders Street has new student works We Are Not Going To Play At Sun City Gary Numan OPEC is being blamed for the latest petrol price hike Ned Zelic scores an impossible goal against Holland the five Iranian truck drivers agreed to take each of us across the border between Greece and Turkey as you weren't allowed to walk they also knew what to handout as baksheesh the monoprint reads play at your own risk a matter of life and death at Chernobyl shave your hair off at school for Leukemia research Greek police make you wipe off Turkish dirt when ferries dock at Rhodes get a job on yachts to get around Mediterranean Sea Paul Keating upsets Malaysia's Prime Minister Tom Willis took an Aboriginal cricket team to England even though his father was killed by Aborigines in 1861 Diego Maradona's Hand of God Annette Kellaman was Australia's original $1,000,000 mermaid an Afro-American for U.S. President or a First Lady or an ex-POW Naples mafia garbage crisis in India cricket protest donkey with the name of umpire in the main zocala of Bogota can be seen this scaffolding that forms the backdrop to a Garcia Marquez play small robots are playing with children who are getting used to them nano-technology where microscopic machines can operate in a human being through the bloodstream knowing the receptionist

working at casualty in Canterbury Hospital during the Milppera bikie massacre robot reproducing themselves with spare parts stormdrain deaths Oprah's Bookclub has massively encouraged reading in American society the contemporary earthy treatment of the Australian landscape by Fred Williams watch Herbie the Love Bug Rings of Fire by filmmaker Dan Klores deals with the boxing champion Emile Griffith who unintentionally killed a Cuban boxer in a professional fight forty years later Griffith is still haunted by this act which was spurred on by taunts to his sexuality here's two West Germans holding up boomerangs above the Berlin Wall on the Annapurna trek in Nepal I heard this straight-down-the-line Aussie guy yell out a coo-eee the Australian Centre of Photography has images of suburban kitsch Michael's aunt would serve a chocolate milkshake to a Liberal Federal leader when he was in his forties when he turned up every Monday afternoon like clockwork important life enhancing medicines face not being on the PBS Paul Keating has a healthy interest in antiques Alexi Zorba died on his feet looking out a window at the mountains the Beatles only lasted six years other exhibitions worth considering is the World Press Photos at the Mitchell Library as well as a series of etchings by the Wedderburn Art group at the Ivan Doughtery Gallery in Surry Hills couple get married inside their Mississipi flood shelter young Aboriginal cowboy practising rodeo on rocking rusty drum on swinging ropes we can get out of the pit Janus was two-faced Roman god which January gains her name he looks forward in the summer and backwards at winter the Fonz is cool film producers killed for revealing jail smuggling secrets the rise of the Normans equates with the rise of medieval Europe the sunk Belgrano in the Falklands War survived as the USS Phoenix at Pearl Harbour Michelangelo's Code elites often make claims that they are directly related by blood to the divine Tom Boyd in St.Peters while Arthur Boyd had his South Coast property bequested to the nation the 23 year old Iarrikin German would eat sandwiches swimming on his back and smoke a cigarette a photo of him is above the bar at Swanbourne Club where he's a patron saint to the club's midnight swims and painting the Cottesloe pylon in club colours in the dark on Iwo Jima a handful of the 22,000 Japanese defenders lived while from 33,000 U.S. Marines approx. 27,000 were killed or wounded in Café Haiku in the United States each group at a table uses index cards and pencils provided to compose poems skateboards in this Sydney ballet production a Turkish man disguised as his dead mother would gain her pension from a local bank an enterprising person charges $7 for luggage to be glad-wrapped at Sydney Airport the Booker Prize has gone to the The Bone People theatre movie and party costumes filling up a whole warehouse are all being given away Chandler liked Rilke Bukowski at the Valhalla Barfly we found a large train ticket office in Beijing not mentioned in any travel guide that street performer at Darling Harbour who I now know was the brother of that Bulgarian pianist who once lived nearby love triumphs there are people in Sri Lanka who earn only 16 to 19 cents per hour a guy had his head stuck in a city bin trying to get his mobile the fire brigade with their jaws of life were called in Clarice Beckett's exhibit is at S.H. Ervin Gallery Observatory Hill many journalists not in touch with the mainstream perceptions of the suburbs 5 straight 4s in the Centenary Test which finishes with the same result Norman Mailer in reference to the executed Gary Gilmour a fabricated portrayal of a descendant of Houdini a disabled American Olympic female athlete gyrating with well-sculptured prosthetic legs middle class people eating edible food thrown away by supermarkets in the Guggenheim the Hiroshima bomb fell in the early peak hour to assure a high civilian toll as an experiment Leichhardt was awash with Italian flags as fans celebrated Italy's entry into the World Cup Final Weary Dunlop who was from Victoria was once a Wallaby Ricky Maynard's photographic essay of indigenous youth in gaol is at the Stills Gallery in Paddington the Cremaster Cycle by Matthew Barney was partly inspired by the gridiron markings on the playing field Labor to apologise to Aboriginals over Stolen Generation but no direct compensation Ethiopian weightlifter to commit to Australia in Olympics he All Blacks win the World Cup Steve Mortimer vs Peter Sterling both champion halfbacks Mortimer married to a theatre person Michael saw him at the Kingsgrove Hotel on his birthday the Canadian town of Swastika refused to change it's name to Winston in 1939 when gold had been discovered in 1911 the name was adopted after a lucky charm the Yellow House in Kings Cross was a focal point for the local bohemia acts started by human pettiness can sometimes lead to examples of human magnificence dolphins have one half of brain on and other half off when sleeping baby dolphins don't sleep in the first month East German café owner in Oxaca has big beautiful colourful semi-abstract paintings on display Happy in MDA a dolphin will make a whirlpool to catch fish in the current to eat a sales company drums up money for this big-time human rights organisation by having it's workers wear the group's t-shirts then asking for donations in shopping centres they are only paid by commission which can mean working and earning next to nothing-strange to rely on dishonesty and exploiting people to save the world must be desperate for money on Chinese trains are poor village families next to affluent yuppies with their mobiles in the next seat social tensions will obviously increase Agamemnon was one of the Allied ships sunk at the Dardenelles Paris Airshow Molecular Invasion mutant bacteria art exhibition literature as organic process not linear Hemingway's wife lost his first manuscript at a train station Sydney house prices have tripled people have their misconceptions of Cabrammata you would think you needed a flak jacket to get around and that Huey planes flew overhead Chuckberry's Johnny B. Good was based on the guitarist Johnny Johnson I met an elderly writer Johnny Johnson and his wife on the way to Cyprus on the ferry in the Mediterranean the Cauliflower Hotel has large cauliflower icon above the awning the weather will be unseasonably hot tomorrow due to global warming the demand for Chinese herbs in Western Europe testifies to an industry which now has an annual turnover of twenty billion dollars DVD recorders are becoming much cheaper Fenwick says in his poem on a hand made Christmas card with an Australian Vegemite Star guiding Madonna and Holy Child on a donkey to Egypt that we have conceived some holy times together Gregor talking of walking with hundreds of Chinese up large wide flights of stairs at a regional rail station in China Napoleon said authoritarian regimes rely on silence while democracies have to lie to keep status quo floating lights in sky are UFOs The Settlement in Edward Street instigated by Sydney Uni in 1895 has served the Aboriginal community in Redfern for many years faces closure by some of the white management committee members who live in the same street have an obvious conflict of interest they would like to improve their property values Bond development in Byron Bay stopped by local hero drug suspects killed in shootouts in Jakarta were really executed divorces up after Christmas famous photo of a young couple kissing in Paris was staged what a great take by Steve Gearin on that high kick by Greg Brentnall Neil Murray outside Enmore theatre when Rolling Stones played there needle exchanges in countries like Belarus to cut down on hepattis and HIV but not in Australia Joen Utzon too old to travel to the Opera House young female peace activist died while still highlighting the suffering of civilian victims of war two Japanese tourists die on Pakistan Afghan border Alexi Zorba believed a

man like him should live for a 1,000 years an approach to life is to never look back herbs mentioned by Shakespeare Jimmy Little has a transplanted white man's kidney proving we are all part of the same human family Morris Dancing with the clanging of sticks a celebrity party that Michael had gone to with Master an English t.v. director met Master at the Bat & Ball Hotel on Cleveland Street they had talked about the Premier League and rued how in Australia it was no longer on free-to-air t.v. it was feared the same may happen to the rugby league the director found it refreshing to meet someone who did not want something from him this footy hour was a regular event Master was invited to a farewell party at the Palace Hotel in Surry Hills Michael came and was disgusted how these so called hip people immediately stopped talking to him when they realised he could offer them nothing for their careers celebrities as grubby mortals looking for footholds to climb Mt. Olympus one main Australian actor there knew better by spending most of night ignoring the hanger on crowd by playing snooker talk about SWEET F.A. Real Madrid stadium targeted by terrorists Red Nose Day for SIDS when an Australian soldier frisked a Muslim woman for hidden weapons to reveal herself as a woman to the Somali crowd it was if she was the 7th wonder of the world Darfur the new Rwanda when hung drawn and quartered in medieval England person revived after being hung so can experience rest of horible death the unfortunate lawyer who prosecuted Charles 1 was also disemboweled when royalty back in power he advocated that lawyers spend tenth of time to help the poor without pay the upper classes organise petition as they did not like these executions in their neighbourhood due to the smell Cromwell betrayed the republican cause when he wanted his son to take over power from him Australian Work Agreements for teachers to be introduced kids with wildcat eyes yelling abuse at outdoor diners in pizza place in Glebe trawler nets catch too many fish American kids taste test for a new ice cream flavour prosperity doctrine airports are natural modern conduits for terror Lithuanian Prime Minister flew a stunt plane under a bridge in Vilnius at Hanging Rock are crevasses where the picnicking girls could have fallen down Ian Botham crushes Aussies still treated like a cricket god does charity walks the Snowy Mountain Scheme built by migrants Michael told me that the mother of all roundabouts is under a freeway on the way to Bossley Park an Australian P.O.W caught in Greece placed in concentration camp saw many Russians die a Russian knew to seek sanctuary with Americans rather than go back to homeland now living in Australia Pigeonhouse Mountain near Milton is a steady climb living in a me generation baby boomers SLRs are out of fashion Simon Katich test discard scores record runs in Sheffield Shield this Eat Carpet short film has squares divide a body into parts to reconfigure a new being German Expressionist music is an attempt to express the subconscious on September 1 in 1715 occurred the death of Louis XIV of France the Sun King he reigned for 72 years in 1923 was the Great Kanto earthquake in Tokyo and Yokohama and killed 100,000 people in 1939 Germany attacked Poland in 1951 the ANZUS Treaty signed but which fell apart when NZ would not allow nuclear armed ships in her ports in 1983 Korean Air flight 007 was shot down by Soviet fighters after straying into Soviet air space 269 people died Bald Archie has a cockatoo judging creation spirits at the Mermaid Pool Zambezi 4th longest river in Africa Nuremberg trials supported by Stalin who liked show trials & then accused shot while Churchill wanted accused captured & shot within few hours without trial pettiness of people who complain about noise living next to Luna Park like petty neighbours next to popular Summer Hill café where people are well behaved the Alaskan islands the Aleutians invaded by Japanese in WWII indigenous ineptly evacuated by the Americans captured indigenous also sent to Japan Russian Orthodox priest converted Aleutian people when Alaska owned by Russia ardous food procesing work in Dutch Harbour nuclear testing caused environmental concerns people who work long hours face more injuries bell was rung to stop the applause for Stalin otherwise 1st person who stopped would be punished Brazilian Amazons ritualistically fighting each other in festival ceremonies as the hurricane happened in New Orleans the trees fell all around the statue of Jesus in churchyard and did not hit it the gulag intellectual was shown how his fellow prisoners recited the Bible from memorising different sections onto their minds Aussie film star supports Sydney F.C the pilot said the engines on a Boeing could move mountains Oliver Sax's sleep patients exist in an eternal present Aussie unis fall in standards have to scrounge for funds Mt. Kosciusko is named after a Pole the Friekorps countered the 1918 German Revolution to form the basis of National Socialism and with financial support from German industry be a very potent political force Hamilton Naki a labourer who became a self-taught surgeon helped Dr. Christian Barnard with the first heart transplant but remain unrecognised as he was black in apartheid South Africa 40 NSW homeless shelters may close due to lack of Federal funding 18 countries will gain debt cancellation by G8 14 in Africa helping out 280 million Africans but is only the beginning 20 other countries need debt relief Harry Kewell plays for Liverpool Arab falcon trainers in Amman abominable snowman to keep NATO intact the U.S made Cyprus a sacrificial lamb by averting all-out war with Greece and Turkey Cliff Young in his 60s wins Sydney-Melbourne ultra-marathon in gym boots Labor Party's front bench changes not good enough says Doug Cameron to fight sweeping industrial reforms Powerball reaches $22,000,000 jets strafed the English High Court Judge's hotel in Cyprus North Korea fires a missile into sea towards Japan use a white sauce for your lasagna a world air guitar comp with an air guitar for sale in a café for $200 save whales San Diego County voted against the carrier U.S.S. Constellation from sailing to the Vietnam War Michael's young cousin got back at McDonalds when he made international calls when working there a methadone centre across road from asylum seekers centre Best & Less have the Best Prices world record for biggest Zorba dance at Melbourne's Federation Square paddle power in Hong Kong dragon boat race to recall 3rd century Chinese poet who hurled himself in the water to protest against government corruption Geoffrey Robinson George Peponis great Canterbury-Bankstown players Kim Beazley can't buy house in Sydney as he says they are too expensive Canberra cabbies have an ABC Newsradio lunch with David Lord German revolutionaries Rosa Luxembourg William Leibknecht both murdered during the failed German revolution in 1918 in Beijing people ballroom dance outside the shopping centre Jimmy Little and Ed Keuper at Newtown R.S.L. Australian wins ten million dollars in world poker championship ACTU refuge/e island Bangladesh beat Australia in one day cricket West Papuan repression goes unheeded I respect the open palm more than the fist Berlin anti-aircraft flak tower to be converted to apartments Newtown silos now apartments woman protesting at Greenham-on-Common protesters against Woolworths at Melany worried about platypus colony on 21st March the sun marries the earth asbestos deaths Russian POWS sent to gulag on repatriation for being captured rather than dying a patriach of Gregor's stayed with Allies Ry Cooder says Buena Vista Social Club have secrets on how we should live which are worth revealing to the world Cubans are people too Ry Cooder's Chavez ravine on lost Latin American neighbourhood and music land bulldozed for LA Dodgers baseball stadium many G.I.s opposed

to the war started to frag their officers leading to many deaths fragging: from fragmentation grenades used one banana two banana three banana four elderly Cuban pianist playing in Havana University hall to local audience 50 words make up half our vocabulary long-term public housing will cease to exist 50 year anniversary of black South Africa's Freedom Charter elephant used to save baby in well deforestation threatens habitat of many wild animals Star City pokies outside for smokers accused murdered his lover when she told him was leaving him sema: name for mystic whirling New York's people Easter Parade Britain's name is from its mythical founder Brutus the great grandson of Aenaes the Trojan who founded Rome Jimmy Little sings Royal Telephone wiretapping was common by FBI Don King the flamboyant U.S. boxing promoter neo-Nazism has a foothold in areas of the old GDR the annual global road toll is 1,200,000 30 odd days to reach the Pole by dog-sled the rail crash toll is seven Hilton Clinton is seen as politically ruthless Up there Cazaly Franca Arena wronged by Labor Comedy Central Arnold Schwarzeninger the Terminator Governor of California the Mermaid Pool at Manly where women skinny-dipped in the 30s has been revitalised back to life old Communist war victories are always shown on Chinese t.v drivers without e-tags pay a higher road toll grapple tackle the Caulfield Cup favourite wins the Stasi the East German secret police there are showers in the state but the drought goes on there is always the fear of more white fella land grabs Peter Sterling did practice by passing a ball through a swinging tyre telemarketing hello sir I am from the following charity spelling bee musical indy movies deserve a bigger audience why do they hate us? asks the U.S.A he's our MAN Brian Lara scores a famous 400 n.o some third world nations make big effort to keep girls schooled Evil Knievel daredevil! Yeti Rambo emotional freedom many demos goad government to send Australian troops to stop massacres in East Timor 70 people said they saw no IRA murder in pub the 3 sisters of murdered man are descendants of Ned Kelly Madrid AL-Queda bombings over 200 die Orson Welles 1938 Halloween radio report of Mars invasion causes mass panic in U.S. flying saucer experiments by the Soviet Union and U.S. 1 in 5 Anzacs died in WW1 a firefighter after 10 years of brain damaged silence suddenly wakes up starts talking cane toads Braith Achilles Anasta the 5/8th for Canterbury may play for Waratahs or South Sydney but it is all speculation cane toads kill species Shanghai with its new architecture is a 21st Century city large bomber raid on Japan after dropping Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombs is forgotten all bombing on civilians is immoral blue moon: a second full moon in same month interned American-Japanese citizens Michael had to have a tetanus injection on a camping trip on the South Coast by an old doctor called Dr Death who worked across the road from the local cemetery bi-polar depression is up Gittoes depicting a man holding up his daughter's head backs his claim to be anti-war artist the kill ratio is 11:1 wild dogs are strung up on trees during cull Kotzya Tsyzu is Australia's boxing world champion other halfbacks improve their passing by aiming ball at goalpost sides as Russians and Americans deal nuclear treaties in Washington or Moscow as their advisors and military hardware wager proxy wars in Africa and Asia Jeremiah 17: the heart is more deceitful than anything else press the hash key race tensions in post-apartheid South African countryside intensify Bradbury's No Pasaran at Opera House Michael goes with Master to watch it Doug Walters unorthodox saviour of Australian cricket bible found on Bloody Omaha David Wenham as charming Diver Dan to surly crim brother in The Boys a versatile actor living march on Holocaust Day work brings freedom Planet Ark says 25% of food wasted aircraft noise protests Sydneham houses soundproofed mobile phone cameras show tube devestation in Underground Zero in London buy www. Amazon Books Arab newspapers say not evil soldiers but evil policy Russian female fighter pilots ruthless & known as Night Witches anger is an energy Gary Numan Americans prefer to speak than to text Dorothy Lange SKY viewers get to text man of the match Billy Bowden NZ umpire Iraq war follows a template cast from Central America wars Barcelona and Real Madrid soccer rivalry represents Catalonian independence versus Franco the marble used for Michelangelo's David is very porous of a low quality which has many air bubbles on a microscopic level riots on rise in high jobless areas more suicide car bombs American beheaded to redeem abuses riots on Palm Island two Greek villages on Chios Island launch 1000s of fire rockets at each other from their churches to celebrate Orthodox Easter Delacroix paints the massacre of Chios by the Turks N.I.B insurance Rick McCosker continues to play in Centenary Match with a broken jaw Rod Marsh scores a 100 now coaches English cricketers to success World Economic Forum at Davros pagan just means country folk Dresden bordello charging cut price for the unemployed Exron in its duplicity is the darkest shadow of capitalism is our health service to be inequitable as the American system? Xerxes long bridge of boats across the Hellespont he said his men had become women and his women men when a female ally and her five ships fought better than the Persian ships when defeated by Athenians at Salamis Australian cricketers battle against reverse swing in Ashes used to be free phone calls off Telstra when looking for phone number foods such as blueberries broccoli linseeds low-fat yoghurt nuts oil-rich fish olive oil oranges capsicums legumes porridge oats quinoa red grapes almonds spinach tomatoes are super foods for your health the Volsci were an ancient people in Latium who Romans defeat towards end of 4th century B.C. remembrance of things past is an expression used by Shakespeare in Sonnet 30 by him St.Petersburg skyscraper threatens historc skyline saffron most expensive spice in the world $1000 a kilo grown in La Mancha Murali Murathilan great SriLknkan spin bowler who values life differently after tsunami like KeithMiller who saw so many die in RAF Roger Federer coached by Tony Roche doing old mail outs by post the old Japanese lady in suburban Drummoyne survived the Hiroshima blast with school friends they saw a flash and later went the10 kilometers to the city centre to see shadows of vaporised people someone in government is teaching people how to carry out torture U.S. forces setback for your country Happy as Larry Tiger Woods miracle putt at Augusta Israeli husband burns huge cash fortune on front lawn after argument with his wife Norwegian children from German soldiers osctracised fake drugs kill third world people the pink lady formed by over 11,000 women at the AFL to commemorate same number of women with breast cancer Melbourne 41º UEFA rules have to change for Liverpool 6 Afghan policeman 1 U.S. commando beheaded Californian skateboarder soars over the Great Wall Gregor mentions seeing a black fire eater from Leeds perform at the Great Wall fascism was a religion in the 30s Jesse Owens the Paper Man Austria's greatest footballer defied the Nazis died mysteriously 3 soldiers commended for not involving themselves in My Lai massacre the origin of all life maybe in the Pilbara Franco used football for internal politics Mussolini rigged referees for Italy World Cup win FUTBOL CCCP Christine Anu played with Neil Murray before she became famous sang My Island Home at closing of Sydney Olympics nano-robots in our bodies to outperform natural organs kill deadly cells more efficiently live longer deformed fetuses aborted Guinness Book of Records the unknown can become famous walking on charcoals the French involvement in the bombing of the Greenpeace Rainbow Warrior as it was against nuclear

testing in the Pacific Argentinean photographer dies Russian astrologer sues NASA for probe collision on comet says upsets balance of the universe cyclones in the Caribbean kills many Cyclone Tracy at Christmas Bukowski his generous philanthropist sold off his first edition library to help give the famed poet a real start Bill Fewes great unsung local poet slow cars lead to knock on effect causing traffic jams love an evolutionary trick human consciousness stays at primal level to have family bim bim bim dim dim dim don't stand by me there has been a conference organised by people who have survived lightning strikes as their ongoing traumas are not believed frustrated caller to cable television help line gets revenge by inadvertently changing telephone message to something more offensive Gaza strip SS soldiers dressed as Americans in the Battle of the Bulge AC DC guitarist with school uniform & cap in 1954 the acquittal of the murder of 14 year old Emett Till was a catalyst of the civil rights black movement after all his grotesquely battered face for all to see at his funeral next year Rosa Parks in Montgomery refused to give up her bus seat in the coloured section to a white person her arrest sparked the first widespread boycotts Cousin It in Adams Family reconnaissance videos for terror attacks a young male driver of a car accident which two best friends died been talking to college students as his punishment with support of the parents of the dead youths it has proved to be an effective deterrent as over 8,000 students take heed of this tragedy take the cake mythconceptions there are 25 billion neurons in human cerebral cortex facing traffic all day contorting space time with cosmic worm holes may not be technically feasible lack of power makes mouth not big enough to take a human bush pilots underpaid don't hang the innocent postmodernism is we know we don't know damn long forgotten wars an interesting personality is shallow with uninteresting life support grassroots prisoners demand administrator resign listening to steady lengthy announcement of Premier League scores a stable anchor in uncertain world astra travel financial pressure causes air accidents exotic matter zim zim bib pull down an EH 's glove box lid see 2 round indents use as coasters for beer glasses gender changing teenagers in Pacific islands Margaret Thatcher did a good job destroying democracy with terrorism Brighton crabs riding thongs from Africa intelligence agencies need to develop flat hierarchies like terrorist cells the Blitz Carl Sagan says earth to pass away to be swallowed by dying sun Labor alienates outer suburbs Christianity rose in acceptance through Roman middle classes who had political power don't muddy the waters unknown negro victims dredged up in swamps yes men 11,000 commuters abandon SydneyRail per month slow timetable introduced to overcome unreliability GPS jihadists disguise as westerners adopt lifestyles when on active duty skinhead in wheelchair in Newtown plays punk music shouts obscenities at Asian passers-by Keanes an aggressive soccer player Darwin beer can regatta elderly Australian couple help Thai hospital by raising big donation a boy chooses to play as goalie to practice his catching AFL skills African-American children adopted by other countries the likes of Kissinger held power while Mayas massacred Corrimal house fire threatens man's life scientists regrow arms replace spines Daniel Pearl's cold-blooded murder in Pakistan at hands of captors taping it a psychological turning point in modern terror era do you love me?Sarcophagus from Ancient Greek belief that flesh eating stone used to consume a corpse in 40 days penguin males take care of egg with feet for 2 months African woman agricultrual student with Madonna was 10 minutes from death when a baby saved by Live Aid says Geldof Dr Who vs the Master East End muslims friendly Amata a South Australian Aboriginal community Russian blue cats breeder at Penrith it's Kylie HBO Les Girls Australian nurse saved East Timor refugees on ship in Indonesia American shame prosperity doctrine a blasphemy divide and rule NSW tannery uses same toxic chemicals as in Erin Brokovitch movie human shield life experience truck sign said we only leave memories stowaway in plane fell to death when landing gear lowered visiting evangelist to Nigeria complains about losing money not making a profit the front room windows had XXXX signs a big picture of Alan Border staring at road 23 countries hit by Al-Qeda El Salvadorian environmentalist said death squads members offered to kill the people who were ruining the environment quasars many boarded ships in Memel to escape from the Russian army oil for food water rates must go up to overcome drought Hugo Weaving in Paddington Czech Republic 2nd in football world rankings work in organising football tournaments in Kenya slums promote life opportunities mind as street directory virtual universe has 20,000,000 galaxies wire prods in brain will enable disabled to move objects with minds Columbian world cup player scored own goal really killed over nightclub argument over a woman in 1940s U.S. asylums horrific like concentration camps despair Zulu says leave way out for enemy or son will come for revenge cold water gargling bad for vocal chords journalist risks his life for the voiceless I.Q. scores improve on terrace wall a country scene with ocean easy to forget inner-city Nick Cave sings are you the one I have been waiting for? Toyota Dreaming a four wheel drive woven from desert cactus grass wins main indigenous art prize Bill Gates a well known philanthropist although business practices of MicroSoft taken to court $40 billion debt write-off for 18 poorest countries by G-8 computer generated model of the universe's beginning been devised life in comets planets align Margaret Thatcher and her megaphone diplomacy Eurovision song contest in Istanbul won by Ukraine have faith but don't give up day job drugged heart stents expensive for low incomers studies of fake & real needles prove acupuncture works 1,200,000 children globally trafficked annually in my mind I see Blake shocked to see Locke Newton Rousseau on Footy Show 2,000 year old date seed found at ancient fortress Massada germinates plant named Methulsa Liverpool's magnificent Instanbul comeback to level from 3-nil down against A.C. Milan win Champion Leagues on penalties inspiring captain lifts his hands like Atlas raising the world at Liverpool fans to help spur on unlikely victory Chinese astrologer in 1500 goes to space in rocket chair Buster busted disco ball elevator of death tiny blue eyed fish eats mosqiutos female artist visiting holocaust memorials in the world in Rwanda clothes of genocide victims form a memorial mid-west tornadoes Michael tells me of his wily old English teacher with grey hair who he once saw at Balmain Markets provided him with wizened view of world to cope avoid terror our affluent comfortable society often reverts to childhood infantilism rather than face up to stark reality we in a global war world's largest soap bubble blown in New Zealand 5,000 kamikazes die the first suicide dive on the H.M.A.S. Cerebrus in the Leyte Gulf orang-utang sanctuaries show intelligent life here on earth not in space the flush toilet is an Australian invention colourful electric Olympic worm bands glowing along outlines of the sails on Opera House 1,065 wooden crosses torn down at Checkpoint Charlie make way for development Maradona wants to invite Fidel Castro onto his new variety show called No 10 the English Premiership is becomig boring according to Master with Chelsea buying its way to success overpriced tickets still the A-League in Australia should be a success Juventus Liverpool final goes ahead despite over thirty fatalities in crowd the thread has fatefully broken on Canterbury's season Cooke who prosecuted King Charles 1st who was exucuted had advocated lawyers do a tenth of their work for free for the poor King Xerxes had stated that his men had become

women and his women men when a female ally with her five ships fought best at the Battle of Salamis which the Persians lost a Persian bridge of ships built to cross the Hellespont a man cut in half which the Persian armies walked in between in Byron environ there are so many environmentalists that they are eroding the local scene media people helping to rescue hurrican survivors while consular people stopped by American officials Sidney Poitier in To Sir with Love Federer a tennis genius Crazy Horse's tribe fought as a family Pauline Hanson says John Howard adopts her policies used as sounding board anti-collision devices be on all planes Ukraine witch drinks street children's blood Hitler said close hearts to pity you conquer the world Chinese mechanic said fishing his hobbit he meant to say hobby Estonia wins wife carrying race pagans had wooden roads their burial mounds status symbols for territorial claims conduits to underworld chieftan palace burnt so in mind tele-ported to next world dancers on Opera House for NYE the only ultimate civil liberty to stay in the war on terror is to stay alive the Benny Hill silly walks and music CO2 videoconferencing Lindy Chamberlain had thousands of letters of support believing in her innocence that a dingo did take her baby Charlegmane cut down a sacred tree to assert authority first parliamentary democracy in Iceland while Europe amid Dark Ages used legends to assert claim over land must know history of land to live in it knowledge is culture link human community to land urban life cut off land also cut off from ourselves Lithuania pagan until 600 years ago poor countries like ignored beggars message stick vehicle Kyoto greenhouse probe crash in comet flu pandemic to kill millions like after WW1 a day without laughter is a day wasted H.G. Wells War of the Worlds attacks colonialism petrol sniffing could be snuffed out in Northern Territory by changing type of petrol what one does is what counts not what one intends to do says Pablo Picasso mass strike for better wages and conditions in South Africa new composition by Vivaldi discovered by Australian researcher in Dresden there is Don Quixote and there is the Don of cricket Confucious existed at the time of the Persian Wars Iceland on fiery faultline of teutonic plates 8 men in room can change history G8 Charles de Gaulle stated hard to run a country that makes 256 different types of cheese itwins separated at birth unwittingly tragically marry Tiger Woods in golf poll seen better than Jack Nicklaus 1958 Manchester United team die in air crash world divebombing competition in Germany 36,000 dead in Brazil in a year by guns Birdsville horse race in Central Australia attracts quality contenders superannuation Roman Empire officially after Julius Caesar the Qu'ran says people made different not to despise each other but to understand each other Mecca Saladdin noble figure Goddard modern rocket inventor dentists don't know cause of tooth decay 1st non-stop Atlantic flight in 1919 well before Lindbergh there is a big music barn in the woods north of Hamburg contortionists not double-jointed just stretch ligaments by training bats not blind see better when light is fading rather than in daylight a compass points 2,000 kilometres west of North Pole to Magnetic Pole evil eye blue is the colour of the crusader Lib control of Senate threat to democracy ICA Master's other nickname Joan Didion's Salvador talks of 'grimgrams' to Washington from U.S. embassy on death squad tolls link pick-ups with atrocities Cherokee bible reading Cronulla forwards woman who lost her soldier son demands to speak to the President in Texas Kinky Friedman to go into politics man gives his Porsche as tip to angelic waitress in Sweden iCameroon beer bottle tops used as currency as prizes can be won Lithuanian border guards have found a 3km hose used to smuggle vodka from Belarus Jewish settlers have secular Israeli soldiers defend them Condeleeza Rice says U.S. more concerned with stability than democracy UN's hands tied to massacres genocides Japanese man recites pi from memory to 83,431 places Ven cats in eastern Turkey have two-tone eys love to swim Big Mike Koori in Sweden Johnny White's Sports Bar and Grill a New Orleans bar in the French Quarter stays open despite flooding Madam Lash wants to save Kirk Gallery in Surry Hills so as to keep this ex-church building as a space for creativity in Sydney test cricket in England more popular than the football premiership Jason Gillepsie to be dropped thrilling ends to tests Albanian Ismail Kadare wins inaugural International Man Booker Prize inspirational batting by the tailenders Kapowitz Lee at Egbaston to nearly pull off miracle win for Australia Hanoi orchestra underground 50 year old woman raped her throat cut in New Orleans her body placed in an oven seven year old girl raped killed policemen shot dead in back of the head by looters special schools in Sydney for discipline problem children Andrew Wilke hero for truth Australian anti-terrorist laws censor free speech protect government's Orwellian criminalities many children in Nagasaki melt away to death N.T.Labor has backing of indigenous on indigenous alcoholism silence is golden dog whistle politics David Attenborough via tv link signals dolphin to put frisbee in basket a Brazil coast village for many generations dolphins initiate fishermen to catch fish a unique act of cooperation of 2 species Australians spend more on pet-care products than on foreign aid female artist visits world holocaust memorials in Rwanda clothes of genocide victims form memorial mid-west tornadoes Sudanese children draw atrocities committed by government army world's largest soap bubble blown in New Zealand Latin American Bureau histroy's blowback on USA sad 3,000 die but also sad hundreds of thousands die from political terror in Central America other parts of 3rd World The Cypriot & the Archibald Prize Sulman Prize Schapelle Corby's Indonesian lawyer has more new evidence TNI kill more people Australian govt turns a further moral blind eye Georgia finally rights the wrong of black maid's legal lynching sixty years later Merian C. Cooper who created King Kong lived a life of exploration & adventure Cooper is one of the pilots who kills King Kong while on the Empire State Building had an idea of a giant gorilla since childhood girl lives through Panama aircrash found after 3 days hanging upside down Cervantes was also an adventurer New Orleans needed bigger walls nanotube sheets five times stronger than steel the internet will atomize us surfies known as finbackers up the coast Matiarichi Mahesh Yoga orders his followers to project peaceful thoughts to the western instigators of the Mid-East Crisis many Russian wizards sorcerers to be licensed memory is a pandora's box while in heaven meant to be many mansions hydrogen power conveniently overlooked a cowboy in a movie shot his son dead because he had a broken leg as he rationalised that he does the same to horses what sort of government puts a crippled woman on a plane to nowhere? To have no one help her?To be abandoned? Like PM Howard & Rudd dcruelly id to crippled Filipino woman? The homeless and the opportunists lined up in a neat queue at Parrammata Park to await a free hot meal some of them fighting among themselves Terry Wogan on BBC2 burglar hogtied by elderly patenque players in NZ Michelangelo made more money than da Vinci & Titian in aftermath of Hurricane Katrina striking New Orleans 1000s of victims abandoned by Bush administration poor & black drug crazed adidcts unable to get a fix are running amok a litle girl's message in a bottle in England has ended up 9,000 kilometres in Perth heralded black singer of the Midnight Hour dies Google selfcensorship in China John Aloisi highly regarded in Spain after that penalty drug crazed hipster angels in Howl poor blacks forgotten in evacuation plans no buses for them Harold Blom argues a connection between the Wasteland's lilies Walt

Whitman's lilies some of Eliot's images are owed to Whitman Johny Depp Sean Penn send off their gonzo journalist's friend's ashes from a 47 metre tower a young autistic boy who was the water boy for an American basketball team had to play because of injuries scored the winning goals to be a hero Bono supports Bob Geldof as Nobel Peace Prize nominee new Bolivian President Morales was once thelowest indigineous peasant picking scraps the Condor is the esteemed bird 6,000 children die a day from dirty water Jerry Springer a serious politician Middle English word bee linked to communal activities leads to spelling bee voiceover actor in Winnie the Pooh dies hard tackling Samoan rugger known as the chiropractor Australia came fourth at the Athens Olympics there are moves to stop the sport brain drain to other countries to secure a top global sport position hard man of the right Nick Minchin's wife used to go out with Midnight Oil's Peter Garret drunk birds smashing into skyscrapers large 15 kilo German bred farm rabbits malaria drug losing its potency millions may die especially African children under five wheneverJayasura scorees for than fortyruns for Sri Lankaseventy five per cent of thet ime Sri Lanka win which tells a story says the capatain in NY those living around the former World Trade Centre were given free vaccuum cleaners because of all the dust problems Chirac talks of using nuclear capability if ststes that sponsor terrorists threaten to damage French interests in McCarthys USA people accused only by hearsay and no fair trial he Subways sing bemy RocknRoll Queen on Rage a whale in the Thames for the first time in a 100 years captures the imagination of a nation as rescue attempts are made to save it and live tv the Beasts of Bourbon singas well & the Divynls also to be savoured Pakistan earhquake kills 40,000 tim tams Aboriginal consulation now goes on when archeologists involve with excavating on traditional sites spirits can be disturbed with detrimental results Port Phillip Bay under threat by dredging Area 10 in brain North Queensland Cowboys in better form with winning spirit Saul Bellow's short story Silver Dish in the New Yorker in 1978 the following extract well sums up the modern malaise: think what times these are the papers daily give it to you Lufthansa pilot in Aden described by hostages on his knees begging the Palestinian terrorists not to execute him but shoot him through head later hemselves are killed & still others shoot others or shoot themselves that's what you read in the press see on the tube mention at dinner we know now what goes on daily through whole of the human community like a global death-peristatis Tyger!Tyger! Burning Bright! In the forests of the night what immortal hand or eye could frame thy fearful symmetry? In Blake's mythology the Tyger a symbol of God's wrath negates Lamb that symbolises forgiveness Marcos Ross Gittens SMH economist who always seems sympathetic to peoples working lives & housing pressures Baghdatis has reached the Australian Open Final states Jim Courier after September 11 less people flew around the world and it was noted the flu season in the US was delayed by 3 weeks in Moscow Russian secret services have found a hollowed rock with electronic device inside & used by British secret services causing a diplomatic row Indian call centres are places which improve the status of many women and allow them to be a help to their families with a good income it is ironic compared to Australia Austen Tayshus&his Australiana routine Turkey attacks Iraqi Kurds Perth is 44 degrees Australians return the ashes of four Japanese submariners who attacked Sydney Harbour via the RedCross an unthinking German driver obeyed his car computer voice when it told him to turn left and duly crashed into a road barrier in the 1988 Grand Final Terry Lamb knocks out star Tiger black Englishman Eric Hanley Balmain lost 24-12 next Grand Final had extra time Wayne Pearce's last-ditch field goal attempt still heartbreaking to see Warren Ryan took off his two star forwards Roach and Sironen helped Canberra finish comeback win: 19-14 Laurie Nicholls champion stalwart Tigers fan wouldn't see another Balmain premiership in his lifetime Dennis Bendall one of the great unsung heroes of the Balmain Club Benji Marshall Scott Prince John Skandalis Grand Final Tigers heroes a fantastic flick pass by a rampant Marshall to have a try scored Balmain's famous tackling 11-2 1969 Grand Final victory over mighty Souths stands as club's greatest achievement fans know where they were that day I a cheering little excited nipper in Balmain's old streets this David over Goliath win still sustains me to this day Aussie Diggers fighting in Afghanistan had a donkey race to introduce the local populus to the grandness of the Melbourne Cup suicide bombing is mainly motivated by an interest to repel occupying forces from territories they are in a tactical consistent pattern when the stars threw down their spears to water heaven with their tears the stars represent reason to Blake they threw down their spears in fearful dread of Tyger war casualties are inevitable the Australian cricket team can be sore losers the commentator says Queenslanders called cane toads by NSW people who in turn are called cockroaches children burnt to death in Kenya church initada in Palestine a child left in a car during a heat wave dies thousands of elderly people die in extreme heat wave in Europe a children dying due to hospitals misdiagnosis human hair is in huge demand in Argentina for hair extensions a Siberian tiger was beheaded skinned in a China zoo Tyger! Tyger! & the human imagination the church is a book club & the only book we all really need to read is the eternal one of life to see if our names are in it Middle Harbour in Sydney Captain Cook's 1769 diary has the first use of the word tattoo in Western literature after being in Tahiti a lot of tattooists are ex-sign writers Market value versus human values South Sydney Leagues Club to ban the pokies waiting to watch the MCG Boxing Day test Jose Carreras sings love songs the malnourished African baby at the start of Lateline couples twirling in mid-air defying gravity in chambers at the world body flying championships there are liberties worth living for or for dying for our rights aspiration the parents of a teenage daughter who committed suicide donate her organs to save other lives Harbord change to Freshwater Iraq wins Asian Cup don't look at me abandoned Hindu widows lost sock & glove Chinese news censorship the use of thugs to intimidate interviewees to Western media Brian Wilson singing California Dreaming in Domain inheritance deliverance don't leave things in your car a smoking gun Sudanese man makes a good shearer in Geelong kumari is a child goddess in Nepal truth is the first casualty of war and ourselves Hollywood writers strike affect talk shows Presidential candidates are products not human beings that slang word random to describe the chance meeting of someone new smoke puffing from digital camera flash like a party trick Geoff Henry Lawson is the new coach of the Pakistan cricket team Tendulkar and the Indian cricket goddess of a hundred centuries that friend of Michael's called the rain goddess as it always rains on her birthday it is meant to be good luck lets have change to believe in Georgie Boy a hard day a batsman should always walk life should be just oversize coffins up 10% due to obesity those self-confident Labor gods Whitlam Hawke Keating Bernie Banton the ill worker who heroically fought the James Hardie company over asbestos eventually died turn on the TV and be mentally transported to anywhere even to Mars we maybe aliens revenue streams the whole fibre of my being it is strange when you think of the monasteries perched on Mt.Athos that atheist is from the word athos I found out in novel Snow forge batting partnership Shiva the Cricketer India 7-705 declared at SCG cricket in NY to civilize gang members and for the homeless those

mannequins on top of the barber shop awning in Marrickville Road another mannequin of a kebab man on top of Victoria Yeeros I saw a man in Stanmore wearing a silver outfit pleasant surprises may await us the crucifixion burning love keep us on an even keel kitten on a broomstick happiness is to feel balanced happiness is having good conversation a crime no English Premier League on free to air tv need a second wind in life feel pressure to live a full life death maybe a relief Epicurus that last push to cross the tryline Seneca said do not expect too much and wont be disappointed the people of Hamlin should have honoured the Pied Piper where do the children play? sings Cat Stevens failed states with nuclear weapons love yes Chris Isaaks it is a wicked game we play brother of Tendulkar spotted his cricket talent at 14 when he made 1st class debut Colin Cowdrey wanted to introduce himself to Thommo when he went out to bat psychic hunt for loved one's spirits on a current affair show Marcel Proust remarks when grimly in a dark wood one can still look up at the blue sky for hope and inspiration in life WWI led to modern anxiety over progress the 20th century is called short because it began in 1914 La Mancha one hour from Madrid the Long Horned Maoios in China whose women have large clumps of roped up hair lets call St.Peters St.Petersburg and build a replica Hermitage on King Street Russian Blue cats are beautiful & intelligent the Australian wicketkeeper wearing pink cricket gloves for breast cancer research Footy Show catch heroic in everyday ordinary life piggy in middle pink cricket bat handles Taliban attack hotel where Aust embassy is UN Baghdad grounds attacked brilliant Brazilian emissary killed escaped hidden in trucks to Thai border its hell live within your means I am not a cut-out hoarding for adverts filling out the days of my life in our celebrity generation do not be impressed by fame hitching in England where in this class society punks or judges could pick you up hindsight if only we could have a rearview mirror view of life working for us caught on a no ball so doesn't count I read a t-shirt that said I liked everything you liked five years ago same same but different a common saying in Vietnam shark cauhght by Melbourne man in dinghy not for the feint hearted if you want to end the drought put the cricket on at the Gabba best laid plans of mice & men Robert Burns a businessman losing all his money kills himself it is realised then the supremacy of a spiritual life Tim Ritchies RN album of year to Perry Keyes Laxman a great No3 Indian batsman drives brilliantly for 4 pure cover drive in good form a shot of elite setting ground alight boundary hitters black arm bands worn by players singles a jig Sydney school art room built without sink trivia of life plastic spring water bottles actually contribute to the ecological nightmare water crystals there are those who say that we live this life so we can get ready for the next one in the so called afterlife our remembrance through our creations Petra Kelly of the German Greens was right samba music to rise above living hells in the third world the time has come to say fair's fair huh!100 wooden pegs are handy Kush the ancient land of the Black Pharoahs we know we do not know everything St.Stephens Day on Boxing Day a bowler conditions a batsman over time to make a rash shot an attacking team conditions the defence to finally open up a gap screaming into his hat tight U.S. elections in 2000 rigged in Florida no one wants to die keep an eye on life happiness is a warm gun sing the Beatles pinhole camera according to Asian legend lip coloured dragon fruit will give the eater the strength of a dragon a fire storm life is too short to do things out of obligation new NY short film festival by DeNiro to renew a neglected district Seinfeld funnily parks in the middle of the road Sydney traffic is an instrument of the Devil a maths teacher who spoke of global lukewarming inky pinky spider sculptures in Maundrell Park Bridge on the River Kwai be happy in your work! the bean counters of the science community Charon shall deal with them Underland with Nick Cave songs Dog Trumpet painted ukuleles exhibited at Clovelly a Fairweather ukele photo of Tiny Tim in suburban room playing with pensioner on piano Sandman its not happiness that matters but knowing what is real state Annandale SHELL station with all OUT OF ORDER petrol pumps because COLES who owns it too miserly to repair them mortgage repossession on increase consider to take Lisa to Julian Ashton School of Art at Quay with its formal approach the sketch club with flamenco dancer or to other sketch club at Tap Gallery? Amnesty International art fundraiser Nicaraguan Boy sold what avante garde at the start of the 21st century turning on an ecological light bulb? St.Bernard a saint knows to be guided by heaven's compass to follow love the five books of Moses are the edited amalgamation of 4 different scholarly biblical traditions the calamity of exile led to the hope of a messiah people trap their thinking within the mental parameters of their present time think outside the box wikipedia the twentieth century is one of paradox technological barbarity and medical advance money is the bottom line of our modern culture which is driven by the market that Indian Brisbane taxi driver who wrote his own song to praise Australia with his video clip in an Indian outfit and turban driving a Vietnamese family in a flying taxi over Australian landmarks and with Cathy Freeman and a host of people from all walks of life and all cultures all Aussie Thomas Edison a man of the future Eiffel fights his detractors of his tower who couldn't see the future a hard construction made of delicate iron lines overconfident Germans no longer use codes to transmit ibattle plans thus a rallied French Army brought to the front in Paris taxis stopped German advance at the Marne the Eiffel Tower a huge radio transmitter for French military had played its part if you look up at the sky you cannot cry you may think your decision may be right or wrong in hindsight but at the time you can only rely on what you think is the right moral choice sound reasons over final direction in this labyrinth called life our market share driven society greed flesh without blood there are two main life principles which we must abide the first being be still to know who is God and secondly that one cannot serve both God & Mammon aerial perspective the ack-ack gunners reported to Churchill that they were not shooting down any Lufwaffe bombers during the blitz he ordered keep firing anyway yes yes Mr. Churchill one does not have to succeed in short term but such psychological anchors or habits or call it mental bridges over a rough patch between brighter days will keep us in good stead confidence must be kept for later success the great journey of life disengage from the system we freeze addicted to oil death lost souls looking for love James Joyce shows us there is no need for any punctuation when writing about our dreams yes strategic hamlets in Vietnam & Guatemala in war everyone can be cruel in the Gospel of Luke Chapter 12 Jesus said be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed or hidden that will not be made known what you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight & what you have whispered in the ear of inner rooms will be proclaimed from the housetops I tell you my friends do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more but I will show you whom you should fear fear him who after the killing of the body has power to throw you into hell yes I tell you fear him are not five sparrows sold for 2 pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God indeed the very hairs of your head are all numbered don't be afraid you are worth more than many sparrows retail chain store in Stock Clearance Sale actually raised retail price of igoods Split Enz free 2SM concert at Victoria Park in 80s Divinyls Christina Amphlett legendary female

Australian singer with school uniform Animals Woodstock Jimi Hendrix playing US anthem using his teeth for all of us silence is golden the ACTU will finance research to track what happens to 8,000 workers under new neo-con industrial laws Sea of Hands at Bondi Koori Mail Neil Murray Jimmy Little at Victoria Park Latin is perfect logic agflation bread is life tortilla riots in Mexico pasta riots in Italy world with end to have human empathy Australians should always keep supporting the underdog fair go Social Darwinism used to justify oppression is this modern world the point of evolution let go on the grounds of what you expect to be released from not because of what you expect to gain we always think the grass is greener then again it maybe carbon trading is essential the light in Genesis where poetic order of creation of all things follows scientific order of evolution where is the end of the universe? Long hospital waiting lists lead to more premature deaths in China people swirling around in their millions in vast train system Keegan for Newcastle coach job Sverenskon good at Man City Michael Schumaker takes over driving of taxi in Germany to get family on time to airport to buy Australian dog Gregor talks of a Danish birdman in wilds of central China even Iran got a detainee back why isnt Australia getting their detainee back? Bolivia has 1st indigenous President is left leaning not liked by landowners FIFA has wanted to ban football in high altitude stadiums Chavez negotiates freedom for hostages held for years by Columbian leftist rebels Taliban resurgence in Afghanistan French aid workers in Chad goal accused for trafficking local children French o deal with much colonial baggage in Africa baby pool drownings Aust govt. deports undesirables not citizens born overseas but live here since were children or from a few days & speak only English modest Edmund Hillary Mt. Everest conqueror with Tenzing dies wants to be remembered for Nepal charity climbed at time off Queen's Coronation work interviewed on Classic Music FM likes the bridge over water song sung by Simon & Garfunkel Heart of Gold Film Festival in Gympir great example of intersection between culture & community involvement mudslides kill many Indonesia deforestation 2 Chinese teachers face death penalty for tricking then pimping over 20 female students for prostitution Fitzroy Crossing take away beer ban led to sharp drop in Aboriginal domestic violence & reawakening of interest in spiritual tradition Republicans do not get specific candidate will vote Democrat everyday ninemsn usually trivial stories humans irrational Stolen Generation demand compensation Israeli Sharon in coma for 2 years Brazilian Santa Claus shot when approached slums of Rio in helicopter to give gifts to impoverished children local drug gang assumed helicopter belonged to police Santa arrived safely later by car great example of intersection between culture & community involvement Aust naval vessels monitor so called research scientific Japanese whaling is Iran nuclear? Never let truth get in way of good story eccentric uncle runs naked in W.A. desert late night T.V old sci-fi movie Slime People attack L. A. anti-Iranian protest in Berlin with protesters in Auschwitz stripes and nooses around their necks on hanging platform organic alcohol decline in public transport Howard gag over welfare groups GETUP lobby group with use of internet for networking helping to set up a new paradigm for social change outside usual rallies etc popular Lebanese politician assassinated oil states have high political leverage over world Russia holds Georgia to ransom with oil prices to show dissatisfaction over Georgia's ever growing ties with West spiking drinks common Australia needs to up www speeds to compete George Washington played cricket 13,000 victims of Stolen Generation Buddy Holly be friends with Johnny O'Keefe in Australia The Wild One window cleaner falls 47 stories & lives a miracle wooden beam slowed fall 1 man STAR WARS show Bob Zimmerman saw Buddy Holly walked out as Bob Dylan never twain will meet young people in New Age spirituality have become more depressed motor way umpiring let later wickets fall Gold! Gold! Gold! reaches record prices especially with war rumours yet another Middle-East peace solution Kerry endorses Ohama Saudi Arabia couple beheaded for killing 9 year old daughter public executions common faces of Australian citizens from all nationalities covering Federation Square in Melbourne inspired as a rebuff to Cronulla riots the French Muhammed Ali look-a-like thrashed Nadel & is now in Aust.Open Final Ali calls win over Foreman Rope-A-Dope German teenager sent to Siberia as punishment January 26 Republic Day in India is also Australia Day Ritz theatre at the time of Alfred the Great warriors would cut open a living person's ribcage and fling out the lungs on either side blood lungs in Randwick old & regal Kylie Monogue was in a new Dr Who episode NATO unwilling to fight in south Afghanistan where imore dangerous Congo death toll reaches over 5,000,000 after 10 years of internal strife a Goth who takes his girlfriend for a walk on a dog leash refused to go on bus by English bus driver a Liberian rebel admits to eating children's hearts to gain battle victory SIM cards can survive heat at up to 450^0 centigrade help in Madrid bombing clues impression of walking alien on Mars Robert Burns born Jan 25 plans go astray signature mix-up of Japanese WWII surrender documents Sydney FC supporter on soapbox press lever in front to see him cheer Scots want U.S. to import Haggis Cat looking at a turtle when he opened the door of the young farm couple's American Jeep when hitching in Arkansas Michael as child with cousins at zoo his aunt would always like to take them she always patting horses in the little park behind shop before Police Station built police use capsicum spray at Australian Open teenager arrested for putting on huge party bash causing public nuisance was on commercial radio paid $750 two die in winery blast German WWII pilot survived falling 1000s of feet without parachute by sliding into big scoop of snow World local supermodel gives up catwalk WHAM-O! Father of Hoola-Hoop Frisbee craze Richard Knerr dies aged 82 Nº 1 tennis star Roger Federer starts career as ball boy in Basel tournament meditate! think beyond times we live mentally ill suicide bombers Baghdatis defeats Safrin but goes down heroically to Hewett in midnight to dawn match Baghdatis smiles facing 3 match points peeling oranges four quartets inspire sail shapes of Opera House new Socceroo Dutch coach observes the quality of A-League not up to a reserve grade training session of Bundheswer League well spotted & Harry Kewell backs this up Farm original name of Midnight Oil surf music Angry Tradesemen twenty year old Russian tennis star Sharapova richest sportswoman obese Australian paddles across Atlantic t-shirt reads I'm cancelling subscription as tired of all your issues German Shepherd antithesis camp guard dog stereotype problem of being earnest folly English aristocracy Mandujuk Black Arm Band of History at Opera House finance meltdown in France 8 billion euros lost that Melbourne ad with guy in suit tails & mad eyes running in winefield sings run rabbit run run looting in Queensland floods an angry PM Rudd assures police crackdown U.S. recession on he cards world go down with it three feet discovered on Canadian coast dogs save people's lives in avalanches by sniffing them out celebrity split ups all the lastest each zebra has unique markings dingoes brought to Australia by Asian fishermen 4,000 years ago possible axing of Bulletin clearly shows profits come before quality journalism govt razor gang Krystgyan mountain to be named Santa's home man's skin in U.S. deep blue an 11 year old boy gave CPR to his father in a car accident and walked 3 kilometres barefoot along a country road at midnight to get help a hero Montezuma killed by his own people thieves blow up ATMs last day of Royal Easter Show childrens day show lost

character since move to concrete of Homebush chemical AWB oil for food scandal Vanessa Redgrave puts up £1,000,000 bail for former Guatanomo Bay detainee Magic Johnson NFL basketballer with HIV does humanitarian work Chinese banned toy joke on www has slippery dip with cheese grater teeth Florida slippery dip with tongue as slide between red lips Sydney people with skylights in their heads McKews MSG supporters PM John Howard loses Bennelong seat to Labor ex-journalist Maxine McKew infers that integrity can win over meanness and brute lack of compassion Bennelong the Aboriginal is actually buried in an unmarked grave in this electorate lest we forget Oscar Wilde said to have too much knowledge is to be doomed the German director of Downfall the film on Hitler's last fateful Berlin days also worked on Inspector Rex he is a hero with no fear-
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Cat starts twirling on the spot like a Turkish dervish as he delves further into a mental junkyard.

"*To unite with God! Everything twirls! Atoms. Water. Blood. All turn and circulate!'*

"COME IN SPINNER! HIT ME WITH YOUR RHYTHM STICK!"

'We must hope to turn again! Multifoliate Rose!'

"GO THE TIGERS!"

'Our brains have become mental vacuum cleaners!'

"HELLO SIR I AM RINGING YOU UP FROM MUMBAI AND WE ARE OFFERING OVER THE PHONE TODAY A DEAL OF A LIFETIME!"

'Life the holiday package! (Read the fine print in your mind!) Our vision is distracted! We all fall down!'

Cat does likewise.

The Mind is a Minotaur

Marcel Duchamp's whirring rotor circles on the front cover of a 1930s French Surrealist magazine titled Minotaure.

'A little hidden motor would make these black and white circles marvellously blend together or separate in ways that tricked the eyes. Duchamp was a mind sweeper. An alchemist of the mind - to repeat a cliché. He shed light on the dark interior of our mental membranes. These spinning circles make a connection in my brain between Ptolemy's concentric spheres of the universe with the microscopic string symphonies of creation. There is so much on my mind. Yet I cannot help viewing 'all things' from the points of view of both the telescope and microscope. In the background of these 'chance spirals' are what appear on first glance to be the vast shaman Nazca lines that stretch out on a desert beside the foothills of the Peruvian Andes. It is realized these outlines are the accidental cracks in Duchamp's large glass panel The Bride Stripped Bare By Her Bachelors, Even which had been seen in person at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The glass of this installation had cracked during transportation. I have always considered this broken glass as containing remnants of a modern Achilles shield.'

Cat glares at Michael. "We are 'little bachelors' compared to Hades!" With his back against the front door of the flat as if to stop it from being opened, Cat stares at Lisa. "Mr. Hell wants her as a nude Eurydice descending the staircase to his 'wonderland'!"

Homage To New York

This 'shaman' then sets his sight on the cityscape. "Human towers of gadgetry that build themselves up and tear themselves down and build themselves up again and tear themselves down again! Strata after strata of broken pillars and rubble on graves of rubbish and bones!"

'We have still been living with a medieval worldview even though we had swapped the sun with the earth and two angels turning the wheel of the universe with gravity; there was still a belief in a fixed universe. Yet, now we see in this structure we call the real world that there are too many irregular, jagged fragments.'

The Large Glass

'The metallically painted machine pieces encased in the dusty large glass are akin to the residue of a repressed psyche, the mechanical bride, amidst a cloudy Milky Way, is eroticised, while the self-loving bachelor, on this wedding night, is not ready to introduce to this machine virgin any sense of organic life, he will withdraw 'his apparatus' before a mutual climactic destiny can be achieved.'

"The marriage of heaven and hell!" Cat taps a window.

'An unrequited existence is what encapsulates us. We are dehumanised. An immortal spirit is teased by mortal logic. Human biology made inhumane. Insanity. We juggle gravity, yet more powerful psychic forces, which we also desire to control, juggle us, too often suffocating our thinking.' "The television set is the medieval stained glass window of the modern age. Our LOOKING GLASS! Our window of sterilized perception!"

Circus Oz

'We went with Gregor to see Circus Oz for his birthday so he could relive another carnival birthday.

Managua Carnival

"…a fountain. A huge female mannequin who wore a long flowing blue dress, walking on stilts, surrounded by several children. Cars honking horns at the sight of this female giant who eventually disappeared into the humid darkness. A showman with a shooting gallery which had a row of cut out bachelors; the tin targets each wore different uniforms, all looking towards the centre where there was a plastic Barbie bride in full wedding white gown. Cheap prizes such as Chinese face fans, small shampoo bottles were on display. The small crowd cheered when the only girl, among the many air rifle shooters, shot down a bachelor three straight times."

Underworld Bride

Margaret's face blossomed while hearing this story; for she was another 'bride' who had been stripped bare by Hades, a Demeter qualified to motherly guide Lisa - our Persephone going through the mental circles of her own inferno.

A labyrinth of anguish…Lisa is an 'anti-body' of pain…Anti-art in human form. She is right: her wasted torso has no place in our consumer world.'

Capitalism

Cat picks up an academic book on a shelf beside the window. The Body In Late-Capitalist U.S.A. "BEHAVE! WORK! CONSUME! SEEK SECURITY! BE DISTRACTED IN YOUR PLAYTIME! ACHIEVE UNTHINKING HAPPINESS!"

'Our bodies are our altars and our vices! Our shopping malls are our churches and our prisons! They are our Pop Art museums and our installations! Yet are also modern air-conditioned, brightly lit mausoleums! The IKEA walkway is our distorted version of the Chartres labyrinth! We are sleepwalkers! Who everyday must fill up shopping trolleys! BIG BRAND SALES! (I see armies of shopping trolleys marching as to war!) FRUIT LOOPS! TOUCAN BIRDS! BILCO SOAP! Seargent Bilko! We must overcome the modern despair!"

The book is thrown onto the floor.

'PALMOLIVE SOAP! Capital needs our body needs satisfied for its profit!'

A look at a photomontage of a young man wearing large sunglasses and a Liverpool t-shirt; he is walking on a lake while pushing a shopping trolley. Cat delicately holds the large protruding handle from his small striped 1950s Japanese teapot to pour a cup of freshly brewed green tea. Looking at another treatise: Nemesis: The Last Days of the American Republic. "FINANCIAL RUIN! A POSSIBLE MONETARY BANKRUPTCY TO EQUATE WITH THE MORAL BANKRUPTCY OF THE GREAT AMERICA WILL HAVE IT'S SULLIED DEMOCRATIC CONSTITUTION TORN DOWN! LIKE THE GREAT CURTAIN THAT WAS RIPPED IN TWO AT THE SPLIT MOMENT OF THE SAVIOUR'S MORTAL DEATH! THE GREAT AMERICA EMPIRE WILL FALL AS THE GREAT ROME EMPIRE FELL!" Flinging away both books; a magazine advertising brochure; an out-dated T.V guide.

Fashion Fascism

'OH PLATO! Our eternal souls are enslaved by a use-by-date society! It mass-produces throwaway objects to keep up an arbitrary eternal present! Time and decay are the 'necessary evils' to move our business cycle! To inspire our replace-all-things motivation!'

"Learn about fashion sense on the Kerri-Anne morning show!"

Human Readymade

'This human waste! This human economy! This human civilisation! Psycho world! The Beasts of Bourbon! King Kong the beast on top of skyscrapers! We are primates! We have reptile brains! Flights of fancy; shoot down the beast with aeroplanes! Superior airpower for a modern empire to win on the cheap!'

"CARGO CULT!" Cat picks up a plastic model of a Spitfire and imitates the Torres Islanders he had seen on a news item on Anzac Day doing an Aeroplane Dance to commemorate Allied planes that had aided in their liberation. The dancers had all wore headgear which incorporated WWII model planes. "Big Bird! I LOVE Aeroplane Jelly! FOR ME! I am a teapot!" This 'tribal dancer' sinks into an armchair and puts a big lampshade on his head.

Immaculate Transmutation.

The shaman lifts his arms up.
Both hands pointing to the ceiling.
Stands.
A human Y.

'Light is around the Looking Glass, this x-ray that reveals the inner workings of human consciousness; the female and the male psyches seek, like the sun and the moon, to enter upon a cosmic union. Androgyneity to lead to immortality; there is no physical connection, yet there can be a coming together on a higher plane in the mind. New growth for a Tree of Life which has branches that bend into circular shapes, gravitating in synch with the pull of dust circles that will form new planets; this settling soil to be fresh ground for living seed.'

The Y sits.

'From the smallest twists of DNA entwined in our blood cells to the largest revolving galaxies the whole membrane of the universe is all from the same vast spinning cosmic catherine wheel. Whizzing, streaming consciousnesses. Sparks of life. Whirring rotor-

reliefs. Spirals. Star discs. Saturn's circles. Join all the dots: Alpha Centauri to Orion to Canis Major.'

Y suddenly pulls the lampshade down even further.

'Thetis, a bride from the sea, was more than stripped to produce a superhero. Yet, Achilles was corruptible. Nietzsche, where is Superman? I last saw Superman running down Darlinghurst Road with a large toy kangaroo in his hands. I was on my way to a garage sale with Michael where I bought a large wooden-framed photo taken at twilight of a young woman in the desert staring out-of-frame with a circus trailer parked behind her. I bought the photograph from an actress who told Michael about her Greek Cypriot boyfriend. It was the day for supermen because across the road we could see a muscle man in a purple leotard in the front living room of his terrace house lifting some big dumb bells after coming home from walking his terrier. Two female joggers stopped outside on the street to have a gossip and a smoko – here was the Human Contradiction.'

"This IS the MODERN WORLD!" yells the Y.

"The CLASH!" exhorts Michael. He plays with the video. "Look at this A Current Affair clip with this guy who fixes up old bicycles in his junkyard and gives them to kids. The council wants to close him down because it thinks his lot is an eyesore!"

'A clash of civilizations in a yard of bicycle parts! A field of readymades!'

The Y is hysterical.

'The universe is a readymade! From atomic fields to asteroid belts we see only the signature of God!'

The Y opens a window. Looks mutely at the street.

'If we live in a universe that is anti-art then we must align our minds to a unified illogical theory of contradiction! We must break up the either/or balance of binary oppositional thinking! Destroy the theses of Aristotle! What does that other madman say to us? The German with his 'overman.' That fate is a force that resists free will? Yet are two opposite motives that need each other to function in their binary way upon our psyche? That we can only perceive our freedom to the extent that our physical senses allow us too?'"

If *it* doesn't kill you - you can only be strengthened…"

'We remain entrapped by our bodies and rely on an intuition or on a circumstance outside our domain that we call fate to comprehend the wholeness of everything that is beyond our peripheral vision? That what we think is freedom is only the dream of freedom?'

"The American DREAM!" The Y giggles.

'We must go beyond our retina to our 'mental organ' to 'see' how all things are possible; that the cosmos is not a mere shadow play upon which Apollo sheds his light. We are not tin cut outs with some showman's light flashing on us; we are solidly made of many physical and mental dimensions that unite. We must learn to know who we are. We are multiple selves that form one soul.'

"We can all be superheroes!" laughs the Y.

"Or *pretend* to be! Just for one day!" adds Michael. "Born in the U.S.A!" A fist thrust upwards. "Let's go to the Bruce Springsteen song night next week!"

'One and three were combined when the extra white counter turned up when that café couple were packing up their backgammon game. Three for the Trinity and one for Unity with the Eternal; the apparition of the white counter brings up the bond between the Godhead and Creation; a Final Synthesis between the Physical and Spiritual, a Total Unity with All Known and Unknown Reality. Human Intelligence involved with the Finite and Infinite Processes of Fate.'

"The totality of being!" The Y holds up an empty pizza carton; stares at the street as he places it over his forehead. Throws it on top of an antique booklet titled Practical Mind Reading.

'Understanding the ALL of reality includes knowing that this cardboard may have been made from shredded top secret documents which would have contained information obtained from spy satellites eavesdropping on every communication made on this globe; a vaudeville act in the heavens which reads every human mind.'

"Live Aid gave us a global conscience! Let us never be denied special moments like THAT! We should not spend our lives slinking in the shadows of the world's history while the all-powerful revel in the global limelight!" Announces the Y. "Bob Geldorf you 'wicked' Irish son!" laughs the Y. "STRIDER!" The Y screams at Michael. "The day will come when the Age of Man will cower and be defeated but it will not be *this* day! It will not be at the Black Gate of Morder! Live by Gandalf's wisdom! For we do not always know what will hold good! Or true! Or which path to truly tread!" The Y with a steel rule prods a copy of G.I. Gurdjieff's *Meetings with Remarkable Men*. The book is on top of a video marked PAGANS. COMPASS.

'From the Neolithic to the present is the transmission of human knowledge which reveals our connection to the material universe. It is no accident that the smith-god Haephestus was given the revered task of making the shield of Achilles. Magician. Wizard. Shaman. Name them what what you will but the smithie who lived on the margin of the village, (like the Creator existing outside the universe), smelt tin and copper together. Here was glinting bronze formed from stone, shining like the stars, was the material of the stars, forged on earth. Inside the furnace were conjured the elements of the cosmos, this knowledge a 'secret weapon' as mighty as the swords or agricultural and medical instruments that were mysteriously produced. Power through nature. The Nebra Sky Disc with it's bronze emblems of the sun, moon and stars - a shield star-map which served the same astronomical purpose as the massive wooden and stone henge observatories - to align humanity to the winter and summer solstice; assuring survival of the human race through sourcing the harvest to the life enhancing energies of the cosmos through the Sun, the mightiest star; with the seven-starred constellation of the Pleiades marking the March to October agricultural season, a sun ship marking the passage of the life star through the night; to be reborn for another day; a horizon line for the midsummer and midwinter solstices and the moon the marker of the passage of time itself. The shaman also as time lord with his bronze cone hat with its rows of suns, moons and stars, a calender into a solar and lunar past, present and future that gave the wearer insight into the everlasting living machinations of the universe. Not only could stone be transformed into metal by the cosmos but the mind could also be opened up like a flower's petal to take in, visualise and journey – to fly - within the spiritual realm. The sky as spirit world. Stone, a substance according to the Ancient Greeks could also consume human flesh within forty days, the human soul eeking through an earthly sarcophagus to arrive at the underworld. Such is human belief. The power of the mind has no equal, consider the pagans who would in turn burn to ashes a whole circular wooden chieftains meeting house as a way of teleporting it to the underworld of their ancestors. The mind to connect us with nature and the universe yet within this stone sarcophagus we call the city it is our minds rather than our flesh which are being eaten away. Alienation. Community is lost. With each other and with nature. Lost in the universe. Darkness. Fear. Death. Knowledge lost must be regained. Only through the knowing can a deadly ignorance be overcome. Deadly nightshade, yet the poison of this lethal plant if taken in the right dosage could liberate the user to communicate with night spirits, with the dead. (Life over death. Negotiating with Fate through spiritual knowledge. To have the very cord of Fate cut at

the right spot…). Blood. Red mushrooms blossoming at the time of the winter solstice and thus consumed to signify to this day by the Christian Christmas that life empowered by the Universal Logos can overcome any mere mortal decay. Neolithic beliefs transfigured by the Middle Ages- '

The mid-riff is suddenly poked.

'Our middle-age…before was youthful folly…afterwards…what then…only the end-'

"LIFE *IS* A CRISIS!" The Y rushes towards the balcony with the rule held high.

Michael is flabbergasted. Breathless. Feeling as if he is Sanchez looking on at Don Quixote attacking windmills. (Yes…here was a mind which sparkled with surreal visions like fireworks or a night shower of shooting stars).

The Y looks at the sky. "A bridge over troubled waters!"

'The inner circle who all knew the actual date and place of the Normandy landings in the last few days before the D-Day invasion were known as BIGOTS - a term based on the word BIGOT which was used for the highest security code. People at the top echelons of world power always know top secrets.'

"The world is controlled by BIGOTS!" screams the Y. "Poor PIGGY! Crushed by the LORD of the Flies!"

'As the bride of the Looking Glass hangs in the ether is she to be sacrificed? For the life force is trapped when it enters inside the material world; yet spirit can make matter evolve so that life is magnified. Sky on earth.

"French paratroopers dropping into war-torn Kosovo to give Christmas presents to Muslim and Christian children!"

'In this charlatan hundred years we see at the beginning the so called silly antics of the Dadaists prompted by a logical willingness to negate the murders in the trenches.' (Catharsis from chaos).

"Yet they would already know the Coca-Cola Santa Claus!"

'DADA destroyed everything to save everything! The theory of human relativity is filled with human absolutes! The century started as absurd and stays absurd! Nihilism gives way to annihilation! DADA knew life hung by a thread!'

The Y goes over to a sewing kit and measures out with steel rule three pieces of thread one metre each in length. They are dropped onto the floor to form three different chance contours of a so-called 'absolute measure'. The Y knows he has repeated an enigmatic act first carried out by Marcel Duchamp nearly a hundred years ago; with Einstein's Theory of Special Relativity somewhere in the back of his comic mind. (After four years of atrocity comes the 'noble scientist' with his revolutionary theory to give Europeans an opportunity to restore to themselves a blind faith in their own supposed 'nobility').

'Another 'eternal return'. We must learn. There are infinite possibilities of what a metre can be. As there are also infinite directions that our lives can take. Chance shapes us.'

The Y glances at Lisa on her twirling bicycle 'readymade'.

"Let's go down to ol' Mexico way. Pass the 'tortilla curtain'. Cross the land of the living to arrive at the land of the dead." After singing his little ditty Michael goes quiet.

The Y is in another trance. Hovers back to the window.

'At the turn of the century we were amazed by frozen frame after frozen frame of a motioning human figure collated together to form the illusion of a many-limbed, many headed Hydra. Time as a centipede.

Captured.

Curving on a linear plane.'

Marey, Muybridge, Duchamp

'It was then inferred that the visible 3-D world we see through our 'normal vision' is merely a shadow of an invisible 4-D universe.'

The Y peruses his Book of Quotes.

The Enlightment's 'Immortality'

'Yet with the three dimensions that we have it was to be determined that just as all four legs of a galloping horse would be photographed to see that they really were together off the ground at the same time, just as the motion of bird flight was captured by silver gelatine to help lead us to flying for the first time since the time of Icarus…photography could also be used to capture light itself - for all time - just as living things capture light everyday to continue life…'

The Dark Side of the Universe

Looking now at a Pink Floyd record cover: white light passing through a prism against a black background.

'…there is also a 'mental photosynthesis' for it seems that colours themselves…although all blending through Newton's white prism…may more truly exist in our minds…just as we use our imaginations to consider the existence of other realities on the dark side of the moon as well as within the dark side of this whole universe…'

Einstein

'It was insinuated that on the vast glass gelatine plate of matter time produces the particles that form the negative through which light moved by motion shines through to reveal us.

We are positive shadows.'

(Positive and negative space. Like life and death. It must also be noted that Einstein's fifty year futile search for an ordered, predictable unified theory of the universe proved to be a failure yet which verified in an anti-thetical way the leaps and bounds of theoretical progress made in quantum theory with its seemingly continuing interplay of chance. Einstein's greatest 'non-achievement'.

Yes, it seems that the universe may play dice).

Valhalla

'I saw the Creature of the Black Lagoon at the Valhalla Cinema wearing red and blue 3-D glasses. An illusion. This universe is an illusion. Yet, I will not jump out the window. Unlike that old Turkish man in that video at the MCA who spoke of a friend who jumped out of a window of a building in heaven to be born again. Water fountains. A thread thin bridge which the old man fell through to arrive at paradise. (I think of Saturn - her rings, her moons). He too had died as a young man, run over by a train. (There are those still alive who remember this, who believe him). In this life the elderly patriarch is living in the back streets of an Istanbul slum. All are welcome to believe or disbelieve in his story. He does not ask for money. God setting his trials to test us to have faith in an ultimate justice. '

Cassandra

'Delusions. This world is made up on a pack of lies. Yet who would believe me? I suffer the same fate as my 'female namesake' Cassandra. Apollo you gave Priam's daughter the gift of prophecy to seduce her into sleeping with you. Still Cassandra resisted so you cursed her that whatever truth she presented to humankind no one would believe her. (True lies!) The Sun – which lights up the world – also provides it with shadows. No one did believe her when she proclaimed Paris through Helen would bring on Troy's downfall; that along with the priest Lacoon she forewarned that the Wooden Horse would spew out Greeks and destroy the city. Hera, that ever revengeful wife of Zeus would kill off Lacoon and his sons with serpents so the Trojans would go on believing that lying Achaean 'salesman' Sinon who said the Greeks had left. After the destruction of Troy, Agamemnon would take Cassandra as her own but his imperial mind would not believe his wondrous slave who prophesised that the king was not returning to peacefully spend the rest of his regal days with his wife – for Clytemenstra would be the instigator of his immediate assassination as well as to Cassandra's death. The delusions of empires ensnare us.

The Y stretches his hand out like the famous Lacoon sculpture as if it his torso and arms are wrapped in snakes; heads towards the window.

'Also the Athenians and the folly of their momentous imperial expedition to Sicily. Thousands cheered for men in their grand flotilla of tiremes who were only going to their doom. Overconfidence leading to debacle. Arrogance. Pride. Blinding us. Russia 1812; 1941-45. Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq-'

Hands cover Y's face. "WHAT *IS* TRUE?"

'Yes. Pilate wash your hands.'

"ONLY THAT WHICH IS NOT OF THIS WORLD? IS TRUTH *THAT* WHICH IS INVISIBLE?"

Through the Looking Glass

'I tap the glass. Again.

Invisible things make this world visible; they are not restricted by a space-time continuum (that may only be one tangent). A labyrinth of dimensions. An ephemeral maze to be negotiated with the only invisible thing we possess: our minds.'

Another tap of the windowpane that the Y looks through.

'To trace the invisible universe on a piece of glass. Lisa's reflection; this 'positive' of our 'bride'.

A key that will unlock the latch.

(Life is a key! Death the keyhole! At the turning point…that intercourse of no return…will we be exposed to the path that leads out of the Creation?).

The window is opened. "We are for now the ghosts of the MACHINE! While the phone companies put up the line rentals within it!"

'A restriction on human communication.'

More random thoughts.

'Christo wrap up the world! Expect the unexpected! Our sorrow, our worries and our agonies…IT WILL PASS! To be LIB-ERATED! Happiness is a warm gun sang John Lennon. It is not happiness that really matters but what knowing what is real. Live a life that keeps you on your toes! That stops you from becoming a zombie, a fossil! Yes, the Ancient Greeks found fossils of prehistoric monsters to authenticate their belief in the legends…thus we need living, minds, throbbing with a sense of lateral enquiry, to thoroughly sift through the evidence, to wisely discern what is myth and what is truth…after the endurance of the wilderness comes the blessing…(how can you obtain

wisdom if your life is secure, stable, sterile? SMASH EVERYTHING APART!) I AM an instrument! Of God. Of fate. To have topographies of the universe in our heads to overcome our mortal confusions, to reach eternal resolutions. To be like soldiers who went into hostile territory with maps on their handkerchiefs. Yes, on D-Day the paratroopers had maps on silk scarves. Hallelujah.'

The Y looks at his body. Touches his face.

'I want to know the meaning to all this, yet if there is none to what happens the quest in itself provides a purpose. For what does our increasing knowledge only bring? That everything is the different arrangement of molecules? With chance is eternal return; and the friction point where these two life principles rub furnaces a whole universe.'

The Y thumps his heart. "Immeasurable energy!"

God's Cowboy Rides His Mind

'Always distracting thoughts. My forensic mind always attending to so much within the scope of so many daily concerns…could we rise above our biology? What of our original human spirit? To strive to arrive at some sublime grandeur. We understand that time and space and movement and growth within them in the cosmos and here on earth is affected by the gravity that results from the pulsating moving mass of each object. Gigantuan celestial realities through to the tiniest microscopic realms with everything in between splinter these two supposed 'absolute attributes' as we perceive them to uncountable different speeds, dynamics and dimensions to make the qualities and 'shape' of time and space indefinable. We build our Saturn Vs to accelerate human progress beyond the gravitational pull of this space island we call Earth so could we also ever perceive with conceptual 'mind missiles' to go beyond the gravity of those very mental forces bound inside our skullcases which may still limit our thinking? We may instead become robots. That Mirror Worlds video with a large hand moving a tractor in a rubbish heap. Like a robotic hand. Another large human hand putting advertising hoardings to high rises. Always these human wastelands.'

Putting the book down that he has been reading: Cormac McCarthy's The Crossing.

'Yes, the pin has fallen out of the axis of the universe. The only universe we know is the one we carry in our hearts.'

Opens another twist-top.

'Yes, yes. What happens on this day follows on from what occurred the day before and each increment contributes to our supposed destiny.'

Switches on the tv. The cricket. An ad.

'Did the Anzacs die so their descendants could watch Australian cricketers promote an American chicken food chain? To advertise mobile phone companies?

Plasma televisions.

Our everyday memories used everyday for the good of money.'

"We are the hollow men. We are filled with straw." He looks at the television. Flicks the channels. Straw!" Thumps the top. "To be making ONLY haystacks!" Steps back. "They are larger. Ever LARGER! With NOTHING inside! ALL STRAW!"

'We worship the Great Whore!'

A mental hesitation.

('The same old story...' Yet each generation must heed the ancient warning). Back to the cricket).

More ads.

'Larry Norman I too am only visiting this planet. Yes, Larry - one day two people will go up a hill for one to disappear! Outside the Hordern Pavillion on the very evening of your

rockin' and your rollin' concert – yes, why should the Devil have all the good music? - I waited for our LORD's return; for thy Holy Rapture when I would be whizzed up to the clouds! I looked up to the sky to sight the Cross sent up by a reverend from the good 'ol U.S. to orbit over every square inch of God's Earth. A satellite cross as a holy witness to the nations!'

The beer is sculled.

'I wish we'd all been ready.' Larry you sing to this fallen generation! Oh Rock Star of the Gospel I AM ready! Those cowboy preachers! Following in the footsteps of the American liberal reverend Dr. Spong! They knew which way to lead my wayward coil; for they had meandered far on the travelling circus of life, heading through the deserts of the human heart to learn of the Garden that will eternally nourish every cleansed soul! Oh God-'

Another damned state of mind: "THEM! I had seen THEM!"

'Colossians 3:1-4. Keep thy eyes on heaven…for Thine is the glory sayeth the LORD…Romero knew the truth…he uttered words of forgiveness as he lay dying at that blood-soaked altar...his blood-'

Pressing the remote.

"THEM!" 'For what 'glory' have we befallen on ourselves?'

Fists.

'A little girl at a police station yelling: "THEM! THEM! THEM!" Giant mutant ants had emerged from the Nevada desert, like the skeleton warriors who rose up from stones to fight Jason; like the valley of bones that rose up into an army of fleshed out people in front of Ezekiel.'

A video.

'Donny Darko…your 'imaginary' Frank the demon rabbit is the darkness…oh for the innocence of Jimmy Stewart's Harvey the invisible rabbit! The beasts of the world are brought on by our disturbances of the natural order; atomized ants attacking L.A, a nuclear mutated dinosaur that destroys Tokyo. On the train from Melbourne to Sydney I met four Australian surfboard riders who had flown in from Auckland. There was a general strike in New Zealand but they had at least been able to board a flight to Melbourne to head home to Sydney. They spoke of a longhaired, bearded man they had encountered on the North Island; the remaining member of a commune that had ascertained that in a cusp between two ranges they would survive any nuclear cloud that enveloped the world. (New Zealand was seen as the end of the world). His hexagonal house was self-sufficient of energy, he wore sheepskins, tended his own food, tobacco and animals. He also had bows and arrows. This 'John the Baptist' was Californian. Yes, when the killer ants arrived from L.A. he would be ready. He'd flown out of LAX to prepare for THEM! Everyone's surfin' now! Everyone's learning how! THEM will surf!'[1]

Another beer.

'THEM SURFING! TO BOMBORRA! THE ATLANTICS!'

"At the regional museum in Penrith I saw the exhibition of local U.F.Os where it is known that in the outer west from Emu Plains to Campbelltown there have been the greatest number of extra-terrestrial sightings in the land! More so than in the desert! THEM! Are stealthily preparing for a takeover! The END is NIGH!" Cat screams.

A fist.

"IT'S AT HAND! Hands on our trolleys! Sex! Death & Shopping at the TAP Gallery! I saw a large canvas of a giant shopping trolley filled to the brim with humanity about to go over a cliff edge! If THEM do not get us with their laser guns THEM will get us through our burnt out neon minds! NOTHING can stop - THEM!"

'Einstein and Tagore both agreed that there is, at least, the appearance of a mixture between chance and order in the existence of the universe, our understanding of the texture of reality may simply be a matter of a point of view for as the great atomic visionary said to the great poet: clouds can look as one from afar but up close they appear as random water drops.'

Picking up the television program.

'I can attest to Einstein's observations from what I have perceived in ordinary daily life…on New Years Day I saw Hannibal's army with its elephants threaten Rome after it's 'impossible' winter crossing of the Alps from Spain to Italy; using even vinegar on boulders to dissolve matter with sheer will. At the Battle of Cannae Hannibal faced certain defeat with Roman legions numbering over eighty thousand infantry and six thousand cavalry against his force of forty thousand men and ten thousand cavalrymen; yet his weak centre drew in its enemy's massive infantry block so after the Carthaginian cavalry drove off their Roman counterparts it was then able to complete the encirclement of the main enemy body. The enemy's heavy mass contributed to its own downfall as Rome's soldiers were pressed into one another by Hannibal's killing band. Thousands were massacred.

I saw the ingenuity of a man who was able to outwit the overwhelming odds pitted against him. Hannibal's shortcomings led to a stimulation of his mental faculties to produce a miracle that otherwise would not have been envisaged. As I contemplated on the paradox that led to such a major achievement I saw how on another channel there would soon be a movie dear to my childhood memories which I had been thinking about as Hannibal was crushing under its own weight the greatest war television stations had brought such an alignment to their programming as if to infer that these two independent choices were conjunctions of a much greater thought. A seam of the Cosmic Will revealed. A divine fissure at 3:40 PM on New Years Day where upon I settled down to watch the movie Hannibal Brooks with Oliver Reed as an English P.O.W. who, with Lucy the elephant from a German zoo, escapes over the Alps to Switzerland. In this 'war comedy' filled with men and women who are indifferently killed (as for me Mel Brooks' The Producers is a real 'war comedy') In the incongruity of the plot where in the end a band of partisans rely on Lucy tugging on a long rope to down a machine gun tower I saw - in the final rush to freedom along the cleared mountain pass - verification in the idea that all things are possible to the faithful…in every 'Battle of Cannae' that we face the odds can be overcome.'

"Here's Lucy!" He laughs. "HALLELULAH!" Sadness. "Hear that Lisa…even you…"

'The conjunction of both Hannibal programs invoked in me the memory of when Igave Lisa in that last week a little brightly coloured wooden Indian elephant - a cheap souvenir from some Chinese shop. To then tell a very tired Lisa all that I had read about the Hindu god Ganesha: "The elephant-headed god became the god of all beings after beating his brother Kartikay in a race around the universe. After Kartikay started this momentous task Ganesha simply walked around Shiva and Parvati – his parents - who he recognised as being the origin of everything that exists. Parvati created Ganesha while Shiva was away so as to mind her place. Shiva beheaded Ganesha when he did not let Shiva see Parvati. However, Shiva restored Ganesha to life but attached an elephant's head, as it was the only one that was available. We have to forgo the doubts of our rational minds to faithfully comprehend that this elephant-headed god is a divine force who removes all obstacles. We have to look beyond the world of appearances to see what is real." As I had to look beyond the pile of bones I was talking too to see a human being. As Lisa clutched the Indian elephant with both her spindly hands I couldn't help but think that her soul was already without a bodily home.'

Punching his chest.

'Ganasha god of beginnings and of learning; wisdom makes us new, I will be a new creature for a new year.'

He puts on his Battle of New Orleans single by Jimmy Driftwood; glances at a photo of Lisa and himself with the wood elephant on her hospital bed.

'When the Great Tribulation comes this 'God's cowboy' will ride into battle seated on an elephant steed!'

He peruses a Larry Norman Solid Rock Army application form.

'Yesterday I caught up with Michael. I suggested we meet up at the old Elephant's Foot. (This pub is now called The Trinity). As we watched cricket fans stroll up Devonshire Street heading to the S.C.G. Test Michael noted the elderly, scrawny vagrant across the road as he kneeled and crossed himself at the bottom of the steps of the church next door to the Actors Centre.

"He's 'Estragon' who was at Melissa's christening…"

(Yes, I had also seen him at the Apostrophe Café briefly perusing the books on the grand opening night of Gregor's exhibition; his various 't-shirt size' prints (XL, L, M & S & so for so & so dollars . 99^{C}) in those neat wooden frames in the bookshelves, with little lit tea-candles on either side of them. He gave away two of his icon etchings to that sparkling elderly homeless woman who was really admiring them. Delores would be eternally ever grateful).

We compared the Battle of Cannae with the Battle of Marathon where similar pincer tactics were employed by the Athenians to defeat the Persians. I speculated that Hannibal must have considered this other miraculous victory as he lined up his troops on that uninviting Roman plain (in this way I always consider Marathon every time I follow the thin blue line that still runs along this city's streets). At my place the last session of the cricket was viewed. Michael reminisced that the only time he had been to a test match was when Dennis Lillee was in full stride.

"Every time he took a wicket there'd be this huge roar. It was like watching the winning try in a Grand Final being scored."

"My favourite cricketer has always been Doug Walters. He was so casual but would always play a big innings in a crisis."

"I would have liked to have seen that Aboriginal bowler who took Bradman's wicket for nought."

After some backgammon and pasta we put on the video we had not watched at the end of our private New Year celebration with Melissa, Margaret, Master, Gregor, Teresa, Rosie, Caterina, Isabella and my neighbours.

After watching the harbour fireworks we all held up champagne glasses and wished Lisa a happy new year. (I was reminded of the time Michael had told me when he once went with Belle on another New Years Eve to Waverly Cemetery to toast a happy new year to the dead while they both watched fireworks burst brightly over the neighbouring headlands).

In the early hours of the morning when most people had either gone home or were asleep Michael and I had picked out from my video collection: Cold Dog Soup, Every Which Way But Loose and The Last Wave. We had watched the two comedies and tonight Michael was determined to see the latter.'

He opens up the Book of Quotes to review a 'Harold Park Hotel' poem Michael had flippantly expressed an overwhelming interest in last night. It is called *Imperial* by Laurie Duggan which is about a woman in a Japanese car advertisement who mentions how it has been her life ambition to see the sun set over the Twelve Apostles.

"Hey Cat! I really like that! Next time I'm over here with Gregor remind me to show this

poem to him!"

He closes the book.

'My apostolic mind is like Einstein's cloud: under the microscope all that can be seen are maddening dark thoughts while from a distance as the sun evenly shines on me what is revealed - as the shadows clear - is the clarity of my living streams of consciousness.'

He checks in his new ABC NewsRadio diary when it has been arranged to meet again with Michael. After rejecting Three Kings as one of the videos to be seen on New Years Eve it was decided to go next week to see i love huckabees which was by the same director. Yet now on his own when the cricket finishes Three Kings will be watched.

Gladiator

'I could not resist. The Three Kings was not enough. After a re-run of Spartacus I view Maximus as Hannibal rallying his fellow gladiators in a cauldron of death. They fight together. United. Methodically. Humans and shields wheeling to fend off Scipio's blade wielding chariots of death. Carthage's lost honour is saved in this virtual Colosseum. A virtual moral victory against the mightiest empire. I listen to Now We Are Free from the Gladiator soundtrack.'

Mirror/rorriM

NETWORK

One of Cat's all time favourite films; the poster was in the shopfront and as the photograph was taken it was noted how he would constantly re-run the famous scene when Peter Finch inspired people to scream out their windows how they were as mad as hell.

"REALITY TELEVISION – THERE'S YOUR REALITY VISION!-" Cat hollers. "We were down at the Gunnery - now called ArtSpace - across the road from Fisherman's Wharf staring at Ned Kelly on large screens. Different videos. A different Ned – Neddy – this underworld Sydney crim. The videos would loop back from the end to the beginning – all day. Defying the laws of time of space. Outlaws. Burning Bridges. That song at the beginning of Kelly's Heroes! Telly Savalas. Clint Eastwood. WWII black comedy! U.S. soldiers after riches behind enemy lines!" A grin. "Money is the source of all human motivation!" Gasping. Another distant look. "The Dirty Dozen…Breaker Morant…all outlaws…" A tap of the chest. "The Gunnery had the constant sound of gunfire and I felt I was in a shooting gallery. Ned Kelly on a large screen in two mirror halves; Ned in mid-air looking like one of those asymmetrical ink blots. RORSHACH CONVICT STREAK! Is the money the source of all human motivation?!" A tap of the chest. "BLUE MURDER! LAW 303! BITE THE BULLET! The mighty inherit the earth. While the innocents die! Fall into the dust!" Staring at Lisa. "All dust." The chiselling away of a human being into a pockmarked stick. Left featureless. Space abundant through its absence. Negative. Positive. Space. Yes, Giacommetti. The mirror world of matter along with an equal lack of it. Negative. Positive. Emotional space. Visible. Invisible. Worlds. Death. Life. Watching people as spirits going through mirrors to the Underworld in Jean Cocteau's Orpheus in the movie theatre of the Art Gallery. Yes, agreeing with the character who intimated that everytime we look into a mirror we see death incrementally working on our mortal selves over a whole time. (Now avoiding one's reflection- unlike Narcisuss…).

MOLOCH

"WE ALLOW PEOPLE TO OVERLORD US WHO IN CENTURIES PAST WOULD HAVE THROWN US INTO THE SEA FROM THEIR SLAVESHIPS AS BEING

‘EXTRA WEIGHT! HUMAN TRASH! EXPENDABLE! ” Reciting excerpts of a favorite poem. *“THE BEST MINDS OF MY GENERATION DESTROYED BY MADNESS, STARVING HYSTERICAL NAKED…DRAGGING THEMSELVES THROUGH THE NEGRO STREETS AT DAWN LOOKING FOR AN ANGRY FIX, ANGEL HEADED HIPSTERS BURNING FOR THE ANCIENT HEAVENLY CONNECTION TO THE STARRY DYNAMO IN THE MACHINERY OF NIGHT…WHO PASSED THROUGH UNIVERSITIES WITH RADIANT COOL EYES HALLUCINATING ARKANSAS AND BLAKE-LIGHT TRAGEDY AMONG THE SCHOLARS OF WAR-’* [1]

‘HAH!

“MOLOCH!”

‘Far gone schoolyard days when I was always ‘cat-called’ by the bullies grated by my so called ‘eccentric wit.’ Having to try to cope like the other students and teachers who were verbally assaulted for being ‘different’ or ‘soft.’

The hard-hearted only understand a hard god. Harsh. Unforgiving. Barking out his vitriol on the undeserving. Only valuing the moral cowardice of the pack. The ‘strong’ must crush the single, powerless ‘weak’.

Loneliness. To grieve inside oneself. A mental erosion. Breathless. Weak-kneed. A persistent throbbing headache as that last scene of humiliation is replayed over and over again in the mind. Wondering how it could have been avoided. Or doing something about it. Yet to only be left dealing with a hurtful, uncaring sarcasm. Piercing. Like a knife stabbing into the heart. Ripping through our shallow civil defenses to strike deep into the core of our self-beliefs. Suffering as if one’s life is fraudulent. The honour and truth of a person crushed under an avalanche of lies. Cat perceived that his only chance of psychological survival was to hold onto who he was especially when the ignorant directly persecuted him. These followers of a foul god who demanded his sacrificial victims for the upkeep of his vicious intolerances.

Yes, not to die inside one’s self. Taking on the nickname Cat. Let the light shine. Human compassion. Human understanding. Human dignity. To stand up to being a human being. No longer to be objectified. Maligned. To also deal with a social darkness by looking into the shadows with ‘cat eyes’ to spot thin slivers of the proverbial hopeful glow. To no longer be afraid; to yearn for emotional maturity; in search of a resolution that allows life to keep its meaningfulness. To have moral fibre. To overcome a lack of self-confidence and emotional paralysis that could lead to a life made impotent. To be imploding. Crippled.

Prejudice. Hate. Everywhere. Germinating in a world filled with a social fascism in all its well-known vile mutations.

Satan is real. A grotesque monster. Callous. Emotionally brutal. Insensitive. Vandalizing not only the body but the mind. Instilling only unhappiness. Harming those who wish no harm. Horrors on the innocent. It is so unfair…there is bitterness….tears…what is desired by every psychological ‘human sacrifice’ to Baal is to be respected. To be left alone. Yet there is the tearing. Of mental flesh. The heart cut out. Stripping away. A human being. To be all bone. For the flies. Vomiting. On a human soul. To be nothing. What you have lived. As nothing. The rich experience of a life made valueless. That you only have value if you cower. Or conform. The gutless prey on ‘easy meat’. Ripping apart. Invalidating. The persecuted not to be known. Only accused. Misunderstood. Stereotyped. Depersonalized.’

Cat knows what it is like to be laughed at; while inwardly in tears.

‘Cruel men. Mocking over the corpse of a soul. Human pain. To cry.

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1. The opening lines to Alan Ginsberg’s HOWL.

Yes. To save yourself.'

"They said the Savior could not help himself..."

'A crown of mental thorns to overcome.

Yes. The mocking of Jesus. Laughing. Grotesque. Sneers. Falsely accused. To persecute a human life to feel if every achievement is invalid. A whole life to feel as nought. Without any worth. Integrity. Value. Denied. Yet not to be forced back. Or crushed. Or shell-shocked or broken-hearted. As others had. Cat would always stay on his feet. Flamenco steps. On the footpaths of his life. Justice for himself then for the accomplishment of a social justice.

"To have others care. For where is the human empathy for each other and ourselves?"

A very small leather bound copy of Oscar Wilde's The Ballad of Reading Gaol is always in the back pocket of Cat's jeans. He taps it.

"Defeat the demons!" A tap of the forehead. A swig. "Have courage." A fist slams the chest. "Stand up for who you are!" Another swig. "Keep your self-respect."

Human Malice. Cat listens to a news report that states how looters in a flooded city have been sniping at rescuers.

"The incomprehensible irrationality of human nature…*We* make Atlantis fall! THE HUMAN HEART SUCKED INSIDE EMOTIONAL WHIRLPOOLS! SAY YOU LISA SAY: GOODBYE CRUEL WORLD! LISA! MAY YOUR FINAL SCENE BE RIDING OFF INTO THE SUNSET!"

"Frankly!" Lisa says tersely as she gathers up some cassette tapes. "I don't give a *damn*!"

Stillness.

"NOT CHASING THE WIND BUT GOING WITH IT!"

Laughter.

Newton versus Blake

According to Isaac Newton gravity allows the planets to revolve on their own axis and to orbit. Gravity the circulatory force of life…gravity binds the universe together; which holds in shape its time-space geometry. It was Isaac Newton who believed that fiery objects such as comets were food for the sun, life giving celestial corpuscles moving within the circulation system of that cosmic body we know as the universe. Yes, the galaxies, stars, planets all in a blood vessel of infinite proportion. For the universe as a reflection of God's pure divinity it too must be pure, thus this Earth – a fallen, sinful world – would one day have to perish; thus Newton also saw comets as missiles of divine wrath, it was certain that one day a comet would slam into the Earth to herald the Apocalypse that would 'sterilize' this planet - by way of this fiery catastrophe - of all its spiritual blemishes; the Saviour to reign for a thousand years, when a new jewelled Jerusalem would arise from the ashes. Newton strived throughout his life to discover by way of alchemy God's eternal secrets, discovering 'vegetative metals' to verify his view of the Earth as a living organic being, perceiving King Solomon's temple as a structure that mirrored that 'heavenly temple' – the universe - a blueprint of the mind of God and His vast Creation, this destroyed holy sanctuary that would be rebuilt after the return of Christ…(Lisa is a temple…)…yet there was Newton portrayed by William Blake on the bottom of the ocean with his compass as a young man drawing out his well-constructed material universe, for all his quest in examining the inner workings of God's visible glories Newton had ultimately reduced humanity's perception of the universe as to it being nothing other than a machine. Materialism. Light, mere particles. A human being, a combination of molecules. There are nothing but machine parts. That become only dust. A wasteland. The mind concealed. Technology replacing the heavens as our

inspiration. Mechanical power attracting our attention, rather than harnessing the power of God in our consciousness.

Yet, Blake usurps Newton's rational world by making him draw his 'blueprint' on a scroll that alludes to the creation as a construct of Imagination. Looking on is Polypus, a large squid whose monstrous tentacles represent the mutating arms of death of any worldly human society.'

"A multi-limbed human death from a fallen Albion." macabrely utters Cat as he suddenly thinks of Hiroshima.

Cosmic Doubt

'Yet presently even in the heavens there is now a gnawing doubt to even the existence to dark matter although it is supposed that large unseen elements in the cosmic darkness influence, through their gravitaional pull, the movements of the stars. It is considered by the observers of the celestial sky that this phenomenon could now be an illusion. A sleight of hand, a mental trick from the mind of God. The uncertainty of a fixed universe first hinted at by Tycho Brahe's observation on November 11, 1572 of a super nova brightly collapsing in its death throes, the explosions of a dying star unsettling Aristotle's and Ptolemy' view of a symmetrical universe which had the planets and stars revolving in perfect circles within a series of crystal spheres with the Earth in the centre. There are comets with tails millions of kilometres long so Tycho's 'comet' would have been smashing through these invisible membranes if they ever existed. There was only empty space, with a shift in the centre away from humanity to the sun; as the later controversial discoveries of Copernicus and Galileo would eventually prove. Yet Tycho himself contrived his own mental distortion, for this physical truth was unpalatable to him, from his point of view he envisaged a solar system which had the planets revolving around the sun - as he identified - but then continued to map the sun orbiting the Earth. Yet the sun has proven central – as the 'holy of holies' that sustains all life…a fiery sanctuary…for in these times (as we further understand the biology of living matter, while peering down microscopes to view the cells that bind the tissues of life – by which the honeycombed microscopic pores of plant cells reminded Robert Hooke the inventor of the compound microscope in the sixteenth century, of monastery cells -), there is the spiritual realisation that our existence is owed to a finely tuned universe in which if there were the tiniest differences in ratios between the elements within it would even disallow atoms to exist. Each living organism is a 'centre' for this universe to remind us of the unique possibility of life-'

On A Highway Star

Countless visions. Disorder to unity. History in the eyes. Mind continents 'fielding' with each other to form our consciousness; to form an internal mental Gwondonaland within that globe - the brain - stays in one piece in the prime of life, to maybe at a later stage fray at the edges and only breakdown all together in the last years. It is said our neurons may dialogue with our experiences. Evolving one with the other. In the meanwhile far off gravitational fields are working together, influencing the transcendent direction of each ripple of a 'human earthquake' emanating from the differing epicentres of awareness as the brain continually pulsates in waking or dream state the conceptual parameters we label as 'being alive'. Underlying teutonic plates always at work, which connect this material continental shelf that is our brain with a never ending throbbing which is our consciousness. The mind is an ocean, forever rolling, ever expansive and watery but still defined by the seismic shifts of the physical contours that ceaselessly occur with the brain. Self-awareness based on a relationship between matter and spirit.'

'Life. We experience love, pain, empathy, prejudice, hope, sadness, happiness, depression, etcetera…our virtues or failings can either strive to enhance the human soul or murder it. It is said the mind - alike but different from the soul - also survives our physical death, this may be speculation but this latent development in our psychic geography maybe akin to the warm glow of those smouldering embers that persist after a fire has died down, it was Zeno who thought of the soul as fire.'

A hand is pinched.

'The body, the spirit's fuel. At birth comes the breath of life, to warm the body. The soul as breath linking our physical self to the breath of God. The cessation of our breath merely being our life-force moving onto a grander plane while the flesh is left to rot, to be dust. To combine with this earth. We are dust. While the soul evaporates into a dustless sky. A vaccuum. Yes, in Latin soul means breath, as Cicero would say, we breathe to live…'

A swig from a small flask.

'Mind and brain…eternal configurations at work in a mortal substance…spirit and matter…intertwined…but separate. Micro parallel universes in harmony. A mystery…a paradox.'

"A white light at the end of a dark tunnel..." Another whisper.

'My fingers are 'wet.' Water. A boundless, invisible material substance which light passes through, which can change and refract this immaterial property, which I can feel, like I can 'feel life' which can sustain life…my life…'

The wet finger is rubbed along a window pane. The water slightly distorts the view.

'Glass, also invisible, yet static and defined, which light can also pass through, to create a transparent vision, by which I can see what is on the other side, water on glass.'

Cat touches his temple. Rubs his hand down to his chin. Then back up again. Repeats the action. Again. Again. Again. His thoughts are entering further unchartered territory. He is pensive.

'Both physical, invisible, one wet, one dry, one immeasurable, the other existing only as a shape that can be picked up while water slips through my fingers. Glass is solid, like ice…water…is liquid…the molecular transformation of what is similar physically can also further extend to become gas. Gas is physical. Molecules so far apart but still connected, in relationship and equating with the unseen in extremities of space that are on par with the spiritual. My consciousness is in space. Hovering. Occupying. Myself. What is transparent is my mind. What can be touched, contained within my cranium is my cerebrum, along with my cerebellum. Thinking. Thriving. Life.'

"Circles! I go around in circles in my head! The universal shape!"

'Why is there anything? A universe. Why isn't there simply nothing? The absence of all things, the very non-creation of everything is as inconceivable to perceive as any all-consuming omniscient Creator. Intelligent design. Intelligent anarchy. Everything from nothing wherin the marriage of time and space led to explosively create this ever expanding universe of mass. We are made, we exist within, this cosmic combination.'

Cat suddenly scratches with a toothpick the inside of a small hole in the wall which he had once unsuccessfully tried to fix up with pollyfiller.

'Singularity. Everything to densely return to a black hole of seemingly nothing.'

The dark night is examined.

'To conceive a multi-dimensional universe where organic substances transform from one molecular arrangement to another indistinguishable one but just as real. Like a boat going around the bend of a river. It disappears from sight but it still exists. The human eye is limited. So may be the intellect. This life is immediate. It is all we understand. The Amazonian people of the Piraha tribe only perceive reality on a purely concrete level.

Only what they see in the present matters. No time. No Before. Or After. No Memory. Nor Abstracts. Always joyful living with only an intense and vivid Now. Eternal Sensations in the Moment. Out of sight. Out of mind. Always this situation. In sight. In mind. The mind is out of sight. It is only our thinking that makes us aware of its possible existence. Of all things, out of sight. We do not think of ourselves as conceptually limited – or as focused - as Amazons. We are not Amazons! Yet we may be Amazons of a whole universe. The Amazons lost at Troy. We may travel as a wrapped corpse in a boat on a river that takes us to the sea. To death. All we seem to know is to make ourselves immortal by becoming machines. With nanotechnology. Healing robots in our bloodstreams. To replace the heart with a mechanical pump. It is what we strive for. To no longer be organic. With steel. Not spirit. Yet our cities fall. So will we. Like Icarus. Victim to a starry furnace. Whose father, the robot maker, human creator of stone labyrinths, at least knew that the power of the cosmos is always grander than our own. Pythagorians (five hundred years before Christ, at the same time as Gautama Buddha was transforming southern Asia, they lived in their own community at the bottom of Italy ruled by the The Three Hundred who spread their wise, peaceful governance over the Greek colonies in the west until Pythagoras and forty of his leaders were killed by a mob led by a man rejected by the Order). In the Pythagorian quest to break cosmic codes, to unlock the secrets of the universe, they saw that the ground zero point of all creation was in the shape of a triangle (one side of an eternal pyramid? Is this universe really a pyramid?), from square mass fields from each triangle side energy emanates exponentially from particles on a subatomic level to make RNA, DNA to spiral upwards to form our solar system and continue beyond, to everything.

We are the byproduct of a mathematical and geometrically established electric helic field of a DNA molecule. Multiplying. Intertwining. Spirals. Trillions upon trillions of interconnections. All in order. The Milky Way. A spiral. A cosmic order equating with the microscopic architecture that forms our existence. Living beings. Life is electromagnetic. Triangles. Squares. Circles. All shapes. Interlocking. Fragmenting. To form existence. (Kandinsky knew). A big bang. An explosion of innumerable chemical combinations. Organic. Inorganic. Spiritual. Crystals. We are crystals. Made in harmony with the music of the universe. To eventually be music. Sound waves. Light waves. Photons. As particles and waves. Interfacing. Ever moving. In circles. Movement. Direction. Is not in a straight line. Vibrations. Revolutions. Thought is a vibration. Human speech. Sound ripples in the air. Brain noise. Cosmic noise. All proof that we do not exist in states of non-existence.

Circles.

Logic.

Yet we seem to find on the tiniest level of all existence shadow particle worlds. Atomic combinations. Arising. To create. Forms. (Where are the last molecules?). To feel. (Solid touch). New possibilities. Not just in dream states. (Which are always silent). There is the supposition that as old realities overlap new formations may arise. New visions. New realities. Within psychological and material subcontinents, within the many fluid aspects of the subconscious, and also within the pulsating trillions of different arrangements in so many uncountable subatomic fields arises insights that help us to see the infinite extensions of those varied sub-realities that dynamically enhance, immeasurably extend, the forces of life beyond all known and unknown physical and psychic boundaries. It is scientifically known that the impossible already exists. It has been recorded and measured to the nano degree. Shadows. We are made from shadows. Tick. Tock. If God in the Christian sense is theorized as three in one it has been objectively proven that the Creator is definitely two in one if not more. For a sub-atomic particle may be in two places at once. It is the material evidence of God in a certain naked state. (Zeus with no

clothes. The husband of everything stripped bare).God on swings. Subatomic particles revolve in a miniature universes at velocities incomprehensible to our understanding of speed. Such is the pace that an atom at times resembles swinging between two fixed outer points that make it appear to briefly be in two places at once. 80 nanometers apart, or in other words: 11 times the width of itself. There are eleven known dimensions on the tiniest levels of the fabric of the universe. Such a fast moving subatomic particle is a mirror of the whole universe. All else is in between. There are the two eyes of God looking directly straight back at us up the microscope. (The sun at this instant can seem like the eye of the Cyclops looking down at us. More so for Michael when he worked under its blazing rays in that dank factory). A child on a swing. The love of the creation. New possibilities. (Each individual is so. Two cells become one to then exponentially divide). Super-positions. (The positioning of a particle in two places is known as a superposition. Revolving at some incomprehensible level of a subatomic G-force that is life sustaining. It is yet to be surmised if other superpositons may occur at higher atomic levels but if the physical is 'illusion' then all things are possible; with death perhaps as a passageway to the impossible). To reality.'

Cat looks through a large olive green bottle which has been lent to Lisa by Michael. It has an indentation of the god Zeus where the neck curves into the rest of the bottle. Despite the temptation to make the obvious reference to looking through a 'glass darkly' the prophet's mind meanders elsewhere.

'Reality, a writhing, rainbow serpent. A rainbow. Curved like space-time. An arced spectrum which can be seen but does not exist. Only in the eye. Water droplets hit by sunlight which is refracted upon our retina. A subatomic reality before us, in 'real' space and time for all to see. At the same time consider that a rainbow is seen to 'exist' because we exist to see it. We exist because of the spectrums of particles that surround us, that are us. We are in a curved rainbow beam of reality. To where will Lisa be beamed too? As we once more penetrate to the very bottom lining of the universe we see a matrix of interfacing energy and mass which we comprehend as a grid, with an undulating surface of little pointy crests and troughs. A dotted surface, like a spinifex pattern. An apparently timeless, microscopic, multi-dimensional, vibrating string world. We exist within two scales of the same eternity which extends from the frenetic minutiae of all matter twisting to the relatively stable blanket-like three-dimensional dark space of a whole cosmos…a superpositioning of the mind with the strange qualities of quantum physics…which includes its superpositioning photons…yes, to be tied to the mind of God, who constantly looks at us…our consciousness superpositioned between the divine and the human at the same time…our awareness arising from a connection with the consciousness of the universe that precedes our own…yes, we emerged from the sea and to look from above while in a plane this ' ocean' that equates with the micro-sea of the thriving fabric of our existence would look so smooth, yet in a boat we would be rocked to and fro by the choppy but regularly shaped lining of this basic matrix whose patterns are mirrored on a theoretically relative level in our daily seen reality…synchronized events are tied to the archetypes of the mind, to the spiralling, swirling ocean that is the universe…our consciousness will survive as an entity at death…what is known as a 'quantum entanglement'…(our spirit a spiritual version of the 'island home' that Christine Anu sings)…Lisa – our 'lonely star' - will float, sustain herself while still becoming a part of the eternal sea-'

Mind Volcanoes

'Transformation. The changing of cells so they may continue to grow forever. Mortality to Eternity. The inkling of a subatomic Paradise. Light. Forever. On every island the

processes of evolution continue at an accelerated rate physically cut off from outside influences. Extraordinary, unique levels of consciousness may arise within every individual. Within me. Our self-awareness the archipelago of our thoughts, which when we communicate with each other also forms our human culture, that enhances our lives, derived from the combined mass of thinking of a whole society. There are heightened moments of visions which violently erupt like volcanoes coming out of the sea then sink again to leave an ongoing residue on the surface of our conscious membrane, to comprehend or achieve impossible things, the power of the invisible.' Following an introduced Mediterranean militarist tradition of a one-on-one bout to determine the fate of whole peoples there was only the opportunity of one chance by the shepherd David to overcome overwhelming odds. Through his precise action, derived from one single thought, the boy with his small sling blinded the well-armed giant. The Philistine. Goliath a warrior representative of a migratory race of Aegean people who would have 'unnaturally' been tempered with the Ancient Mental Regimes of Material Logic and Rationalism antagonistic to all visionaries through the ages-'

Valley of the Giants

A harsh glance at the VCR.

'Our modern day one-eyed Cyclops…yes, yes I have been through all this before but I must not forget that in the beginning the giants were bred when fallen angels lusted after the daughters of men. The raping of innocents. To traverse through 'lands of giants' to reach the Promised Land.'

"The 'holy land' inside my temple threatened by encroaching enemies who will molest me; who find their passageway via *Emek Rephaim* the Valley of the Giants."

'To fear an erosion of the spirit. Nevertheless, it is said that our synapses, those junctions that connect our nerve cells to the functions of our body, change or stay the same according to our experiences. Thus to 'clasp together' body and mind to life by holding onto my visions! Holy experiences!'

Cat looks wide-eyed as he slightly rocks his body. "Sultan of swing…" Another whispered utterance.

The rocking stops.

'The surprising series of massive high energy blasts which occur at the birth of a black hole are the largest in the known universe; such is the immense scale of these flashes that they are only dwarfed by the very birth explosion that brought this cosmos into existence. A swirling, negative apparation, sucking in all surrounding existing matter into its vortex. A singularity of darkness, which, along with dark matter, is another shadow in the universe. Symmetries. Hurling realities which smashed into each other. Stellar collisions; the cosmos as it cooled moved from having an electrically weak field to an electromagnetic one to allow matter and anti-matter to co-exist.'

Hunters & Gatherers of Tranquillity

'We would always kill, to always live. Hunting. Gathering. Animals. Each other. For food, land…to travel over vast grasslands, across whole aeons…yet always to still have this basic need to survive, any way possible…even with new possibilities…with sowing seed…this competition with nature, with other people, yet always at the same time working with this world as well as fighting it…nevertheless arising a creative tension towards harmony, to rise above the hardship and violence…'

Cat rubs his hands. Places his sweating palms on his temple. Stiff fingers pointing up.

'A violence also in the mind, yet to seek…tranquillity, a full stomach…ultimately, a search for meaning…culture, religion…peace…yet, always at the same time a quest over power…to not be powerless…that is 'it'…to link ourselves with the sources of imagined natural power to help us rise above our human vulnerabilities…it is why our ancestors sought out the sun, the moon…the stars…these 'trinkets' of some mighty Power…'

DADA

A sigh.

'We separate ourselves from the natural world to make a concrete labyrinth.'

Cat sights on the shelf: 'Selected Poems. T.S. Eliot.' What The Thunder Said from the Wasteland is referred too.

"The Greeks with their elements of existence: Earth. Air. Fire. Water." A quick glance through the previous poem headings. "Burial of the Dead. A Game of Chess…a multitude of voices…a passionate Sermon of Fire. Death by Water…we only want a common humanity…yet our modernity with life tending to be sterile, vain…futile…the 'unreal' city-"

A mocking smile.

'What do you say…Zeus…thunder god? DA…a key is turned, to free us from our prison…Adriane had the key to the Minotaur's maze…love would release Theseus…Data, dayadhvam, damyata…(give, sympathise, control)…the Roman Coriolanus who threatened to turn on those who had honoured him for his saving of Rome, yet not enough…human pride can lead to our demise…what is in a name? The naming of all things…language is the key through which we find expression for our mind, yet we forget there is a purity to life that is beyond any label…shantih shantih shantih…there is a divine peace that is above all human understanding which will configure with the consciousness of the universe-'

"William Burroughs once said language is a virus from outer space!" Cat looks down.

"DADA-"

Sydney Easter Island

Cat reviews a photograph taken of Lisa standing in front of a row of large curved metal bulwarks that are each several metres high. These large rusting industrial objects on now unused Cockatoo Island remind him of the huge stone heads on Easter Island. "Oh Crucifixion!" exclaims the prophet.

Holy Devolution

"Does God exist?" inquires the holy man wearing his cowboy hat "It is a foolish question…" surmises Cat. He stabs the side of his head with his forefinger. "FOR ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE! There has only been one human being since the beginning of time who has fully understood that the Human Imagination and God are one and the same thing, and that is William Blake! Since his passing our spiritual evolution has only slid downwards."

Fragments

I

The Wasteland along with HOWL by Alan Ginsberg are considered by this prophet as the two most significant poetic works of a whole century.

II

'The soul, the guiding white light.
Yet, a bright, blinding light emanates from a picture tube. The television set, that 'mental net'-
A wrinkled forehead. Cat's head is filled with more divergent thoughts.

III

'From the micro-levels of atomic structure within us through to the many cosmic dynamics around us we are literally balanced on a precipice between life and death. The universe itself has since its inception gone through different symmetries.'

IV

The fast breathing visionary. Sucking air. In. Out.
'Take away the vibrations to reach a stillness. To reach Vasarely's 'zero form' - a black square on white. Silence. Beyond all objects. A spiritual form. A single point, amidst the multitude patterns of mirror symmetries. A 'picture molecule' to acutely focus on. Ultimately, a nirvana in monochrome.'

V

'There is also the regeneration of life. That song by Paul Kelly coming on over the radio on the way home. Deeper Water. A child taken into the water by her father while playing at the surf. Grows up, while the parent dies. Goes further into the water with her own child. She too will die but the cycle of life will be repeated again with the next generation and the generations to follow. The water is the universe in Lisa's own mythology. To enter deeper into with life, but also with death, also our hope…'

VI

A deep breath. It is time to pause as various religious, metaphysical and scientific speculations waywardly mingle together in the mind; as if in a twirling mental kaleidoscope to both focus on and blur together many beliefs and concepts.[1]

VII

"Eternal return…" A familiar book is pulled out.
"Survey the circling stars, as though yourself were in mid-course with them. Often picture the changing and re-changing dance of the elements. Visions of this kind purge away the dross of our earth-bound life. MEDITATION 47. BOOK SEVEN."
This book is shut.
"Human Pity!" Cat exclaims under his breath.

VIII

"God's glories are invisible…"

VIIII

'The Lord is my shepherd. Who will guide me.'

X

'What is it that some people who have had near death experiences think? Only when 'dead' have they felt really awake for the first time in their existence…yes…the white light. At the end of the dark tunnel…to be alive…'

XI

'I derive…too much…'
A book is placed back on the shelf.

XII

'For any physical object to decay is to become 'invisible'. Nothing is invisible. Death is the clear starting point to our final bodily decomposition, although for the mind, already invisible in insubstantial form, could sustain its existence. Molecules falling apart. Molecules that stay. To make death an illusion. (I think, therefore I am. For if the mind survives the body this is possible).'

XIII

'…to always allow an introduction of many new dimensions into our lives.'

XIIII

'The universe helps to transform us while we live. (I wonder if through what we call prayer or meditation we can change the nature of the world via a subatomic pathway through our minds.'

XX

'The symmetrical lattice of molecules that forms every solid vibrates at such an astounding rate that it can impede particles from moving through it at their maximum speed, thus as the forming brain cools after the first cellular explosions that brought it into existence an incomprehensible multiplicity of neurons are allowed to internally evolve so as to communicate with each other at their swiftest.'
As certain as the good Lord prevailed against the Devil's tricks and temptations during his forty days; it is in the wilderness that we learn all things…"

XXI

'…the mind is beyond any human project to measure it…'

XXII

'As James Maxwell discovered light is an electromagnetic wave; different colours corresponding to the different speed of the vibration of each light wave. From the slow pulsations of red to the furious oscillation of blue.'
"GET SMART!" Cat shudders.

XXIII

'Life is a mystery. Our souls. Around each thought a sea of molecules that work like the loose collection of electrons around the inner core of metal atoms'.

XXIIII

'The Poet versus the Rationalist. Yet a case of the boundless versus the bound.'
"The pen…*is*…mightier…"
'After all, that most famous of modern knight errants Don Quixote disingenuously said: the pen is the tongue of the soul.'

XXX

A drum roll on the paint lid.
"That's what I call metaphysical." I had remarked to Michael.

XXXI

'Yes, the picture tube from which not only captures our minds but from which we also derive too many of our thoughts, dulling our imaginations, limiting the intellect-'

XXXII

'Thus to quantify the mind is presently as incomprehensible as viewing the reality that existed before the creation of this visible mass we call the universe. No projection is possible on a purely scientific level. The human mind is still the exclusive territory of mystics.'
"I am the way the truth and life." A sardonic whisper.

XXXIII

Cat rubs against his cheek a stiletto that he found on the footpath after the stiletto race in the city. "I ask you about human beauty." He slurs. "Think of the magnificence of humanity on the Sistine Ceiling." The stiletto is thrown onto a sofa. Yet again a new thought. "However, the Pope had the 'sculptor' paint the ceiling to catch him out! It was hoped that Michelangelo would fail in his attempt to paint the Creation. To put him in his place! Yet, what human and divine grandeur he was able to portray for our eternal inspiration!"

Myth of Er

1.To look at Medusa - whether she was alive or dead - meant being mesmerised by her and turned into stone. a thousand snakes writhed from Medusa's head, these former strands of hair were kept alive by her horrid psyche. This Gorgon was the only one out of the three vile creatures that was mortal; once a beautiful woman Medusa was turned into a monster by Athena who was indignant of her physical liaison with Poseidon in one of her temples. Perseus was the son of Zeus and Danae who was impregnated by the thunder god in a glittering golden shower while she was still imprisoned in a bronze subterranean chamber. Danae had been encased by her father Acricus of Argos when the Delphic Oracle had prophesied that her yet to be born son would kill him. Eventually, mother and son would be placed in a chest by Acricus and thrown into the sea. Danae and Perseus were washed ashore at Seriphos where the king was love struck by this single mother, while the young warrior son was seen as an obstacle. Feigning a wedding to another woman, the king asked for wedding gifts, and gave Perseus the impossible task of obtaining Medusa's head as a trophy. King Polydectes would have thankfully believed he would never see this protective son of his true love again. Perseus went off to the three old witches known as the Graeae who were the sisters of the Gorgons. Their mother was Ceto who was both wife and sister to the sea-god Phorcys. (Phorcys had also fathered the nymph Thoosa who would mother Polyphemus by way of Poseidon. With Hecate the witch god he also sired Scylla who was a sea nymph who Glaucus fell in love with. Glaucus was once a man who was transformed by eating a magical sea grass on the shore into a minor sea god. Yet, Glaucus had no power to gain the affection of Scylla who was a sea nymph who Glaucus fell in love with. Glaucus went to the enchantress Circe for a love potion but she fell in love with Glaucus who resisted her advances. Circe thus went off to the channel between Italy and Sicily where at a rock pool - shaped like a crescent moon where Scylla swam - she threw poisonous herbs into the water. Scylla turned into a sea monster with six snakes with dog heads protruding from her upper body. Along with Charybidis the Whirlpool they would in these straits either suck ships to their doom or devour the crew as sailors tried to avoid one or the other horror. Six of Odysseus's men would be killed by Scylla who especially despised the Ithacan due to his new-found friendship with Circe. (Ulysses knew of the tragic fate that awaited six of his men – although he did not know which six – so thought it best to keep the information of this horrific but unavoidable, brutal destiny from his crew). Medusa, Scylla – two of Phorcys's beautiful offspring who were tragically fated to become horrible malevolent forces; Phorycs – the son of Pontus the Sea and Gaea the Earth – considered to be the sea as evil was also known as Phorcus the Intrepid.In contrast Nereus - another son of Pontus and Gaea and born early in the creation of the world as seen by his greybeard - was just and kind. In the Aegean this 'Old Man of the Sea' would often leave his sea cavern to help sailors and provide friendly advice. Nereus's wife was Doris and one of their fifty daughters - who were known as the Nerieds - was Thetis the mother of Achilles. Another benign sea divinity was Proteus the son of Oceanus and Tethys who was also known as an Old Man of the Sea. He would shepherd Poseidon's seals and could see into the future and always spoke the truth. However, he would always change into different animal shapes to avoid this task but would give up the deception if the seeker of truth and the future was courageously persistent.). The three grey haired sisters only had one eye and one razor-edge tooth between them and Perseus grabbed the eye as it was passed from one hag to the other. It would not be given back until the location of the lair of the Gorgons was spelt out to Perseus. Although their eye was returned this resourceful intruder still obtained from these elderly shrews a dark hat that rendered him invisible, a magic satchel, and winged sandals, which could make him fly. Following misty, dark paths that were littered with many statues that were Medusa's previous victims, swift invisible Perseus reached his ghastly goal. Perseus stealthily carried out the execution with a sickle given to him by Hermes. From Medusa's sliced neck emerged Pegasus the flying horse and Chrysaor a male warrior holding a golden sword, both had been fathered by Poseidon. With Medusa's head in the bag Perseus was chased by the other two Gorgons but escaped from these mangy dragon-like beasts by riding Pegasus Coming across Atlas's kingdom Perseus asked if he could rest but the giant Atlas who feared this son of Zeus may steal his golden apples refused him hospitality and in turn exposed by the sight of Medusa's head

was transformed into a mighty mountain - which on its back still rests the earth and heavens. In a desolate Ethiopia Perseus came across and saved Andromeda from a sea monster sent by Poseidon who was as equally outraged as the Nerieds by Andromeda's mother's remark who had stupidly said she was more beautiful than these sea goddesses. (Mention should be made of the seven Pleideas who were the daughters of Atlas and Pleione: Alycone the Queen who warded off evil storms was seduced by Poseidon and most likely gave birth to Orion's father; Asterope akin to a twinkling star; Celseno who was swarthy; Electra akin to bright shining amber and it is thought that the Greek word electron is derived from her; when static electricity was discovered in 600 B.C. by Thales of Miletus the use of the term probably came from the name Electra. It should also be noted that Electra was the name of a daughter of Agamemnon and Clytaemnestra who along with Orestos killed her mother and her lover to avenge the death of her father; Maia the Great One, the eldest and most beautiful of the Pleideas, seduced by Zeus to give birth to Hermes; Merope the eloquent and Taygete the long necked. Pleiades is in reference to the star cluster of that name and the word plein means to sail and it is said the star cluster's conjunction with the sun in spring and to its opposite in autumn marked both ends of the sailing season in Ancient Greece. There is also mention of the word pleaos 'full' which means many in its plural form that can relate to a star cluster and also to peleiades 'flock of doves' the seven sisters were metamorphised into this bird and flew to the stars). Intending to torment the land this behemoth would instead devour Andromeda as a worthy sacrifice; she was chained to a rock on the insistence of an oracle to the king. Perseus freed the princess - and once the tough-skinned marine creature was defeated - married Andromeda. Medusa's head was placed on a nest of seaweed beside the sea while the wedding proceeded and this sea grass was transformed into coral. It had been the case that when Perseus flew over Libya each blood drop from this severed head landed in the desert to create new snakes. In Seriphos Polydectes was maltreating Danae who did not love him so Perseus on his return revealed the head of Medusa to turn this corrupt king into stone. The helmet and the satchel were given to Hermes, and Medusa's head was placed on Athena's shield. Danae and Perseus headed back to Argos where on the way Perseus competed in funerary games at Larissa where Acrisus having left Argos to avoid his grandson was unwittingly in attendance and was thus accidentally killed by a discus thrown by his unknowing inescapable nemesis. However, the fated grandson chose not to take over the throne of Argos and went to the kingdom of Tiryns where he founded Mycenae and from his family of the Perseids Hercules, also fathered by Zeus – disguised as the husband of Alcmene - would become it's most famed son as portended when as a baby he killed the two poisonous snakes an envious Hera had sent to kill him. It was also on this outing to South Head that Cat told the others about Demeter the vegetation goddess who looked for her daughter Persephone with two torches after she was kidnapped and taken by Hades to his underworld. The earth went barren while Demeter continued her search. It wasn't until Helios the sun god who could see everything from his great height spoke to Demeter that she found out what happened. Picking flowers while playing with the daughters of Oceanus - who is the circle waters that surround the world - Persephone saw the narcissus placed in the ground by Gaea the earth mother for Hades - the 'God Who Receives so Many'. As Persephone unwittingly plucked these flowers a chasm opened up and the god of death emerged to seize Persephone whom he loved and who he would marry in the Underworld. Crops no longer grew, animals stopped breeding and death came to humanity. A wildly grieving Demeter went to Zeus and demanded that he make Hades return her beloved daughter. The lord of Olympus said this could only occur if Persephone had not eaten anything in the land of the dead. However, Persephone had eaten a fruit seed which Hades had slyly given her. Fortunately, a compromise was reached whereby Demeter would go back to Olympia to restore the earth's agriculture while Persephone would return to the surface at spring and go back to hell at the time of the harvest just before winter. Persephone's movements would reflect the hibernating and regenerative qualities of the earth's four various seasons. Cat added that a source of this vegetation myth is Eleusis near Athens where there was a performance of a religious ritual which represented how a corn goddess would go beneath the world after the harvest at the start of the summer months personifying how collected corn was stored under the ground to escape the blistering heat of the sun which could leave the bare earth dried out. Keeping the corn away from these furnace conditions helped to retain its life properties.

2. In what seems rather ironic to him in the present context Gregor finds himself viewing MARK 9:33-50. [NIV]: [***Who is the Greatest?***] They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the road?" But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest.

Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last and the servant of all."

He took a little child and had him stand among them. Taking him in his arms, he said to them. "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me."

[*Whoever is not against Us is for Us*] "Teacher," said John, "We saw a man driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop because he was not one of us."

"Do not stop him," Jesus said. "No-one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, for whoever is not against us is for us. I tell you the truth, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to Christ will certainly not lose his reward."

[*Causing to Sin*] "And if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone tied around his neck. If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, Where

'there worm does not die,
and the fire is not
quenched.'*

Everyone will be salted with fire. Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with each other."

* *"As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me," declares the LORD, "so will your name and descendants endure. From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me," says the LORD. "And they will go out and look upon the dead bodies of those who rebelled against me; their worm will not die, nor will their fire be quenched, and they will be loathsome to all mankind."* (ISAIAH 66: 22-24. NIV).

3. It is said Zeus influenced his ascendency to the throne by sending Minos a white bull from the sea but it is also speculated that Minos asked Poseidon to send him a sacrificial victim to assure his right to rule. It was the sea god who sent the bull. However, it was such a fine animal that Minos did not have the heart to kill him. For a while, Minos was unable to have sons due to Zeus's displeasure in not carrying out the sacrifice. Every woman who slept with Minos died due to a poison in his body placed there by Zeus. Not until Procris came to Crete - after her fallout with her husband Cephalus caused by the goddess Dawn who loved Cephalus - and formed a woman's shape for Minos to sleep with and draw the poison out. Minos would give Procris a magical spear and hound with which she gave to Cephalus and they were reconciled. However, a jealous Dawn would trick Cephalus to kill Procris who the hunter had mistook as wild game hiding in a bush. Nevertheless, the original situation of 'lethal sex' with Minos possibly enabled Poseidon to have Minos's wife Pasiphae fall in love with the bull by which the Minotaur was produced from their union; a monstrous creature who had the head of a bull and the body of a man. Daedelus, an inventor from Athens who had been exiled to Crete for throwing his nephew pupil Talos off the Acropolis, thankfully Athena saved him and turned him into a partridge - Daedelus feared that Talos, who had invented the potter's wheel and the saw, would grow in stature over him – was commissioned by Minos to build a labyrinth that would imprison the Minotaur. I should also note that Daedelus was famed for his many mechanical devices and moving sculptures which had to be chained down; they may have been the first robots as it was said these figures could also make themselves.It was Daedelus that made the fake cow which fooled Minos's bull to impregnate Pasiphae. Minos deeply mistrusted Daedelus so he too was imprisoned in hi s labyrinth. As it was Daedelus gave advise to Adriane who would give Theseus the thread that would help him to make his way through the labyrinth to kill the Minotaur who had demanded human sacrifice to him every seven years. As we know Daedelus would famously escape from the labyrinth with his waxed wings in which he lost his son Icarus. Minos with a great fleet tracked Daedelus to Sicily where he had gone to live after not having the heart to go back to Athens without his son. In the Palace of King Cocalus Daedelus would be boiled to death in a torture bath he invented. Although another legend has it that Daedelus, who was loved by King Cocalus's daughters because of the beautiful toys he made, helped to plot Minos's death and it was he who was boiled. I prefer the first version as Daedelus, who was revered as a craftsman by the

Greeks, with a divine touch like Michelangelo, is to me a horrendous creator. Cadmus had to kill a dragon which had killed his companions who were fetching water - for a ritual in the sacrifice of the cow to Athena - from a spring the beast was guarding. Athena had him sow half the dragon's teeth into a field while the other half she kept for Areetes the king of Coletes, who would give them to Jason the Argonaut. Cadmus watched a harvest of warriors rise up from the ground. Dadmus threw a stone into the middle of this phalanx and in the fighting that ensued only five sown men survived and these Spartoi would build the citadel Cadmea and become the ancestors to the noble class of Thebes. Zeus gave Cadmus, Harmonia - the daughter of Ares and Aphrodite - to marry; every divinity was at hand to attend this wedding and at the end of their rule Zeus transformed this regal couple into snakes to take them to Elysium which is the Isle of the Blest. Cadmus is to be noted for introducing the Phoenician writing script to the Theban Boeotians as these letters would form the foundation of the Greek alphabet.

God's Cowboy

1."We may even be - unfortunately – just a footnote to history if THEM - instead - divide the oceans by using reliable old fashioned Old Testament means; there shall be no military directive from a 'General Electric' using nuclear weapons that rely on modern day electronic boards. (Better to buy an old second-hand fridge whose manual operations will last for decades than a new one whose electronics will break down after five years. So says the Lakemba Bangledesh refrigerator man who inquires why do the Great Powers seek to kill when life is already short enough?). It is said the Red Sea could be an Ancient Greek mistranslation of the words 'reed sea'- some shallow stretch of water - which the Chosen People crossed to escape Pharaoh; yet that cinema Pharoah Cecille B DeMille would concur that it truly was the raising of Holy Moses' staff that brought on the full force of thy holiest special effects department to have his people saved and drown the godless enemy. Whether it had truly been an outflow of a tsunami that then sucked right back in or a high strong wind making way for a land bridge or an underground volcanic eruption that produced a temporary rock causeway these are all merely the means by which YAHWEH used to bring the Israelites out of slavery and to inflict his wrath upon a godless nation. We are a godless generation and THEM will be the instrument of the Divine Wrath. We must change our self-indulgent ways and be liberated before it is all too late. It is said that the burning bush through which God spoke may have been a tree that caught on fire in a lava flow whose 'holy voice' is merely the loud crackling sounds of burning molten rock. Yet the higher truth is that YAHWEH – the Great 'I AM' - is THE ROCK! The Rock of ALL Ages upon which can be the foundation of our salvation - for all around us is the mental quicksand of this world which we visualise through that inanimate glowing talking box we call television – the LORD will deliver us from THEM! The ultimate miracle will be that THEM shall be vanquished – not us! A holy glory shall be revealed in our minds and this shall be our 'earthly evidence' to the eternal immortal might of spiritual faith over a constricted mortal unholy doubt. Trust! As Joan of Arc trusted! As the young actress who played her in the Hollywood film Miracle of the Bells also trusted. The bells rang for three days in the small American coal town in which she was buried! St. Michael took care of her soul and it was he who moved the statues of himself and of Mary to look down upon her coffin at her funeral – not some movement of a rogue rock fissure caused by the rampant coal mining below. St. Michael as Saviour! Oh holy press agent! Frank Sinatra as St. Michael's priest! Fred MacMurray as faithful loving Hollywood publicist friend! Lee J. Cobb as Hollywood mogul whose big business heart is transformed by the miracle of St. Michael! Who loves God! Who loves his country! Who loves the American Way! He knows the cruel assassin will come! Merciless! Without pity! God's psychopath upon through whom God's vengeance has been bestowed upon to carry out! Upon which greatness is made! Upon which great nations are made! Through the ruthless measures they adopt to gain what they want which is always much more than they need! Forever strong and mighty! Nothing shall wither! In countries where no old men will stay around! To cut down the unrighteousness! To raise the Chosen to their rightful glory! To true riches! Taken justly from the riches of a booty undeservedly owned by the heathen! No chains! Except for the wicked! It will be their unfaithful heads that will be decapitated! To be made defenceless for slaughter! Naked before the naked power of YAHWEH!Manifest Destiny!It's US or THEM! Life as hallucinatory state!Weep! Weep! OH WEEP! EXORCISE THE DEMONS! THE MOTIONS OF LIFE! GATES OF ETERNITY! OH HOLY END! Pharaoh Yul Brynner you watch out! Watch out Anne Baxter Nefeteri! Watch out B-GRADE modern mind! Moses

Charles Heston will point his staff at the likes of you with Edward G. Robinson as his right hand man! Oh James Cagney! RAT-A-TAT-TAT! ALL YOU DIRTY GODLESS EGYPTIAN RATS! Thus speaketh the LORD! To take another bitter twist let us never forget that THEM come in all guises: a gutsy daughter of *THEM!* throws a bomb into a medico Huey in Apocalypse Now! Machine guns blaring from flying machine mosqitoes of THEM! For THEM is really in all of us! We come out of THEM! Wagner's The Ride of the Valkrye! BLARING! FROM THE SKIES! A U.S. Cavalry trumpet of a last napalm judgement! Massacres galore! Fort Apache! In Tie A Yellow Ribbon John Wayne's cavalry resolutely outwits & attacks the Indians! YELLOW FEVER! Those SAVAGES! HAH! S/LAUGHTER!" There is nothing but sheer madness! In my eyes! At the turn of the 20th Century Yellow Fever was killing U.S. cavalrymen in Cuba! Killing the Spanish before them! Oh colonies of mass slavery! Mosqitoes as instruments of YAHWEH! The LORD scourges! Yet Science saves! Yellow Fever of the body is no more - but a plague of Yellow Fever of the mind still clings on so ever strongly! For THEM with nuclear at least shows that Science - as espoused from the human intellect - can also destroy! Yet the LORD will overcome human wickedness! If He does choose to modernise even use it as His DIVINE INSTRUMENT of JUDGEMENT! THE ALL OF EVERYTHING TO BE DESTROYED! ONLY NOTHING *IS* PURE! OH! ETERNAL ARTIST WORLD PRESS PHOTOS!"

Fragments VI

1. Other esoteric perspectives come into play such as 'hotons' within particles… '…intelligently creating time and consciousness within a mass-energy matrix of gravitons and photons which metaphysically move backwards and forwards across negative and positive time fields. Where a hoton may literally appear in the past, present or future. To be the creator of time. Like a memory or image emerging in the mind, to reminisce on a past event or visualise the future and perhaps help bring it into fruition, or dwell on the synchronicity of a present circumstance with its interplay of apparently two separate events now acting as a meaningful coincidence, like a signpost…(…a sign of god…); all of this interaction maybe in no particular linear fashion, yet together these 'timeless experiences' 'within time' bring about and unify human action and consciousness…(…the contours, the symbols of daily life, our language to our experience of being…black holes, hotons and memories…atoms of God…)...like…Energy. Matter. Light. As waves and particles…Einstein…the Hindu anu…the atom within the atom the essence of an intelligence that also extended into the inherent building blocks of the largest cosmic body; anu is equivalent to Brahman the wise holy Indian 'magician' to which all things owe their existence, as well as the creator to all consciousness in its many forms. Anu, this ancient Vedic term used today to describe a tiny pulsating structure that visually resembles a heart; with ten spirals of electrons as well as other small particles nestled on top of each other; wound within them: tinier spirallas. A dynamic cluster of energy. An Eagle Nebula on a subatomic level. If this anu were to be unravelled it would be a circle, of immeasurable circumference, made of the tiniest dots. An ethereal smoke ring. Beyond all vision. The froth of existence. Trillions of bubbles. Absolutes of nothing as if in a flowing liquid: immaterial energy stranding together a solid reality; like the water on the potter's wheel, that smoothly allows the creator to mould the clay into any shape. (The form created the signature of the maker's mind). At every zero point of these creative 'vacuums' there may emanate quantum gravity fields each more dense in their energy levels than what is contained in the whole of the seen cosmos.

TERESA

Below are thoughts by Teresa that illuminate mainly on her time in Lithuania, London, New York but do not on first reading relate directly to the main narrative. Nevertheless her insights maybe of interest to some readers who find this character's experiences and points-of-view rather intriguing.

Failsafe

Teresa tinkers with her teaspoon.

'I want to slam this! On this!'

The spoon is gracefully placed on the café table.

'An old man with baseball cap and bowtie who shuffled down wintry city streets and spoke to me of the years of limbo. I have met the exiles. That man, that woman, their child. The lost years. In Siberia. The recovery. Also lost. No paradise follows purgatory. Only further struggle. I met a man who fought. With his mind.'

Teresa studies her shaking hand. Grips it with the other one. Teresa stutters. To herself.

'He had spent half his life. In exile. Yet. Volunteered. To fly. In nuclear bombers. He wanted. To know. His enemy. A guerrilla knows. To steal. His enemy's weapons. Otherwise. Steal. His mind. No one asked. About. His background. Otherwise. He could not. Be. Trusted. The planes. Flew. Everyday. To failsafe. Then turned around. Some planes had bombs. Others did not. He never knew. What was a decoy. What was real. Like. Everyday. Life. What was important was what he learnt. Yes. Know thy enemy. To defeat him. Previously. In prison. He saw. Life. On the streets. From his 'fourth window'. He wondered. Why. The so called followers. Of liberty. Never came. To defeat. His foe. Yet. His enemy. Reached. A different. Failsafe. To defeat himself.'

New York, London

Natasha, I met her at the New York Port Authority. A huge multi-storied bus depot. A middle-aged, wry, heavy-smoking Russian Jewish émigré who was quick to say that so many Americans could be 'theatrical', and so it was little wonder that this 'land of the free' had a 'showbiz empire'.

(Yet she also informed me of 'a quiet-spoken American', an acquaintance who had worked in the 'Peace Corp' at the very start of the sixties. After a victorious army skirmish, he had gone outside Saigon, with schoolchildren in buses put on by the government, to see the dead guerrillas. One young man had been halved in two through the waist - just like Vietnam. "There's some American razz-a-ma-tazz for you darling.").

I sat beside Natasha, in an upper level café of this subterranean-like concrete cavern, feeling like she had called me – 'a bag lady'. My bus cancelled, feeling dishevelled after my delayed flight from London (as well as spending my last night in Europe with a boisterous cousin, a tube driver who resided in Tufnell Park.[1]

I was grateful when Natasha offered to take me in, (there was then the dim possibility I may even catch a flight in the morrow to Toronto). Her flat was off Manhattan Island and shared it with three Brazilian illegals. They were young men who spent their days doing cash-in-the-hand house painting jobs. In the morning they would drive me to the Port Authority in their white work pick-up truck.

With my arrival it was decided to put on a party. Our lively dancing in the living room and loud samba music rivalled in - its tiny way - Carnivale. The illegals seldom took the risk to go nightclubbing when they faced being checked on by immigration agents. Thus these fellows were use to making their own fun at home. For my benefit they even put on their elegant nightclub clothes and we dimmed the lights to create the right atmosphere. Natasha's boyfriend even played the bongo drums and we attempted the lambada!

New York boogie-woogie.

At dawn I had this magnificent view of the Manhattan skyline. A large orange sun was rising beyond the silhouettes of the skyscrapers whose silver surfaces glistened above the morning mist. Natasha had commented that such a scene was what America was for many people: the imagined silver lining…

"Yet, darling, the reality is my three dear comrades live strangely perched on some outer circle, grasping to stay on, amidst this very centre – why, this bull's eye - of global power.

The Centre of Europe

'I visited an international sculpture park in the so-called Centre of Europe. The country road from the highway to this epicentre proved to be a few kilometres so on the walk back I waved down a car. The driver could speak fluent German and I explained to him I was staying at the youth hostel where the very friendly, perceptive middle-aged owner with long moussy hair and beard was always amazed to meet people such as my self from such far away places. He was very helpful in making my stay comfortable and in fact I had extended my stay due to his warm hospitality. I had met some interesting people such as two potters from Oregon and a Japanese man who was riding throughout Europe on a motorbike. However, the main purpose of my trip was to catch up with people who knew my family; my grandparents had been Prussians who had escaped to Germany towards the end of the war. My great-aunt in Hamburg had given me a few contacts; a person who had lived in perpetual sadness since the great firebombing of that city. I had to promise her on my return to visit a dock area which according to her was the only part of the city that was not burnt to a crisp. One remarkable person that I had met was a youthful accomplished printmaker who worked at the Teacher's House where the British Council was situated. Hopefully I would still be able to meet up with her for lunch. Where? At that 'modernist café' in the Contemporary Art Museum. Yes, the one with the two signs above the bar that says:

I am an artist I love myself

My driver said he would take me there. He was envious that I came from a country with a temperate climate. It was a usual comment. A rueful smile. He had, at least, lived in the tropics for several months. Cuba.

"A holiday…business trip?"

"No, no!" laughed the driver. "A military mission, in the seventies. I learnt Spanish, met Castro, even befriended a Spaniard who had gone to the Soviet as one of thousands of Republican child exiles during the civil war, now he writes to me as he considers his chances of living out his final years in Bilbao. How people, the times, change. As for me I now work for a large foreign firm. It is very interesting to experience capitalism first hand. In my office is an American-Lithuanian manager out here for two years from the mother headquarters. I am also a manager but while I still have to save a little longer before I get rid of this old car she can easily afford to fly back to Chicago to visit family. When I signed my employment contract I had to agree not to talk about my

wage with anyone or I would lose my job. All the staff had to agree to the right of our employers to do this." A sigh. "It seems so easy to lose my job. Is this what the American leaders mean by 'freedom'?

I cringe. Feel uncomfortable. Speak clumsily. "I'm afraid it's the sort of 'freedom' I fear may also come to my country…such American 'liberation' makes you realise that there are many 'snakes in the grass' everywhere…"

The driver smiles. "You give me an honest answer but you should not be so hard on the snake who lives in the grass. In Lithuania we revere the green grass snake. It is a gentle reptile. No need to fear him like all those American rattlesnakes." A laugh.

"As a village boy my mother told me when she was hoping to have a child she would leave a saucer of milk for the zaltys. That is what we call our green serpent. We are all pagans in this country. Christianity was only forced upon us from the Teutons six hundred years ago so we still haven't got quite used to it."

"You have so many grand churches."

"Yes, yes, but we still put sunrays on the top of most them. The sun to us is like a milk jug which shines off it's rays like molten gold. Saule goddess of the sun loves the zaltys. My mother said only a few days after she saw the zaltys and left the milk out for it she was pregnant with me." Another broad smile. "I have a lot to be thankful for to our little grass snake."

"I had an unusual experience the last time I was at the Contemporary Art Museum café –the place with the silver metal and black leather décor. A young artist sat opposite me and drew a black bird on a sepia postcard of the sea. Afterwards, he got up and briefly joined some of the regulars who play chess and then he left. He had black-rimmed eyes, a black-leather coat and was unshaven. Although many of the people who frequent this café have what I call the 'inner-city look' he was highly unusual. A modern-day 'angel-of-death' at my coffee table. I don't think I would have that occur too often…"

"AH! You should meet this this other Australian-Lithuanian woman who I know. Is living here for a few years. Meeting up with family that she has not seen for decades -" A laugh. "Are all you Australian women so beautiful?"

I jibe how Lithuanian women are far more pretty…apart from going on to briefly discussing other local myths 'Yes, I know of Perkunas the supreme fire god, he's on the matchboxes' - whenever the conversation meandered back to the 'great geo-politik' - I realised as I threaded away from the centre of this old world, I was being made aware of the ever expanding universal circumference of another grand continent. Yet, as such historical centrifugal forces spin ever greater, I now wonder about the many others who are being pushed further along to only a darker edge. (Yes, the voiceless are kept muted). Silence. (The Spanish knew that to mention Lorca's name under Franco was a capital offence. In Nazi-occupied Poland it was also a death sentence to speak of Chopin). Tonight had been a mere enlightened hum amidst the chorus of imperial gloating. Yes, there are human mirages that confirm the Devil's worldly omniscience.'

NOTES

New York, London

1**.** I had to keep this ever strident 'Gunners' supporter company until the late hours at a quaint, village-like but busy local pub called The Pineapple; drinking only Guinness, talking about such literary luminaries as Blake, Joyce, Ovid, Beckett, Melville, Vonnegut, Auster, Styron, Heller, strongly debating the pros & cons of an autocratic Soviet Union supporting third world liberation struggles, then it was the cricket, Rushdie's 'fatwa' and the concept of holy war, we had earlier in the evening been to the local cinema to see the film version of Nick Hornby's Feverpitch with the Arsenal striker 'impossibly' winning 'the big match' with a spectacular last-ditch goal at the very end of all time…never give up despite all the odds…my host was very amused when I told him of the muscly fifty-something Bielefeld man who would ride his bicycle naked to show off the human form. (I had seen 'Bernie' while staying with a girlfriend who lived in one of a few ex-circus vans sited in a disused field, she introduced me to another 'fraulien' who had just returned from Esteli that was Bielefeld's Nicaraguan sister town, which meant little to me yet was interested to hear how many Nicaraguans wondered why the 'internationalistas' abandoned them when the Sandinistas lost office…interestingly, my friend now lives in Fremantle where she works as a nurse due to shortages in this profession here)…I told him of a 'monkish' businessman friend in Vilnius who had returned from 'exile' in Paris; who chain-smoked his pipe, had an endless supply of cognac and who had a caustic wit which he would really appreciate… (I had to put up with watching Tarantino's True Romance with him on a large film projector screen in his living room, much better was a dinner party followed by a game of RISK which with all its Napoleonic intrigue and strategy went on to the early hours, almost to dawn…)…nevertheless at 3.00 A.M, in his kitchen, with its huge piles of unwashed crockery, I was told how to make a proper pot of tea…'the pot must be warmed first'…)

MICHAEL

Below are a few remarks by Michael - mainly made in conversation with Gregor, Margaret. Lisa or Cat; he is also remembering comments made by friends such as Cat & Gregor.

Phoenicia

'When I used to go to the gym there were four television sets. Something different was on each one of them.'

Michael is very drunk; thinking to himself while with Cat and Lisa in Cat's flat.

'These big mirrors on the walls. Guys always looking at themselves! Always this angelic female voice singing with the techno! Spunky women do callisthenics in front of the Opera House. ALL these gadgets to lose belly fat! Sport's the great thing in this country because only those convicts with fit bodies could survive that First Settlement hellhole! OZ! We are the prison show! The Troy Horse Ducks play the Warren View Hotel mob at Earlwood Oval to see whose gonna win this year's Blind Bat Cricket Trophy! New Year's Eve at the Warren View a thin Queen in a wheelchair! She wore a silver crown! There was human dignity! Driving down Brunswick Street in the dark after checking out the curio shops in Smith and Church Streets. Looking at all the cut-outs and props above the shop awnings: different animated winged figures; a big daffodil with scary mouth; an oversize picture frame; a large clock. Listening to the news on 3RRR: a farmer had raised a crocodile since it was a new born and considered it like a son. Felt totally safe. Wait till next week the news guys said to hear if there will be a sad twist to this good feel story. Never forget the time when we pretended the combi had broken down outside Sydney Town Hall so we could pick up my cousin's sister and her girlfriends knocking off work from McDonalds who in the car all got dressed up like the B-52s lead singer who we were going off to see at the Hordern Pavillion. They looked like the dolls in that Super-8 film my cousin made called Evil Doris. Had him gliding up and down the garden path with his hands flapping. He really knows how to use the one-stop frame. Last Saturday night after a laksa at the Golden Barley Hotel I went up to the Townie to back a trot called Odyssey. It won! A muscly guy like some Cyclops who just got himself a cheap Chinese feed warned me of thieves hiding in the bushes at Erskineville Oval. So I stopped off at the Alexandria Bowling Club to see The Sirens! I saw all these westie women who had just finished with their factory outlet bus tour!'

Danoz strapless bra ads.

"It's ALL a wasteland! Huh! Let's go to the Phoenician Club! The Phoenicians were the first to Cyprus!"

Star Woman

Cat's place.

MY OTHER CAR IS A BROOM.

"Cat picked this car sticker up at the markets. He placed it above where Lisa slept." states Michael to Margaret. A folded ABC 630 AM NEWSRADIO sticker inside the envelope. A few ripped out pages from old weekly TV guides. Michael smiles while looking at all these artifacts and photos. "While staying at Cat's place Lisa did come across lots of programs she otherwise may have not bothered with…what's Cat circled here…Minder, The Royle Family, OZ, Carnivale, Twin Peaks, the Awful Hour and

Cracker. Just as well Lisa was a big fan of Northern Exposure."
Lisa with a psychedelic scarf around her head. Pointing at a newspaper poster.

ATHENA STARWOMAN.

Wearing other coloured scarves. Hands raised. Legs stretched out. Looking like a preying mantis. Imitating a Bollywood dance. Another young woman. Exotically dressed. Swishing her long auburn hair. The Indian Hour is on Channel 31.
"A wild Chicago airhostess. Stayed for a week while Lisa and Melissa were still there. A fun night."
"I met Cat at a Beefburgers where he was buying a meal for this Danish journalist who had been robbed in Las Vegas and had hitched his way to Chicago with the Negro hobos on the trains! 'Hamlet' had to survive three days before he could catch a flight back to Copenhagen. Says he was going to go work in Beijing. I was sitting on the next table and just joined in the conversation."
"She let us stay at her place."
"They got to see Jerry Springer with me. JERRY! JERRY! JERRY! Jerry interviewing a 700-pound man! Whoa! I always take heed of Jerry's Final Thought. Cat's such a culture buff – told me that Springer is German for knight – I even accompanied him to a play about a black cop who was a Vietnam war hero. Said how in 'Nam he felt sorry for dead Charlie. Shoots this white trash who'd been racially taunting him. Gets all regretful. Afterwards we saw the blues."
Cat puts on Bob Marley.
"Tells me how he met two black cleaners in a public toilet. Talks to 'em while they wash their hands! They smile, say another Australian was also friendly. They weren't used to that."
"NO WOMAN! NO CRY! Pizza's ARRIVED! Here's my pink Medici's t-shirt given to me when I said they made the best pizza in the world. Although Antonio's at Bexley North and those wood fire oven places at Haberfield would give it a run for their money! Here's us three outside a Wendys! Here we are at this American bar applauding comedy skits performed by students of the University of Chicago. I love those stools, the old advertising, the glass, all that whiskey! I'm sticking this photo above my Cabaret Voltaire poster. It has the one and only Vladimir Lenin at a back table seriously 'analysing' the Dadaists! There is your true theatre of the ABSURD! Voltaire said we should spend our lives tending our gardens!" Cat flings the photo at Michael. "Your father would agree with that!" Arms thrust upward. "Oh to have pancakes with Canadian maple syrup! At an American diner! Watching the gridiron! Washington Redskins versus the San Francisco 49ers! How I enjoyed listening to crazy theories that JFK will return from the dead as the beast of Revelation and that it's insurance companies who truly control the world!" Cat holds a Gideons. "Revelations 13.3. I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed and all the world wondered after the beast!" The small bible is tossed onto the sofa. "God bless America! U-2 Devil go ahead and ring up the United Nations! Bullet the blue sky. Outside is America! Go the North Queensland Cowboys! K-19! God Bless those eight Soviet sailors who gave up their lives to radiation poisoning so there would be no submarine nuclear accident so there would be no accidental nuclear HOT WAR!SUBTITLES! TO HISTORY! THE MASTERS OF WAR! DON'T WANT US TO KNOW! SUBTEXTS! SOUNDBITES! THE COMEDIAN BORAT FOR PRESIDENT OF KAZIKHSTAN! Yes! I listen to be informed to: ABC NewsRadio! Radio National! Podcast! Peter Thompson! Fran Kelly! Radio National Breakfast! The Sports Factor! Star Stuff! Word Watch! Letters from America

with Alistair Cooke! Great Moments in Science! The Health Minute with Norman Swann! The TODAY Show! Stateline! The Collectors Show! The Jim Lehrer Hour! CNN! BBC! News Around The World! Radio Netherlands! Deutsche Welle! NPR's All Things Considered! New Dimensions! LNL with Phillip Adams! Classical FM! The Goon Show! Grandstand on 702! Weekend Halftime with Debbie Spillane on 630! Cricket gurus Alan McGilvray, Harsha Bhogle & Ritchie Benaud! Listen to Scratch the Surface of Sydney on FBI on Friday mornings! The fading away of drive-in cinemas! The Bass Hill complex to make way for ever more apartments! The drive-in at Blacktown making the last stand! Drive out to there! The Wild West! CLASSIC MUSIC FM with Emma Ayers! FBI on Saturday mornings The Naked City!On RN The Planet with Lucky Oceans will be on after the news bulletin. Today he's got a collection of West African music-"

"I AM NOT LUCKY!" screams Lisa. "Breakfast with Kate, Merrick & Rosso! HEY CAT! When YOU aren't around I have a big hit of JJJ, MMM, 93.5 or Nova – Supernova – as I call it."

Calm and Crystal Clear

"Hey Gregor! It's Neil Murray!" I am well and truly drunk, swishing my VB sword; Singing with the lyrics: "…where are Australia's caretakers now?" A thrust of the sword above my head. 'Yes, the stars above do not offer any consolation…we do live and die together…leaving our bones to the weather." The sword is swung in a vast arc in the living room. Further reciting: "Yes Lisa…there are some things that do happen that we will never understand…oh, to be calm and crystal clear…yes Gregor! Let's be calm and crystal clear!"

A Dave Warner song. Howling how I really AM just a suburban boy!

On the Road to Melbourne

"When I'm at work I sometimes think of my grandfather who told me stories like the riots in Brisbane against the Russian community in 1919. After having gone across the whole of Siberia, to Habin, to Shanghai then to Brisbane it wasn't much for my grandparents to then head to Sydney. He thought the Bolsheviks and the Whites had 'taught' him about intolerance, but he soon realised its inherent in human nature. It bothers him how in this country many old prejudices - and the accompanying violence - are being stoked up."

"My cousins know about all that from their milk bar days. After some big surfie film night at Earlwood Theatre some gutless wonder in the lane that ran along the side of the shop threw a big rock through a bedroom window. I still remember my uncle having fistfights with the bodgies. One Saturday night he stood outside the front of the milk bar screaming and shaking his fists in despair at all the Australians around him as he raved on about all their abuse. On another occasion my aunt had a policeman turn up to deal with these two louts who were hassling her. The trouble is this old police guy said to my aunt that these two 'kids' were just having 'a bit of fun.' My aunt called the policeman a bastard so it was she who had to go to court and pay a fine." I smirk. "Thank you, Australia." I say sarcastically.[1]

Mind the Gap

(Apparitions in Michael's mind; thinking of the modern metamorphosis of the Trojan conflict while swaying on the dance floor). "No one's allowed to walk the one kilometre of no-man's land at the border between Greece and Turkey - two NATO countries – mind

YOU! MIND THE GAP! No train and there was no bus! Gregor finally got these five friendly Iranian truck drivers to help take him and these other backpackers in their trucks! One passenger to each! Apparently! Lots of bakshish! To the Turks!" Michael sculls a shot of Johnnie Walker. "Like this stuff!" Hannibal Gregory! With his herd of merry, neighing Trojan horses! VROOOOMMM! HAH! That's diplomacy! Nothin's changed since that bloody holy mess – the fall of Troy! No Golden Fleece! No Holy Lamb! Forget the shears! Click go the triggers boys! CLICK! CLICK! CLICK! BANG! BANG! BANG! RAT-A-TAT-TAT! Incoming artillery! KABOOOOMMM!"

Lake George

"In dark places exist monsters!" A sweep of the VB sword. "Short memory! El Salvador!" 'While passing Lake George I talked about my trip to Canberra with Rigoberta. Gregor glances at the lake and remembers Lake Atitlan. All that travel, for him those times were the glory days. "Sometimes when I sit on the back porch I think of the waterways between Mexico and Guatemala. I hired a boatman who had a motorised canoe to take me through them. We arrived at a village just after nightfall. A soldier appeared from the darkness right beside me as I left the boat. There was a blackout and under this large grass canopy where I had to register entering the country was a platoon of soldiers around a table that was to one side. They were all quiet, staring at me. A lantern stretched their shadows right across the underside of this open roof. I can still feel this sense of foreboding. If I disappeared off the face of the earth that night nobody would have ever known. I met an El Salvadorian man whose hands would not stop shaking. He kept looking over his shoulder while I waited for a bus to a place called Flores. He wanted to leave for Mexico in the morning to find work, to run away from the civil war. My boatman was taking him and a couple of others. Seeing him talking prices with these nervous 'shades' made me think he was Charon."

"You'd know how this Argentinean homecare worker I met at my aunt's place must feel. She confided to me that her brother was taken from his university class by a couple of plainclothes policeman. He was 'disappeared'-"

"You should feel the spirits of the 'disappeared' on these haunted roads in North Queensland." states Gregor curtly. "Angola is our graveyard'." Another random thought. "That's what this Cuban guy told me once. I met an ex-British mercenary in Phnom Penh. Told me how he was working as a mine-clearer. Said it would take a hundred years. Wanted to speak to me because he noticed how quiet I was the night before when all the backpackers were partying in the restaurant of the hostel. I was staring daggers at this long haired, muscly American guy who had borrowed these flashing devil's horns, who had his feet up on a chair, still wearing his military style sunglasses, beer in hand, cigarette in the other, boasting about the 'taxi girl' he'd just been with; a label for these desperate Vietnamese women who had crossed into Cambodia to make good money by sleeping with tourists. A lot of guys considered them like they were cabbies lined up at a rank waiting for the next fare. Anyhow, this 'loud American' was like the leader of a conquering army. A 'little beast'. I spoke for a long while with the Brit. He was interested to hear how to me the main street was unrecognisable to what I had seen many years ago. All these new backpacker hostels, many old colonial buildings having been redeveloped with modern facades. A lot of changes had happened to initially accommodate the U.N. peacekeepers but now there's a rising tourist influx. Although the war seems over, foreign influences are still spurring on other vices. Child prostitution is on the increase. With this guy we got onto the war, then spoke about the international scene, suddenly he clammed up when I mentioned that

Cuban guy and Angola. This is when I found out he'd been there as a mercenary. I hate to think what atrocities he'd committed that played on his conscience. I'm pulling over."

Gregor takes out his forty-year old Afga camera and puts it on top of an old wooden fence. He leaves the B-stop open for a minute so as to take a photo of large swirling orange and red clouds softly colliding into each other. It is a peaceful sky. Yet in the ensuing photograph although the camera had captured the magnificence of the warm colours in the twilight sky there is an illusion of a wild gale or cyclone. The reality was something more serene with a smooth warm night blowing against the windscreen.

(Is my mind swirling for no reason?).

We had seen the Rembrandt exhibition at the ANG and were backtracking to a pub at Collector to document this large strange mud wall being built by a local artist. The intermittent straggly posts of its unfinished wooden frame clawed upwards to the rising moon like some primal henge to the sky, a ruin of civilisation, a post-apocalyptic signpost. The stark black letters at the gallery cut up on bright yellow boards, old Shelleys drink crates from a gone world (like those fading, peeling advertising murals on old brick city walls) given fresh life as if by magic. Thus, there is still hope, that in some shaman way, we may arise from our self-inflictions.

Neil Murray is back on. 'Life is mysterious...where do our dreams go...the Dreaming...?'

Kathe Kollwitz

While walking to the church for Melissa's chrstening Michael had seen in the front window of a second-hand gift shop a print of a mournful mother holding a sick child; an inscription in German was underneath. Michael was flustered by this gaunt image. He recalls that moment while looking at this same image in a 1920s catalogue of Kathe Kollwitz's work which Gregor had bought in Amsterdam.

NOTES

1."She had it better off these bikies who once stopped the traffic in Homer Street so she could cross the road with her kids. Although my cousin tells me a few members from some other bikie gang once walked into the milk bar and threatened my uncle. He pointed a huge bread knife at them and said if you hurt me I'll also bring a couple of you down with me. Apparently they just turned around and walked out."

"Sounds like folklore Mick!" laughs Gregor.

GREGOR

Below, a few comments by Gregor in conversation with Michael; however, this section is very short as it can be seen that Gregor's observations have found their way into the 'meditations' of the other characters..

FOOTNOTES OF HISTORY

"I ought to let you know," states Gregor, "that the first Greek who came to Brisbane back in the 1830s was from Ithaca, same place as your mate Odysseus. The Greeks and the Italians worked in the cane fields along because they knew about their 'special treatment'. At this Glebe dinner party - in this great old, rundown house which you would have loved - I met an Italian-Australian documentary maker who told me about these two Italian 'reds' who were originally internees from the war; they complained about the work conditions on the cane fields, they were so unpopular with the Italians who were fascists that one of them was killed."

Gregor is sullen. "It's the sort of historical footnote you don't hear much about like the American Negro soldiers billeted on the South Bank because white soldiers would shoot at them - never mind the Battle of Brisbane between the Yanks and the Aussies."

"As they say: out of sight. Out of mind." quips Michael.

A frown. "I wouldn't mind having my faith in our democracy restored." Silence. "It's not bad enough that Australian governments helped to train the Indonesian military but I hear now we're helping to cover-up the worst massacres in East Timor so we can smoothly 'normalise' our relationship with Jakarta. Despite making noises about Tibet - we fondle China-"

"It's the way of the world." Michael is finding Gregor's analysis of the politically obvious a little tedious.

Talking about how whatever's good for business rules. How the Murris in Brisbane are holding out against the apartment yuppies through holding onto their identity by way of their art; just like in Sydney the real estate values and rents in Brisbane and Melbourne are going up. People being forced out.

"Giant apartment blocks and mega-shopping malls is the way global 'culcha' is going." concludes Gregor. "Whatever is unique is being swamped by 'monochrome development'. People not realising how much history and identity is being lost. Gregor looking at the road. Long white strips. Freeways. L.A. A crucified American Indian outside a ruined Mayan temple. An American Eagle at the top. This mural by a Mexican was whitewashed. A cover-up of a bloody history. Shining apartment blocks rising over skid row.

"In Cronulla they're going to knock down that big pub by the sea. The Workers Club is also going." Michael remarks. "All those new people moving into the area won't know what they're missing."

Malacca. A new shopping mall dominating this old colonial port, diminishing the feeling of heritage.

Shining glass everywhere blinding out many pasts. "See the world Mick before it is covered in concrete."

The Culture of Kick

The melancholia that can overcome Gregor. Always drinking from that Café de Nicaragua Libre mug. Always going up to that Central American solidarity shop in Glebe to buy Nicaraguan coffee and Venceremos magazines. The time spent on the back porch like particles revolving around each other. Yet, it was not an atom being formed, but rather that one would not split. Gregor wondering so much about the old travel days; when letters were sent to him addressed to so-and-so place POSTE RESTANTE. Talk of Nicaragua. Hitching. With an English guy. John. On top of buses. In the back of Sandinista army trucks. Wind through the hair. Life glorious. Despite all the danger. A real adventure. These images the reminder of missed things. Missing people. Bric-a-brac at Gregor's place. Posters. MELBOURNE FRINGE. Postcards. Aussie Rules players being served an espresso at a trendy café. The M.C.G. GREETINGS FROM MELBOURNE. THE CULTURE OF KICK. A lot of this stuff from curio shops in Melbourne. Like that lovely black milk pourer in another photo; yet the white coffee pot being held was from a curio shop on the way to Kings Cross. It's since closed down. With Lisa so many items stored at Kingsgrove as artefacts to a passing life

William Kentridge*

Having gone with Gregor to see William Kentridge's work at the Museum of Contemporary Art and later at the Annandale Galleries.

Film loops of a world which is perfect in reverse. Rising balls always caught.

Rising books caught from behind. The mistakes of life erased.

Gregor is mesmerised.

"I saw in Europe in a large blacked-out museum room a tightrope walker on a screen repeatedly falling off a rope between two buildings. Stravinsky's Rite of Spring was continually playing in the background."

George Milies the first film magician. A Journey to the Moon. Giggling with Melissa when a rocket ship hits the Man in the Moon in the eye.

ZENO PIZZA. Surry Hills.

Confessions of Zeno. A Trieste man smoking. Promising his wife to stop. Knowing the First World War is at hand. He also cannot stop the world from going up in smoke.

A black hole.

The centre of the world will tear itself apart. Yet living off-centre. Out of balance. Only able to look on. Or be dragged in. The centrifugal forces of history. Apartheid. A.I.D.S.

A coffee plunger of an executive going pass the bottom of a coffee pot deep down into a mine. History also has a subterranean strata.

Gregor snaps out of his trance.

"I went to Melbourne to see some puppet piece of his called The Return of Ulysses."

(Time to return).

Surrealist Inferno

A hundred prints of the Divine Comedy by Dali on exhibition in a prestigious art shop at Circular Quay.

'Dali ought to have portrayed himself in the Inferno. He supported Franco.'

Gregor grimaces.

*South African visual artist.

LISA

Below are mainly chapters that deal wth Lisa's life via many of the photos that Margaret and Michael had been looking at; there is no particular order – much in the same way one randomly looks at photos. Many of these chapters were not considered too essential to the main narrative (although that is open to discussion) but all the chapters - as one – should hopefully lead the reader to gain a more in-depth impression of Lisa's 'end days'. The photographs are usually interspersed with comments from the likes of Michael, Margaret, Cat, etcetera and - more often than not - by Lisa.

The Plaza-Ibero Americana

Sticky-taped to the cassette box that had the recording of the Mexican poems is a yellow envelope with photos which include: Lisa with Melissa at Central Railway with busts of Latin American explorers and independence leaders; Juan Azurduy de Padivio. 1780-1862. A Bolivian female guerrilla fighter. Simon Bolivar. 1783-1830. The 'George Washington' of South America; Michael shaking the hand of the Mexican Benito Juaz; Gregor looks seriously at Jose Marti. 1853-1895 who is revered in Cuba like Augusto Sandino is in Nicaragua.

"There should have been a bust of Macandel who led a rebellion in Haiti." remarks Michael. "Alejo Carpenter the Cuban writer turned Macandel into a butterfly when he was burnt at the stake by the French. We had a look at these busts while we were on our way to catch a train down to the Quay; to see Legs on the Wall abseil on a whole side of the AMA building. If you are going into the city and want to drive some of the way you can usually find free weekend parking around Central."

Last Chance

"It *really* is our last chance to see these photos together." remarks Margaret. "Not like last time."

"Yeah. Yeah." states Michael. "It's hard to believe this is the last weekend in Sydney for you two."

"Tomorrow we still have to go to that Marrickville Italian cheese factory to pick up some bulk ricotta. I've also made space in the esky for some packets of that cheap red salmon from that other delicatessen. First thing in the morning though is to visit that local fish market."

Sitting on a bright red couch to the side of a young man dressed in a green silk gown wearing a red fez with a yellow sash; he is stretched out on the lounge holding a red teacup with his head resting on the lap of 'his attractive guest.'. On the wall are thin black vertical lines curling up at the ends into assorted curves. The Beardsley Room. After dinner Michael, Melissa and Lisa were driven to Thirroul to catch the train back. This 'good samaritan' who had now dressed up in his forties dark blue pin-striped suit and grey hat took his friends in his old sixties Valiant car to the station. Michael spoke to him about the poetics of Aristotle, this Ancient Greek had remarked that what was feared more by men than facing justice was to face a lack of it.

At a rock pool with Master which it was quipped was akin to the waters of Zion. At the bottom of a valley in Royal National Park.

"It can be walked to from Helensburgh station. Very peaceful. Very appreciated."

By a creek on a long bushwalk behind Springwood. Green Hills, Cronulla. Another rock pool on the way to Shelley Beach which Lisa nicknamed the 'well of life.' With Melissa in the water on Michael's old surf mat. Standing in front of a large photo that consists of hazy bands of high key colours. Lake George.It is an exhibition of digital photos of Australian landscapes at the Addison Road Gallery. Cockatoo Island. Wiseman's Ferry. Tongue poking out while crossing the river to show off another crisp shiny fruit tingle that is stuck on it.

"Apart from going to this lovely sandstone hotel there was a local gallery with the artwork of an Aboriginal elder on display."

Cat studying these Dreaming paintings.

Land of Canaan

A big yard in front of a fibro house. There is a dark green canvas gazebo with Australian flags tied on the poles. A large family is having a barbeque. On a laminated table are sausages, chops, white bread, tomatoe sauce, fairy bread covered with hundreds and thousands, cupcakes, lamingtons, chocolate and honey crackles, a pavlova and frankfurts. Mixed with the stubbies in the esky are Sunnyboy iceblocks and Cottees green cordial. The men are wearing terry towelling hats. The patriachs have classic beer guts. The youngest kids are in a small plastic pool with a blow up yellow and green kangaroo. In the bit of backyard that can be seen is a tattered vinyl trolley standing as a relic beside a rusting Hills Hoist.

"AUSTRALIANA! That was taken at Brighton-Le-Sands. We'd stop for fish and chips on the way back to La Perouse. Had them beside that monument to the First Fleet. It brought back this memory of going to the Kogarah Mecca where before the start of The Man from Snowy River this pianist on a little stage played the national anthem."

The PAUSE button is pressed.

"I'll never forget my parents and my uncle and aunt proudly going to Circular Quay for the official Bicentenary celebrations." ruefully comments Michael. "I realised how much they wanted to feel a part of this country. My father even took his binoculars which he only takes to the horses."

"Wherever they live people like to feel they belong." reasons Margaret.

Melissa watching a busker in George Street wearing an enormous floppy red hat playing Christmas tunes hitting - with a pair of drumsticks - a home made instrument that consisted of two rows of hanging beer bottles.

"Ten green bottles hanging on the wall…" softly sings Michael. *"If one green bottle…or two…should accidently…"*

Koori Radio

With Master and one of his musician mates outside the Troy Horse studios in King Street. "It's moved to Redfern. Where the FBI studios are. We usually listened to FBI but on Saturday mornings we would switch to Koori Radio to hear this elder who had the gruffest voice..."

'Accentuate the positive. I can move, I can do this, I'm free. I can do what I want to do. No one owes you. Except your family. They each own a bit of you. Don't

worry about the suicidal stuff. Get auntie to help you out. She. Uncle. Love you. Don't resort to any white stuff. Build a bridge and go over! Know who you are! If you get knocked down pick yourself up. There's beautiful people to meet after you die but they're happy to wait. Enjoy. Enjoy…enjoy life." A laugh. "Hey YOU! The Koori Country Connection. Don't be backwards in coming forward as my grandfather would say. The Aboriginal populATION of this nATION needs announcers. Look at me I'm not a rocket scientist. In fact I'd blow your rocket up in your backyard! As one of the original members of the Warumpi Band says: music takes you anywhere. I encourage the younger generation to play a few melodies. Enjoy life. So adopt then adapt. Filter out all the rubbish and enjoy the good stuff. The white fella drinks his white wine and has his white whine. We can be better than that. We all know there's hard knocks waitin' for us. Life is filled with troubled waters. That's how it is. Be confident. You are the truth. Enjoy your weekend. We are unique. Laugh. Laugh at your bills. Go get some ice cream for the kids. Enjoy Troy. The poet man. Have a beautiful day. It's a big city. The buildings go up and up. Where's the sun? It gets lost in the back streets. There are beautiful people in every nation. All have troubles. The understanding is the answer.'

"This guy just raves on in between putting on Aboriginal songs. He says the same stuff every week. I love it. Even here in the hospital I still listen to him."

The Transit of Venus

In the Botanical Gardens.

"All life on this planet belongs to one big happy family." Master looks at the bit of sea that can be seen through the foliage at the Botanical Gardens. "This whole coastline was only discovered because Captain Cook was on his way back to England from Tahiti after observing the Transit of Venus; shows how even the stars can directly affect our history…in ways we'll never understand."

The Kingdom of God is a Child.

With Melissa, Isabella, Caterina, Margaret and Master at a picnic in Whitlam Park. Mother and child going up King Street on an old double-decker bus from the Tempe Bus Museum.

Laughing with Melissa while watching a dog jumping through hoola hoops at a neighbourhood kid's birthday party…holding Melissa's hand as she excitedly points at Inspector Gadget at the ABC bookshop in the Queen Victoria Building.

"We had to rush from the Mary Martin bookshop in York Street to make sure Melissa would catch him in time."

Melissa with the arm of the Sesame Street cookie monster around her shoulder while on a rocking car ride…clutching a newspaper article of a baby orang-utan with a bandaged arm. (Above it the headline of a separate article: NICOLE TO HAVE A BABY!)

"I showed this picture to you Melissa and you grabbed it. Wouldn't give it up until it was time for you to go to sleep. The baby had been wounded when her mother was shot by poachers. The poor thing looks so worried. Melissa you have real empathy." Michael looks over at Margaret. "Cat once told me that William Blake said that the Kingdom of God is a child. I think I know now what he means… "

That Eye the Sky

At an exhibition of a friend of Michael's who was exhibiting at the Jewish Holocaust

Museum in Darlinghurst. Amidst exhibits depicting the doomed were abstract paintings which were magnified sections of a kitchen scene with a cabbage and coffee saucepan painted by her grandmother who had also perished. Life extinguished. The funeral of a mate of Cat's who had died well before time; mortal decay had accelerated in a body cursed by naively experimenting with a drug cocktail as a schoolboy. 'Little John' the dux of the school, all-round sportsman and gifted pianist had a body that was bloated by medication to fend off the schizophrenia and cancers eating at his body. His heart could not take it anymore and in his young thirties finally succumbed to this one night of youthful indiscretion. Lisa hovering near to the coffin as a pianist played Nick Cave's the Mercy Seat as a last requim. To imagine a deathly immersion. Eyes shut. Warm sunshine. Restful face. In contrast to any intimate space a memory of the vast expanse of a warehouse in Redfern covered in red sand. A police four-wheel drive. At a production of Dead Heart sitting with the rest of the Thursday night budget crowd experiencing the unearthly vastness of the central Australian desert in inner city Sydney. Theatre at a wharf. Another large cavern. Another large audience. In this warehouse space an Australian-Greek Opera. A large hills hoist glowing with florescent tubes attached to the main pole and wire supports. Three women in long flowing dresses with song sheets in their hands sing beside this glowing suburban totem. Waking up. Picking up up a publicity pamphlet of this show in the bedside drawer.

To Traverse the Water.....experimental music theatre that expresses and explores the human condition in all its frailties and strengths.....themes as broad as the international impact of AIDS to the thwarted genius of an individual…the intimate is expressed through the vast. It is the relationship between the wider reaching conditions of all people and the individual experience that provokes the paradox of an intimate experience within the large public arena of opera.

Abomination

S/HELL.

"That was during a day trip to Berrima. We had lunch at this old pub and went to the large Berkelouws barn to check out all their second hand books. It was an excuse to give me another chance to get out of the city. As you know we ended up doing more and more little country trips. In hindsight it seems it was the most natural thing for me to have gotten out of the city all together after you were born Melissa…I was in total sympathy to Michael's bloody-mindedness. Especially when shells are my most favourite things from nature. As it was Michael had to walk a few hundred yards to the next servo to fill up the can." A giggle. "At least the petrol price had gone down a whole cent by the time he'd got there. Later on at night we were drinking with Cat and Michael also raved on how millions of Africans who were dying of A.I.D.S. would have been feeling abandoned by the world; (as Cat called it: their unholy fate! He remarked how at least the Brazilians were making cheap drugs to support their HIV poor. I started to cry when Michael and Cat said all that, I said they were right…I was holding in Melissa's hand one of those little Guatemalan worry dolls.'

The Last to be First

At an afternoon for Nicaragua at a Latin American hut on the Addison Grounds. A Chilean concert in the auditorium next to Radio Skid Row to remember Allende on the anniversary of his overthrow.

A liking for all things salsa had been cultivated at La Vina but an acute sense of insecurity that had developed over the break ups with both Timothy and Dan had also

sparked a greater empathy to the plight of people.

"I loved that day. Especially the afternoon. I'm not that into politics but I can't help but always remember the day I went to the Invasion Day March at Belmore Park in Central in the Bicentenary Year. There were ten thousand Aboriginals from all over Australia. A great memory. Master and Michael were also there."

The Greatest

At Canterbury-Bankstown Leagues Club looking at rows of $1 cheques behind glass that are an excuse for autographs by rugby league celebrities - like Grand Final captains - signed tongue-in-cheek to famous sportspeople like Muhammad Ali.

Oracle Night

Reading *Oracle Night* by Paul Auster in hospital. The cover is upside down.

"Lisa bought this book at Surry Hills markets on the Saturday before she went into hospital. The cover was stuck on upside down back to front by mistake. A chance event that really amused her. Reading *Oracle Night* by Paul Auster in hospital. The cover is upside down. "Lisa bought this book at Surry Hills markets on the Saturday before she went into hospital. The cover was stuck on upside down back to front by mistake. A chance event that really amused her. I had it autographed by Paul Auster at the Chauvel Cinema where he showed his film The Inner Life of Martin Frost; Mr Auster wittingly said when he saw the book that it was like 'an upside down stamp'. I have a Granta magazine that has stories from his Little Red Notebook. You should have a look Margaret; it's about coincidences and the circular way he has met people. I can-"

"I'm in no mood to read…"

"You will be."

A small full four-sided bookcase that swivels on a round stand with the following books in view:

Introduction to LUCRETIUS. A.P.Sinker. *The Art of Rhetoric.* Aristotle. *That Eye the Sky*. Tim Winton. *The Master and Margarita*. Mikhail Bulgakov. *The Sorrow of War.* Bao Ninh. *The War of the End of the World*. Mario Vargas Llosa. *The Shape of Time*. George Kubler. *In the Land of White Death – An Epic Story of Survival in the Siberian Arctic.* Valerian Albanov. *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich.* Alexander Solzhenitsyn. *The Intellectuals and the Masses*. John Carey. *The White Album* Joan Didion. *Blue is the Colour of Heaven A Journey to Afghanistan.* Richard Loseby. *Remembrance of Things Past.* Marcel Proust. *Les Miserables.* Emile Zola. *Tess of the Durbevilles*. Thomas Hardy. *Darkness At Noon*. Arthur Koestler. *Being and Nothingness. Nausea*. Jean-Paul Sartre. *Les Enfantes Terribles.* Jean Cocteau. *No Other Life*. Brian Moore. *Apocalypse – The Book of Revelations.* Jacques Ellul. *Black Sun - Depression and Melancholia*. Julia Kristeva. *Metamorphosis.* Ovid. *The Persian Expedition*. Xenephon. *Phaedo*. *Timaeus and Critias*. Plato. *The Homeric Hymns. The Odyssey. Illiad*. Homer. *The Divine Comedy*. Dante Alghieri. *Memoirs of Zeus.* Maurice Droun. Aeschylus – *The Oresta.* Euripedes *The War Plays*. Ted Hughes. *Hell Laziness: Why Hard Work Doesn't Pay.* Corinne Maser. *Disability in Australia - Exposing a Social Apartheid.*Gerard Goggin & Christopher Newell.*The Rise and Fall of Athens: Nine Greek Lives.* Plutarch. *Selected Writings.* Hildegard of Bingen. *Julian. Lincoln. The End of the World – interpreting the plague.* Joan Acocella. *The Golden Age.* Gore Vidal. *The Name of the Rose*. Umbero Eco. *The Hobbit. The Lord of the Rings*. J.R.Tolkien. *Homage to Catalonia. Down and Out in Paris and London.* George Orwell. *2001 A Space Odyssey* Arthur C.Clarke. *We* Yevgeny Zamyatin. *Agony and the Ecstasy. Lust for Life.* Irving Stone. *Cry, The Beloved Country.* Alan Paton. *Illias.* John Sakkas. *My Place*. Sally Morgan. *The Track to Bralgu.* B. Wongar. *Unbranded.* Herb Wharton. *Sing for Me, Countryman.* Neil Murray. *Creative Suffering.* Paul Tounier. *The Great World. Johhno.* David Malouf. *Monsignor Quixote.* Graham Greene. *Long Day's Journey Into Night.* Eugene O'Neil. *In the Blue House*. Meaghan Delahunt. *Nova Express. The Western Lands*. William.S. Burroughs. *Midnight Cowboy*. James Leo Herlihy. *Selected Poems*. Ana Akhmatova. *The Death of Artemio Cruz*. Carlos Fuentes. *Cosmos*. Carl Sagan.*The Wild Girl.* Michele Roberts. *Girl With A Pearl Earring.* Tracy Chevalier. *Wind, Sand and Stars,* Antoine De Saint-Exupery. *Mindfield*.

Gregory Corso. *The Secret Meaning of Things*. Lawrence Felinghetti. *The Clown.* Heinrich Boll. *War & Peace, Anna Karenina, Resurection.* Leo Tolstoy. *Iron Earth, Copper Sky.* Yashar Kemal. *The Bridge over the Drina*. Ivo Andric. *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*. Thornton Wilder. *Afluenza-When too Much is Not Enough*. Clive Hamilton & Richard Dennis. *The Magic Pudding*. Nprman Lindsay. *Meetings with Remarkable Men.* G.I. Gurdjieff. *Life and Fate*. Vasily Grossman. *Their Eyes Were Watching God* Zora Neale Hurston. *Fortunate Son.* J.H. Hatfield. *Midnight in the Garden of Good And Evil.* John Berendt. *To Kill A Mockingbird*. Harper Lee. *Billy Budd* Herman Melville. *The Tortilla Curtain.* T. Coraghessan Boyle. *Tortilla Flat. East of Eden. Of Mice & Men and Cannery Row. The Grapes of Wrath.* John Steinbeck. *The Man with No Qualities.* Robert Musil. *Reaching Tin River. It's Raining in Mango.* Thea Astley. *My Brother Jack. Clean Straw for Nothing.* George Johnston. *And the Ass Saw the Angel*. Nick Cave. *Sanctuary.* William Faulkner. *A Trip to the Light Fantastic: Travels with a Mexican Circus.* Katie Hickman. *Under the Volcano.* Malcolm Lowry. *Wide Sargossa Sea.* Jean Rhys. *The Place at the Coast.* Jane Hyde. *To the Lighthouse.* Virginia Woolfe. *Fever Pitch* Nick Hornby. *Unreliable Memoirs.* Clive James. *The Transformed Mind.* Dalai Lama. *What's the Matter with Liberals?* Thomas Frank. *Freedom from the Known.* Jiddu Krishnamurti. *As I Crossed A Bridge of Dreams: Recollections of a Woman in Eleventh Century Japan.* Lady Sarashina. *Knulp. Siddhartha. Steppenwolf. Narziss & Goldmund. The Glass Bead Game*. Herman Hesse. *Catcher in the Rye*. J. Salinger. *Lord of the Flies*. William Golding. *The Wine of Youth. Ask the Dust*. John Fante. *The Big Sleep*. Raymond Chandler. *Pulp. Dangling in the Tournefortia.* Charles Bukowski. *Solitudes – Crowded with Loneliness.* Bob Kaufman *I Apologize for the Eyes in My Head.* Yusef Komunyakaa. *Selected Poems.* Dylan Thomas. *Less than Zero.* Bret Easton Ellis. *Peter Camenzind.* Herman Hesse. *The Great Gatsby.* F. Scott Fitzgerald. *Last Boat to Astrakhan*. Robert Haupt. *The Lost Steps*. *The Kingdom of this World. The Chase.* Alejo Carpenter. *Slaughterhouse Five*. Kurt Vonnegut. *Paradise.* Abdulrazak Gurnah. *Of Love & Other Demons.* Gabriel Garcia Marquez. *Wonderful Fool*. Shusaku Endo. *Invitation to a Beheading.* Vladimir Nabakov. *The English Patient.* Michael Ondaatje. *Residence on Earth.* Pablo Neruda. *Poem of the Deep Song.* Federico Garcia Lorca. *Selected Poems*. Paul Eluard. *Inspector of Tides. Streets of the Long Voyage.* Michael Dransfield. *Death in Midsummer.* Yukio Mishima. *The Road to Oxiana*. Robert Byron. *The Fallen.* Juan Marse. *Novel Without a Name* Duong Thu Huong. *The Fig Tree*. Arnold Zable. *The Bone People*. Keri Hulme. *Sophie's Choice. Darkness Visible. TideWater Morning. The Long March.* William Styron. *The Unbearable Lightness of Being. The Book of Laughter and Forgetting.* Milan Kundera. *Utz.* Bruce Chatwin. *Queen of Love.* Rosie Scott. *The Women Who Live on the Ground.* Lee Cataldi. *Lyrical Campaigns.* June Jordan. *Seasonal Adjustments*. Adib Khan. *Selected Poems*. Joseph Brodsky. *Collected Writings.* Willem de Kooning. *Metamorphosis.* Franz Kakfa. *All the Pretty Horses, The Crossing, Cities of the Plain, Outer Dark.Suttree.* Cormac McCarthy. *The Tin Drum.* Gunter Grass. *The Doors of Perception. Heaven & Hell. Brave New World*. Aldous Huxley. *Hard Travellin'*. Kenneth Allsop. *Vernon God Little*.D.B.C. Pierre. *Postcode.* Wayne Swan. *The Seal Oil Lamp.* Dale Ardmond. *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*.Luis Bunieres.*Captain Dimitros*.Nicholas Kyriacos. *Komninos*.Komninos.*The Bridge on the River Kwai, The Planet of the Apes*.Pierre Boulle. *Last Temptation of Christ. Report to Greco.* Nikos Kazantzakis. *Three Penny Opera, Mother Courage and Her Children*.Bertolt Brecht. *In the Human Night.* Peter Bakowski. *Mexico City Blues.* Jack Keroauc. *Asphodel*, *That Greeny Flower & Other Love Poems*. William Carlos Williams.*Selected Poems*.Rabindranath Tagore.*Howl*.Alan Ginsberg.*The Four Quartets.* T.S.Eliot. *Ancient Evenings,The Executioner's Song, The Naked and the Dead*. Norman Mailer. *Carpenteria,* Alexis Wright.*Narrow Road to the Deep North.* Matsuo Basho. *Outer Dark*. Cormac McCarthy. *Snow.* Orhan Pamuk. *Pride&Prejudice* Jane Austen, *Hunger.* Knut Hamsen*Thirst for Love*.Yukio Mishima.*TheChant of Jimmy Blacksmith*.Thomas Keneally. *Dirt Cheap*. Elisabeth Wynhausen.*NickelandDimed*. Barbara Ehreneeich. *Quarterly Eassay Beyond belief: What Future for Labor?* John Button.*Tibetan Marches*.Andre Migot.*Blue Highways A Journey into America*.William Least Heat-Moon. *Full Bloom the Art and Life of Georgia O'Keefe*. Hunter Drohjowska-Philp. *Mephistopheles, The Devil in the Modern World.* Jeffrey Burton Russell. *VOODOO in Haiti.* Alfred Metraux. *Malone Dies*.Samuel Beckett.*Requim of A Dream*.Hubert. J. Selby.*For Whom the Bell Tolls. The Old Man and the Sea.* Ernest Hemingway. *Death of a Salesman.The Crucible*.Arthur Miller.*King Rat,* James Clavell.*Where I'm Caling From,Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?* Raymond Carver. *Picture This.* Joseph Heller. *Kandinsky-the language of the eye.* Paul Overy. *Women of Troy*. Euripedes. *The Soccer War*. Ryszard Kapuscinski.*Timbuktu. Moon Palace. New York Trilogy.* Paul Auster.

"Many of the books belonged to other people. Most of the classics were lent to her by Cat. As you know the other shelves were also full."

"It wasn't really a matter of reading all of them was it…" remarks Margaret.

"Na…just that all those books made Lisa feel she wasn't forgotten. Cat once said to me

that these books would sometimes have also provided Lisa with more support than all of us; he reckoned we - at times - would have seemed as useless and infuriating to her as Job's friends. I know that what Lisa mainly did was read a lot of poems. You can't see it in this photo but do you remember that framed Charles Bukowski poem that Cat lent to her? The one above the bed? CRIME & PUNISHMENT. About Dostoevsky. *"That tough son-of-a-bitch."*[1] Lisa loved that poem." A wistful grin.

"Lisa also spent her time organising these photos."

"Her bedside was like an office. There's that Rubik's Cube she liked to play with; *'See Mick how all the ins and outs of life finally do connect up...'* she would say…sometimes when I visited Lisa it was as if she was keeping me company rather than the other way around. Although having said that I *know* Lisa always looked forward to seeing you Margaret. She was saying to me once - how as you couldn't be her mum - you were like an aunt. Yet, one evening she had a bit of a fever and was mumbling that you were her mid-wife. I was thinking Lisa was remembering Melissa's birth but I realised it had more to do with you helping her to face up to…"

Atlas Groans

Holding up a headline. **FORTUNE FAVOURS THE BRAVE.**

"Corina Morariu dealt with her leukaemia to reach the doubles final. Lindsay Davenport stayed as her partner. Loyalty. That matters to me." Lisa slowly slides her right hand along the side of the hospital bed to touch Michael's free hand which is on the bedspread.

"She started to keep a lot of newspaper clippings and that's because that apart from always staying up late at night listening to music there was also a lot of tuning in to overseas news programs which she got into the habit of hearing while staying at Cat's." Michael looks grim. "Trouble is the news sometimes made her more depressed. Would be so withdrawn next morning wouldn't want to speak at all…"

"Like the weight of the world was on her shoulders…was that it Michael…suffocating her…?"

Trivial Pursuits

"Luckily Mick I was able to quickly wipe off the chocolate QUIK Melissa spilt on Cat's Dame Edna Everage coffee book. It's such a classic – like his old battered blue Trivial Pursuit box and that huge video collection…"

"You're right." says Michael. "As for me I have a soft spot for his GUMBY picture book - The Authorized Biography of the World's First Clayboy!"

Horror Movie Right There On My T.V.

'I'm lucky Mick..is what I said…Cat is in today with a portable TV which has an in-built VCR…he bought it on the cheap at Cash Converters…I'm freezing…I'm dying…as well a a big pile of videos for me which he just scooped up before leaving his place…I grip this bed…life is a dream. I don't want to wake up…he's put on Dr Who…there he is with Leela in an underworld…I am in my own underworld…both trying to sneak into the Oracle's hideout hiding under a white sheet while sitting in a mine trolley…Cat tells me it is just like Ulysses and his men who hid under sheep to escape from the Cyclops…for me there is nowhere to hide… I am told that this series is about a quest just like Jason's…there is always the happy ending in Dr Who…I look at Cat speaking…seems like a dream…I would much prefer to be watching Augustus, there he would sit in his

wheelchair at the beginning of OZ always ready to sweep away all our illusions…thrown over the top of a wall by the police to be left paralysed…betrayed by his own 'brothers'…huh, this guy with the Rafrastarian look…looking beguilely at you down the camera with his hands clasped in front of him…elbows on disused legs…keeping only to his wits to survive in that 'rehabilitation' hellhole nicknamed Emerald City…I'm listening to you Cat…yes, Greek myths…Augustus gave us his version of Orpheus…a beautifully sincere…love struck…supernatural musician who was ultimately dealt a pitiless end by the gods…my end, to be the same…no matter what anybody says…Cat was right when he yelled out death never sleeps…Cat shouting how Cervantes was right to say that death does not even wait for us to have our final say…Augustus intimates the same thing as he mentions the many, varied indifferent ways the inmates will brutally die by each other's hands without any chance of saying any last word, famous or otherwise…a hole in the wall. A reverend, although scandalised by the temptation of mammon this prisoner was still a fervent man of faith and he now dies, slowly, holed up in between two walls, by a jilted, malicious follower. The devil cast out sought his unholy, sly revenge. Cat was entranced, as the entombed fallen preacher clasped unto his dying breath those famous words: "…although I walk through the valley of death I shall fear no evil…"…I suffocate…my death is evil…I will…gasp…oh God, there is the horror…'

"Hey Lisa!" Cat cheerfully holds up a video. "We'll have to watch this episode of Mythbusters some time! Do you know more rain lands on you when you run instead of walk? That water does stop bullets? They also show how salsa can be used to breakdown prison bars!"

Lest We Forget

Lisa is sometimes too weak to press the channel switch and so numbly watches the early morning SBS news programs which are in Japanese Chinese Russian Indonesian Greek Spanish Italian German and so forth. No subtitles. Language as redundant for Lisa; yet what captures her attention is the quivering movement of the lips of each newsreader as well as the news items representing the movement of life that is outside, way beyond the hospital room. To be divorced from the world; Lisa gripping the side of her bed; to be like Odysseus staying afloat on a raft in a stormy sea, to overcome that growing sense of isolation that arises from so many voices from the television and radio. A cacophony; the shadow of Babel; human history is passing by. Lisa fears she is to be forgotten; travelling listlessly in a sea surrounded by so many overbearing voices, while her voice is becoming ever so feint. Odysseus exorcised his house of the lustful, self-indulgent suitors. Lisa seeks for some sort of exorcism of the demons of meaninglessness, so that there would be some sort of satisfactory conclusion, to avoid the prospect of an anonymous death; this is what hurts Lisa more than anything else and so there is always the internal struggle to regain her voice in some way, to hold on to the notion of living and dying with meaning, as well as to be remembered.

MIND CHANNEL WHIRL

Mind noises. Mental spam. Fast forwarding a video to see that Cat has taped

scenes from some old movies such as Frank Sinatra as an ill-fated U.S. Army officer in a WWII train prison escape; switching to Sinatra talking to a boy where there is a restaurant called The Garden of Eden in the background; Jerry Lewis buying products for an old woman who wants one of everything that is advertised during the commercial breaks on her television; "…when the moon hits your eye/like a big-a pizza pie…" Dean Martin singing That's Amore. "PADDYCAKE!" Bob Hope & Bing Crosby carrying out a typical comic routine - confusing the big baddie who has found them out - to save their lives; Abbot & Costello asking: whose on first!; ultimately there is a scene of Mickey Rooney - as the Atomic Kid - a publicist claims he survived a H-Bomb explosion in the American desert because of the peanut butter he was eating; curious to look at another video - while continuing to speak to Michael on the phone-it feels like stumbling onto a 'holy of holies' for such apparently random recorded visual bites intimate so closely to Cat's cluttered prophetic frame-of- mind:

mental frame 101303
longitude 12^0 latitude 316^0

"Canterbury has scored eighteen points in eight minutes! Talk about a resurrection-

mental frame 234567
longitude 23^0 latitude 231^0

"Neal Cassidy who was the inspiration for Jack Kerouac's larger-than-life Dean Moriaty had - along with his wife - Caroline both taken an interest in the writings of the religious psychic Edgar Cayce who claimed that it was possible to believe both in Karma and Christ. Prayer and meditation could develop your psychic abilities by which we could discover meaning to our psychic hunches; talk with the dead; read auras; dream the future and enter into retro-cognition & psychic examinations of previous lives-

mental frame 567345
longitude 56^0 latitude 45^0

"This Great Barrier Reef shrimp has binocular vision and can see sixteen pigments including ultra-violet and polarised light as against the mixture of three primary pigments which we can observe; it processes this colour knowledge in it's eyes because unlike us it's brain is too small. Here we see it playing with a Rubiks Cube. What could we see if we had eyes like this shrimp?" [An elderly scientist wearing a white cloak with an eye dropper over his eye]. "It's like the splitting of the world! Filled with light! I can see colours I could never imagine!" Voiceover: "A doctor with the power to see what others cannot see!" FILMED IN THE NEW PHOTOGRAPHIC PROCESS. SPECTARAMA!-

mental frame 453210
longitude 52^0 latitude 341^0

"We will be visiting a man who has a scanner which allows people to look at their auras; we will also be introducing you to a woman who has sensitive sensory perception like that of a shark and so can be psychic with animals. We will show her reading an alligator's mind so his trainer will understand why he has lost his appetite. It is possible that sharks who can pick up the tiniest electric signals from miles away maybe able to read our thoughts which are produced from electrolyte

signals in our brains-

mental frame 345012
longitude 129^0 latitude 311^0

"The Freedom Ride was like going past the jaws of hell into an underworld festering with many wraiths ready to recriminate so many downtrodden souls…I was deeply moved to see all those people marching with Charlie Perkins facemasks in honour of him –

mental frame 876441
longitude 32^0 latitude 235^0

"Kafka and Kandinsky met on Prague's Charles bridge-

mental frame 109843
longitude 45^0 latitude 29^0

"This Mexican shaman who looks more like a plumber is highly recommended in Mexico City to exorcise your house of unwanted ghosts-

mental frame 762000
longitude 89^0 latitude 93^0

"A plastic bag in India is a poor person's briefcase-

mental frame 765432
longitude 10^0 latitude 98^0

"The Cremaster Cycle by Matthew Barney will premier on Sunday February 8 at Melbourne's ACMI Cinemas. Matthew Barney's mythic vision of human development is to us - according to the Guardian's Jonathan Jones - what T.S. Eliot's Wasteland was to the Western world in the early 20th century. Jones portends that after watching this five film series you may feel like J.A. Alfred Prufrock lingering in chambers of the sea…Till human voices wake us, and we drown."-

mental frame 000786
longitude56^0 latitude 318^0

"It is extraordinary the pressure these children are placed under in these American spelling bees-

mental frame 666001
longitude 13^0 latitude 100^0

"God-abiding geologists believe that by looking up Old Testament references of the biblical lands they will discover oil in northern Israel-

mental frame 786320
longitude 56^0 latitude 78^0

"There is a 10,000 franc fine if the Marseilles is mocked. We have here a reggae rendition of the French national anthem followed by an Arab version-

mental frame 271091
longitude 298^0 latitude 124^0

"St. Vincents has organised with the Australian Catholic University to offer humanities courses to the homeless so as to house the mind-

mental frame 840002
longitude 101^0 latitude 303^0

"Gore Vidal who claims that the Zero attack on Pearl Harbour was no surprise to FDR dubs his country the United States of Amnesia-

mental frame 275001
longitude 87^0 latitude 43^0

"Strange lights were seen from the space shuttle moving very quickly in a zig-zag direction in the earth's atmosphere-

mental frame 187300
longitude 78^0 latitude 287^0

"In Sweden on April Fool's Day it was announced that black & white televisions could be converted to colour by stretching a nylon stocking over the screen. Actually when colour television did come to Sweden it was on April One-

mental frame 789934
longitude 210^0 latitude 92^0

"I'm Toni Collette and I'm here to let you know that In Greek mythology Prometheus stole the secret of fire from the gods and revealed it to mankind. To punish him every morning the gods sent an eagle to claw out his innards. The same fate can await a careless entertainer. Joe Dulce was from the U.S.A. An obscure fringe artist but it is for a lethally infectious novelty song that he will never be forgotten or forgiven."
"What's the matter with you aye! Gotta no respect! Whadda ya think you do! Why you look so sad. It's a nice a place. Shaddup You Face!"

mental frame 789454
longitude98^0 latitude 317^0

"The core of the earth is as hot as the surface of the sun. We can dig a tunnel three kilometres deep into the north-east of South Australia's crust to find rocks hot enough to use as a source of electricity-

mental frame 230001
longitude 200^0 latitude 201^0

"Many Aboriginal leaders hold fears that the government's legislative proposal to the Aboriginal Land Act is a Trojan Horse-

mental frame 541199
longitude 21^0 latitude 302^0

"Frisbee competitions where people play in games with rules similar to netball have become a fad in Europe. Frisbee training videos are in big demand-

mental frame 000932
longitude 78^0 latitude 193^0

"A checkout girl has married her husband at the supermarket as many of her co-workers were unable to have time-off. The happy wedding couple met via the internet-

mental frame 832999
longitude 34^0 latitude 241^0

"In the Japanese anime film Patlabor 2 the point is succinctly made between two police characters that an unjust peace exists where first world prosperity is based on the economic suffering of others-

mental frame 666033
longitude 33^0 latitude 22^0

"Only in the Cold War were there 'good refugees'-

mental frame 084007
longitude 67 latitude 107

"The secret services under the Putin government are being accused by Boris Berevosky – a former oligarch now in exile in London – of manufacturing the bombing of Moscow apartments in which over three hundred people have died so as to have an excuse for further incursions into Chechnya. NTV the independent Moscow television agency which alone has criticised the Chechnya campaign is being closed down. Putin's manageable democracy means a manageable media which only suits the Kremlin-

mental frame 999000
longitude 99^0 latitude 10^0

"A child suffering from asthma on a country property has died because the boy's family could not get assistance due to its faulty home phone. An increasingly privatised Telstra had failed to quickly fix it-

mental frame 342109
longitude 78^0 latitude 198^0

"Flamenco dancing originally arose from Indian gypsies who had made their way to Spain centuries ago-

mental frame 732002
longitude 54^0 latitude 234^0

"The Mardi Gras has made a very welcome return to its political roots with several

social issue floats including one called the Tamphobia. Here is Miss Reconciliation-

mental frame 541112
longitude 23^0 latitude 12^0

"In medieval Spain the Jews who had converted to Christianity to avoid persecution would eat pork publicly to appease their persecutors yet inside their own homes they would observe their old faith-

mental frame 320991
longitude 56^0 latitude 345^0

"In this Woody Allen clip we see an Ancient Greek priest burn offerings to the gods. He and his military escort look up at the sky to hear an answering machine state that Zeus is not at home at the moment and could you please leave a message and he will get right back to you followed by a thunderclap-

mental frame 341021
longitude 48^0 latitude 97^0

"The Flight of the Phoenix is the 1965 movie of how a crashed cargo plane is used by the survivors to make a new plane to escape their hopeless predicament. Hardy Kruger plays the Teutonic model aircraft designer Heinrich Dorfmann who methodically works out a way to salvage the wings and fuselage segment for this demanding project. The cantankerous pilot Captain Frank Towns is played by James Stewart an actor who during World War II actually served in the Air Force and flew in bombing missions over Europe. He became a Colonel and was awarded several bravery medals that include the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Croix de Guerre. In 1959 he retired from the Air Force Reserve as a brigadier general. However, what is more ironic in relation to this film is that one of his favourite past times was making model aeroplanes with his good friend Henry Fonda. It is tragic that in real life a stunt pilot Paul Mantz died in this heroic film of severely flawed men surviving insurmountable odds to stay alive-

mental frame 294167
longitude 45^0 latitude 91^0

"A man who was holding fifteen people hostage in Amsterdam as a protest against wide screens for television has shot himself after releasing his captives. Unfortunately for him it seems he had occupied the wrong building because Phillips had recently changed its premises-

mental frame 785492
longitude 23^0 latitude 235^0

"In tonight's Global Village we will start with a story that involves an African tribe that at the end of the working day gather in a circle & joyfully perform a happy dance then we will look at a Paris art commune known as the Roundhouse & which has hosted many art luminaries including the likes of Chagall…our last story will be about Columbian youths in Cartagena who frequent an innovative dancing school as a way of dealing with the trauma of a 40 year internal insurgency in their beautiful country-

mental frame 797320
longitude 90^0 latitude 89^0

"Derrida talks about the 'psychic archive' when considering the inner life of a human being-

mental frame 300111
longitude 317^0 latitude 19^0

"If it had not been a slow news day we may never have heard of a young Japanese woman dying a lonely death in the snow outside Fargo. There is a truth in the story of her death but it will not be found in any movie-

mental frame 761229
longitude 63^0 latitude 23^0

"World boxing champ Kotzya Zu would probably agree with the daughter of a Russian mail bride that while in Russia you may only get one slice here in the West it is possible to have the whole cake-

mental frame 218033
longitude 89^0 latitude 34^0

"Families in Indonesia have to send their children out to work says an Indonesian woman human rights unionist who has turned down a fifty thousand dollar human rights prize from Reeboks. She says it would be better if Reeboks improved workers wages and conditions in countries such as Indonesia and Mexico. In Indonesia a daily wage is only one dollar eighty cents and activists who have protested for higher wages have been raped and killed. The woman activist says that up to seven million children are no longer at school having to go and find work for their families. They are part of a lost generation-

mental frame 798451
longitude 310^0 latitude 239^0

"William Yang by referring to different personal objects and two large digital screens provides his audience with a meditative overview of his life with the Tao philosophy of Lao Tze Tung being the one unifying thread through this very human montage which covers anything from a North American Indian dream catcher given to him in Canada to a large pan used as a bird bath in his Arncliffe flat-

mental frame 679012
longitude 91^0 latitude 45^0

"In Iran the conservative religious forces are trying to usurp the parliamentary reformists. As this power struggle goes on a democratic mullah points out that power is like water: if it does not flow it stagnates. He is attacking his conservative brethren for he has surmised that when water flows it is a river of life-

mental frame 456198
longitude 78^0 latitude 203^0

"Independent arbitration must be maintained and an Australian minimum wage must be guaranteed-

mental frame 100543
longitude 28^0 latitude 351^0

There was a chimpanzee called Nim Chimsky who was named after the famed linguist Noam Chomsky and was the first primate to learn American sign language. However, the most unusual chimp would have to be Oliver who regularly walked upright and would socialise with people. Oliver drank coffee and beer, smoked cigars lounged on a sofa and watched television. He would even go to the kitchen himself to make his own cuppa and take it to his den. All in all Oliver was just another regular guy. However, when Oliver made sexual advances on the wife of his carer he was sold and now lives in retirement in Texas-

mental frame 330123
longitude 10^0 latitude 301^0

"Andy Warhol's Time Capsules at the NGV International in Melbourne randomly captures time and human experience to raise the trivial to art; what we see is Warhol's documentation of daily life in each of these 600 boxes.

mental frame 239045
longitude 67^0 latitude 220^0

"It is a national disgrace that bank fees are slanted towards penalising the less-well-off-

mental frame 892300
longitude 12^0 latitude 34^0

"Tonight we will show on Mythbusters how goldfish do have long-term memory and not the proverbial three-second attention span. That you really can get struck by lightining if you are on the phone during a storm. Also with the sinking of our tugboat the Mythtitanic we will find out if you can get sucked into the death-dive of a sinking ship. Folklore says that the cook on the Titanic was high up in the air on the stern as it descended towards the water. When it finally went under he said that all he did was step into the sea like getting out of an elevator to then later be picked up by a lifeboat-

mental frame 489032
longitude 10^0 latitude 66^0

"These sunglasses are specifically curved to angle out those light waves which normally impede clear vision. Fishermen, racing car drivers, mountain bike riders, tennis players, snow-skiers, water-skiers, board-riders, outdoor sportspeople in general ALL claim these sunglasses give them the edge! These sunglasses will bend to the contours of your face so you'll forget you are even wearing them! Great style! They WILL improve your vision! They will NEUTRALISE 83% of unnecessary atmospheric light. We GUARANTEE that they will not scratch or crack for the first twelve months! Ring now and these glasses that normally cost HUNDREDS OF DOLLARS will ONLY COST YOU $39.95! THAT'S RIGHT! SEEING IS BELIEVING: $39.95-

mental frame 945001
longitude 32^0 latitude 356^0

"Sanctuary houses similar to those in North America to hide refugees are being suggested-

mental frame 895634
longitude 76^0 latitude 190^0

"There was another demonstration outside the School of the Americas. This institution which has trained many of Latin America's military leaders has simply had a name change-

mental frame 167304
longitude 26^0 latitude 43^0

"At the Nicholson Museum at Sydney University there can be found Ancient Greek Cypriot pottery with the swastika symbol in reverse-

mental frame 674312
longitude 78^0 latitude 45^0

"Susan George who has written several books on global capitalism and world hunger believes that these days the 'bastards have gone too far'. In her eyes under the Republicans the U.S Constitution and democracy is being dismantled piece by piece-

mental frame 345109
longitude 89^0 latitude 21^0

'Hollywood actress Angelina Jolie who as goodwill ambassador for the UNCHR states that the West – and this includes Australia – are like a beach couple who totally ignored a dead African refugee man whose corpse had washed up on the Mediterranean shoreline. They kept sunbaking just like a cold-hearted West keeps 'sunbaking'-

mental frame 777666
longitude 333^0 latitude 12^0

'Youthful 48 year old accomplished Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya was gunned down in the elevator to her apartment block by a hit man. Although Anna Politkovskaya knew she would one day be the victim to a contract killing she refused to let up on her courageous criticism of the Putin government's incursion into Chechnya and the atrocities being committed by Russian troops on the whole civilian population. It seems a whole generation of people there – from many diverse national groups including local Russians - has had to pay with their lives for the brutality being carried out by the few on both sides of this 'callous equation'-

mental frame 234500
longitude 23^0 latitude 89^0

In Pisa 100,000 candles are lit up for one night every year this spectacular Luminari is in celebration of Saint Rainieri

mental frame 899321
longitude 83^0 latitude319^0

"Today's Tale of a Suitcase is about a Dutch man who grew up in colonial Batavia. When the Japanese invaded he was interned with his parents; they died while he went to Japan to work as a slave labourer-

mental frame 675432
longitude 73^0 latitude 94^0

"It is said that Aborigines could speak up to five languages and were thus very receptive to learning new tongues. It has been claimed that the Aboriginals who lived around Bennelong Point could gain a basic comprehension of English within six months-

It's All Good

Although the bookshop in Victoria St is a small place Cat found some great old art books there. I know he's recommended it to Gregor. It's just as good as Darling Street books in Rozelle near the markets; last time we were there we picked up all this Herman Hesse stuff. Peter Carmenzind. Daemon. Narciss and Goldmund. The bookshop guy was surprised with our selection as apparently Hesse is not so popular now. A pity."

Visiting a third world bric-brac shop in Rozelle that was sending money to Ethiopia; having been to the opening night party the evening before; seeing the MAHATOLLA QUEENS at Balmain R.S.L; on a sunny tranquil Sunday morning walking along the foreshore by the pier where the Balmain Ferry stopped. A 'coastal arcadia' as Michael had called it; having a palm reading with this 'burly' gypsy woman in her exotic tent at Rozelle markets; listening to a female guitarist who sang Patsy Cleine covers under the large tree in the back of the Rozelle markets.

"She had a sad, beautiful voice. A female Orpheus as Cat put it. It's all good – that's what she'd say between songs. Lisa would also like repeating Cat's mantra: "It's not about happiness but what is real."

Hotel Palisade

Lisa enjoying the strong afternoon sun on her body while sitting outside on a bench of the Hotel Palisade.

"We were there during the happy hour between 6 and 7. This woman kindly helped me guide the car into a parking spot just outside it as I had done a really bad job of parking the first time as about twenty people were watching me. She asked if I was blind drunk. Made me laugh. She was really nice. Talk about 'stage fright.' You would like the Palisade. It's a historical pub. Great façade. Lots of space inside. Up behind the Rocks. On top of the hill, you just go straight ahead instead of climbing up to Observatory Hill. You can look down at the old wharves of the harbour that are down behind it. There's that huge arch you walk under to get to the top. I've always reckoned someone ought to paint a mural on it to rival the Sistine Ceiling."

Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star

Melissa's hand in the hand of a Vietnamese girl outside a mobile repair shop in Dulwich Hill. (Michael was there to get his mobile phone fixed off the Vietnamese girl's father for less than half the price for what the mobile phone company was demanding).

Melissa and her new friend are singing Twinkle Twinkle Little Star as they watch this female accordion player from the café next door plays this tune; as she serenades patrons who are seated on the footpath.

A cheerful blonde hair woman with a large floppy hat and is wearing an ANTAR Sea of Hands t-shirt gives both Melissa and Vietnamese girl a big hug after their impromptu 'performance'.

"Funnily`enough," remarks Michael, "I met up with her again recently at a 'Murray concert. Found out this legend was staying with her. She invited Master and I back to her

place for a cuppa; along with this woman who always dances up front next to the stage. Her house reminded me of Master's place. She was a very friendly, hospitable person; thought I was Melissa's father." A laugh. "She'd asked me if I had seen those Aboriginal dancers doing their version of Zorba the Greek. I had. Apparently these guys are now famous in Greece. All the cafes screen their dancing which they can get off YouTube. That's the internet - Margaret."

There had also been talk of working as a teacher's aide: mentioning Family Night where such newly arrived students to this country would bring their parents or guardians with food from their countries to the school hall. The night organised as an official welcome to being here; afterwards dancing to hip-hop.

Another one of Michael's typical distant looks.[1]

St. Michael.

An old postcard of St. Michael's monastery off the Brittany coast in northern France; Michael had 'lent' it to Lisa during her first week in hospital. Flipping it over.

'St.Michael' it was a really good idea of yours to have a car parked in that side-street off Flora St. near the airport and then catch a taxi there and back to International. It's true, I was told by my family who dropped me off that the taxi fares did turn out to be much, much cheaper than the greedy amounts you normally have to pay for airport parking. I go to have a proper farewell with them without having to worry about the parking time etc. Ta! Karin X."

Flight of the Phoenix

A photo of Lisa and Melissa at Beaman Park beside Cooks River marvelling at a remote controlled model plane buzzing high up in the clear blue sky. Michael remembers that crisp early Sunday morning walk where Lisa found the energy to walk all the way to Tempe.

Sienese Paradise

Outside a prestige print shop at the Quay. In the window are images by Chagall. Miro. Picasso. Kandinsky. A Rembrandt. An etched Christ being lowered on the Cross. Lisa touching the glass at this point.

Smiling beside reprints by Giovanni di Paolo. Dante and Beatrice leaving the Heaven of Venus and heading towards the sun. Dante and Beatrice looking directly at the light of God. An infinite bright point. Surrounded by golden rings which are the orders of the angels.

"In any cosmos I imagine myself as a star surrounded by the main orbits of Michael, Melissa, Margaret…Gregor…Cat…Master…Caterina …"

A Bridge too Far

The last rush of the Super 8 Central Australian film. Port Augusta. An Aboriginal woman singing a gospel song in a church. A young family in a living room. Zooming in on an Impressionist painting hanging on the wall of a bridge over the river Seine.

"I would have liked to have seen Paris…"

Space Launch

Lisa helping Melissa sit within the gold circles of an astronomical sphere in the Botanical Gardens.

Satyr

Mother and daughter on either side of a life size black statue of a cheeky satyr - almost hidden amongst the foliage - it also is at the Opera House entrance of the Botanical Gardens.
Laughing.

'Mona Lisa'

Seated at a sculpture drinking fountain; she is smiling and has folded her arms. Behind Lisa is a hazy Sydney foreshore that can just be seen in between the expansive foliage; while the sea nymph Diana as goddess of purity looks down at this tranquil mortal.
Michael softly sings Nick Cave."*Oh Diana…sweet Diana…you're a mystery to me…"*

Christmas Kanga

Melissa – wearing very large oversize novelty heart-shaped sunglasses that cover her whole face – is standing beside a six-foot red kangaroo decoration that Master had bought at Reverse Garbage. It is standing up in the front yard of his house and has Christmas lights that flash around a thin plastic tube that runs along the border of the kangaroo.
"Master told me that it was one of a troupe of kangaroos that pushed Santa's sleigh that was once on top of a shopping centre. Luckily, Lisa got to see this photo. Master put it up very early just so I'd take this photo for her."
"Yes, he told me." remarks Margaret. "He doesn't seem to have the heart to pull it down."
"Never forget the white rabbit from next door staring at it at night. It must have been like television for him."

Christmas Cowgirls

A smiling Lisa with her arms around a laughing Melissa looking up at Michael's camera; mother and daughter are both wearing red Christmas cowboy hats with white fluffy rims.
"Lisa found those at a two-dollar shop in Ashfield Mall."

Ashbury

Melissa and Isabella wearing the Christmas cowboy hats while alking down a street where every house is superbly lit up with Christmas lights. It was Christmas Eve. 'Stars.' Melissa has said; for her these were not just rows of flashing coloured lights but whole galaxies, supernovas here on earth to give her a sense of presence of her mother who she knew was entwined with heaven.

The two girls standing outside a house covered in Christmas lights with large effigies of Santa Claus; his helpers and reindeers.

"Remember all the magic lights Melissa!"

The child smiles.

"On the night I think I was more amazed than her!" jokes Michael. "Caterina certainly thought so…" Michael thinks of this night when it had seemed so poignant to see Melissa wearing her Christmas hat on this walk; the faces of the two urchins were 'lit up' with unadulterated joy. "…it was the first time I'd been to Second Street as well."

Sierre Leone Evening

A community hall in Marrickville filled with local African émigrés. Graceful, eldely women wearing colourful costumes. Apparels to human dignity.

Musical items. A film shot down by Cooks River with young African actors. Have been watched.

Teenage girls crowd around a cheerful Melissa who is being held up by a young female teacher who has taught them English. Melissa grabbing the long curly black hair of the woman who empathetically holds her; also noting the olive complexion of her skin. Lisa looks on. (It is obvious in recent times she has thinned and thanks the female teacher for helping her out with her daughter). A smile; despite everything these girls had gone through they were all so full of life. Very feisty. Lisa had liked them immensely; these people had revitalised her. It can be understood how life with all its supposed cosmic origin had begun in Africa. Yes, to be of the cosmos.

John Hegley

Camden Town markets. An old theatre in Hammersmith where Karin had gone to a third world benefit. On the back of this photo Karin had written it had reminded her of those big African and Latin American nights at Paddington Town Hall.

A little A5 size collection of poems by John Hegley.

'Very witty cabaret! Just like God's Cowboys!'

The black & white front cover has Blake's The Ancient of Days holding a pair of big glasses; also a linocut illustration of Blake's mad Nebuchadnezzar on all fours under a poem about someone losing their glasses.

A John Cooper Clarke Leaflet.

'Remember when we went and saw him at the Sydney Trade Union Club? I loved it when he did I Married an Alien from Outer Space.

Silver Lining

Along with these images was the one photo that was deeply cherished: one of the buskers along the Quay wharves was another man who also did not speak and was dressed in silver robes with a silver wreath around his head; in front of him was a silver altar which had roses and a silver toaster that was used as a money box. This silver god would give children little lollipops as they came up to him and in turn money would be dropped into the toaster as an offering of thanks for this 'blessing.' After an old bearded Aboriginal man made some positive comment to the silver god - coaxed by her mother - Melissa shyly approached the shining being to be joyously given a lollipop which was rubbed down the side of her arm; then something rather unusual happened when the silver god bowed down and pulled a small silver robe out of a bag and wrapped it around Melissa; more so than this was the silver wreath placed on her head. Michael looks at the photo of Melissa robed in silver standing beside the busker in similar garb and holding a bunch of red roses in one hand and a silver plastic buccaneer sword in the other. On the far right of the photo, steadying herself on the wharf railing is Lisa looking very proudly at her 'little goddess.'

A Final Circle

Holding a Kentridge postcard: an Arctic Circle with two dancing silhouettes.

NOTES

Oracle Night

1.CRIME & PUNISHMENT\listening to Beethoven\after a bad day at the track\then frying a steak\trying to return to creation\it's like trying to return to your love\after a bad argument.\I didn't step out on creation. I just deserted her a bit\will she take me back?\Dostoevsky used to meet hell over the roulette wheel.\but he got the *The Gambler* out of it\and probably a few other novels.\but I'd never suggest gambling or suffering as a deliberate method to create art.\there isn't any deliberate method of creating art.\I wish I hadn't gone to the track today.\I wish I hadn't done so many other things in life.\but that's all chatter and looking back, isn't it?\there's always the next hill to climb\the next fall.\let's get our legs back under us, let's move on!\that Dostoevsky was one tough son-of-a-bitch. Charles Bukowsi. BLACK SPARROW PRESS.

Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star

1.Michael is remembering how on this welcoming night the students were encouraged to dance by a wise, cheeky & very compassionate 'fifty-something' elegant Thai aide who was a very good, skilful dancer;· as well as by a lively 'thirty-something' casual teacher of Croat-Ukrainian background; Michael was always intrigued to hear about her overseas travels as she yo-yoed back and forth every year between Australia & every continent; Michael then thinks of another Adriatic friend originally from Dubrovnik who is a flamenco dancer - she would have been excellent to bring to such a vibrant evening.

KARIN

Below are the contents of Karin's letter which only a few lines were included in the main narrative.

'…I'm off to Mali. From Paris there are direct flights. I am staying at a pensione in Montmare but I hope to spend my last night at this nineteenth century flat filled with antique furniture and old paintings which is the home of this Russian fashion designer that I met at a bus station in Krakow. I found the cafes that were in Before Sunrise and Amelie. I haven't had the need to go to all the museums as I have been to Paris before but I'm hoping tomorrow to go to this new museum made up of indigenous art, including works from Australia. I want to go to Fontainebleau as a French guy that I met said Wolli Creek reminded him of the forest around there! (I take a small collection of photos from home with me whenever I go away to show people when they ask me what's Sydney like).

It's late Sunday afternoon and I'm looking out my 'French window' to view a glorious sunset. I've just come from the Georges Pompidou building where I've seen all these reggae buskers. I took a photo of this one singer wearing a large colourful cap that you would really like. I left my 'flatette' and in my last week in London I stayed at a community house called Patchwork in Islington. A teacher from my ex-work put me up. Patchwork is three terraces with the dividing walls knocked through and over twenty people live there including a family. Everyone has their own rooms but there are communal living and dining areas and a large kitchen. When I get back my friend is hoping to move into her own place as its time for her to have some more personal space; I may live with her or I may come home. Anyhow that's all in the future, as for Mali I'll be spending time in some far away villages, at least try to get off the usual tourist trail. (My travel book says that in the more accessible Dogon areas uncaring tourists will take photos of the villagers although they know there is a strong local belief that a camera can steal a person's soul). I'm definitely going to see the mosque in the cutting I've sent you. Magnificent isn't it? Apparently it's the largest mud brick structure in the world. I'm also looking forward to listening to some great music, especially in the side trip to Senegal. You can ask Michael about this but I use to take him to the Haymarket where we'd go up this rickety wooden staircase to this little planked room to see these Afro-reggae bands like Kalabash. All these groovy, well-dressed guys from Ghana used to turn up; yet what I remember best is this lovely hot Sunday afternoon where we came by these Raffrastrian musicians practising under this big tree in the park close to Turrella station. That experience probably gave me the initial desire to go on this trip. We were with a friend of Michael's who was working in Central Australia. It was her birthday so it was a pleasant surprise. Michael was telling me you are in a lot of pain. It's a pity to hear. He said the situation gets you all short-tempered but I explained to him that you've always been a wildflower! (That's a compliment! You have a feisty soul!). At least that day down at Circular Quay sounded a joy. In ancient times the Dugong of Mali worshipped the Dog Star Sirius. The tribes of Mali have a belief that God spat out the world in the shape of a

human being. They have villages outlined like a person; it's an interesting idea: the universe shaped as a person…'

P.S. 'I recently sneaked into a hall like at Hammersmith to see the Oils rehearsing. At this benefit Germaine Greer was on the bill. I have seen a couple of Australian bands like Mental As Anything and The Triffids. There was another guy I saw: Attila the Stockbroker. He was really funny. If he gets to Australia go see him!'

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In order to belatedly stave off any criticism of 'intellectual plagiarism' the author wishes to acknowledge a fair proportion of the literature that was referred too during the writing process. This is not an exhaustive research list as I have been unable to keep tabs on every source (the author is happy to have the reader make him aware of any overlooked source) and it should also be noted that many news and other information programs on Radio National and NewsRadio were also useful - Starstuff, Poetica, Late Night Live and Hindsight come to mind. Innumerable television documentaries, newspaper articles and websites covering anything from the nature of the universe to hotons to mythology to international politics to the likes of Captain Thunderbolt, Edward Muybridge, William Kentridge, Joseph Bueys and Marcel Duchamp and many others were also looked at. My nineteen-seventies version of Encyclopaedia Britannica as well as Encarta encyclopaedia on the internet were also very handy. I would also like to state that in regards to much of the classical mythology that is mentioned in the book some of the explanations that Cat states or thinks are no more than mere paraphrases of already succinctly written descriptions. (Without exception all the literature here would be found in Cat's personal library – he could be nicknamed: 'Catipedia.'). There are also excerpts from popular culture mentioned by the characters which I usually acknowledge as a footnote. Two books in the list below which I wish to make special mention are Penelope Reed's *The Idea of the Labyrinth* and Florence & Kenneth Wood's *Homer's Secret Illiad*.

I also wish to express my deepest gratitude to Dr. Gerard Goggin for his professional encouragement.

A thank you also to Susana Sokcevic and Nada 'Susana' Rogic for one or two rather astute suggestions with the overall presentation of the novel. This may also be an appropriate point to make mention of a dedication to the Black Fez: along with my good friends Doug Wakefield (Mr. 'Black Fez' himself as he wore one) and David Fenwick, for many years we would organise these rather casual 'amateur' poetry evenings in cafes or houses on about three - sometimes four - Sunday nights per year. They were the Nights of the Black Fez whereby people would read out their own work or the work of their favourite writer; or even play a musical instrument or even describe an artistic piece etc, the forum was all very open and they were always enjoyable, inspirational evenings.

Although this literary work is an act of the human imagination in some regards I consider it to loosely be a 'historical novel.' (Although I refer to events and places that occurred and existed from the early 1980s to 2000s as happening in only a time span of a few years. I think of Joseph Heller's remark at the beginning of Catch 22 where he cites that although his novel occurs on the Mediterranean island of Pianosa it is obvious that it could not accommodate everything that happened on it. In much the same way the events in my work are far more expansive than the small 'historical island' in which it is claimed that they occurred). However, in no way can this piece of literature be considered 'autobiographical.' Although some scenes that have been written use real events as a 'springboard' the overall structure of the book is purely a product of my mind. (However, the writer does attest that the miracle of the backgammon piece did occur in a café at

Darlinghurst (which an old friend - Kristina - who I was with can verify) and a bird once did fly out from underneath the author's jacket at the Bar Italia in Leichhardt where I was with another group of friends for lunch; also a bunch of dry flowers did once waft down from a high rise building of units in Ultimo to land at the author's feet – which curiously occurred after seeing a Tibetan sand mandala ritual at the Powerhouse Museum. There is also a space apparatus called L.I.S.A. in deep space). That also goes with the characters. I did have an acquaintance who did tragically die of A.I.D.S but in *no way* did she resemble Lisa. (In *all ways* she was the anti-thesis of a character like Lisa). The only two common features is (1) she passed away on William Blake's birthday – 28 November and her funeral was on December 1 – World Aids Day and (2) is that I did once show her an Aboriginal batik from Central Australia in hospital as she had cruelly lost the ability to use her drawing hand. (From memory I believe she had been a fashion design student). At her funeral I was awestruck when the minister displayed a cloth piece with a design on it which she had apparently attempted to bravely do while gravely ill. It was at this moment that the germination for this book occurred.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the poets and their work used in this novel; I wish to also make reference to most of the literature I looked at during the writing process:

Poems

There are several direct excerpts from poems and below are their sources:

1. The blues poem from the U.S. that Cat recites is a slave parody of the Lord's Prayer. It can be found on page 51 in *Black Self Determination* by V.P. Franklin. Lawrence Hill & Company. 1984.

2. The William Blake quote is from William Blake's *Jerusalem.* (Chapter 2). I procured it from the Everyman edition of *William Blake's Poems and Prophecies* which has an introduction from Kathleen Raine. The excerpt can be found on page 205. Everyman's Library. 1927. Reprinted 1984.

3. The T.S. Eliot excerpt is from Burnt Norton which is the first poem from his *Four Quarters* series. Furthermore the reference to T.S. Eliot talking about going back to the same place as if it was for the first time can be found towards the end of Little Gidding which is the last poem in the *Four Quarters* series.

4. The excerpt from Dante's Canto XXIX is from the Inferno as translated by Mark Musa. The Divine Comedy. Penguin.1981.
Cat reads out the opening lines of T.S. Eliot's poem *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*. "'Let us go then you and I…'

5. The Japanese medieval haiku can be found on page 248 in an anthology entitled *Anthology of Japanese Literature. To the nineteenth century.* Penguin. 1968. It is not known who wrote this haiku but it has been attributed to Nijo Yoshimoto (1320-1388) the famous poet of linked verse who wrote in the Muromachi Period (1333-1600).

6. The biblical quotations from Mark and Isaiah are from *The Jerusalem Bible*. Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd and Doubleday & Company, Inc. 1966.

7. Excerpts in capital letters from the opening stanzas of Alan Ginsberg's HOWL. Alan Ginsberg. Selected Poems. 1947-1995. Penguins. 1996.

8. In the Pleistocene Period mind sequence which goes on for many pages there are several poem extracts and poems which include *The Dancers* by Michael Dransfield (extracts) in *The Inspector of Tides*. University of Queensland Press. 1972. Extracts from Peter Bakowski's poems: *Suicide, In the human night, The painting and the girl, One for Charles Bukowski, The jaws of factory (Graveyard shift), Eastern European Song* in his *In the human night*. Hale and Ironmonger Press. 1995. Poems by Gregor Corso: *Stars, Spirit* in *mindfield.* Paladin Press. 1992. *La ahogada del cielo/The Drowned Woman of the Sky* by Pablo Neruda in *Residence on Earth (Residencia en la tierra)* A New Directions Book. 1973. *AND AFTER THAT (Y Despues)* by Federico Garcia Lorca in *Poem of the Deep Song (Poema Del Cante Jondo).* City Lights Books. San Fransisco. 1987. *HOWL* by Alan Ginsberg in *Selected Poems 1947-1995.* Penguin Books. 1996. *184th Chorus* by Jack Kerouac in *MEXICO CITY BLUES.(242 CHORUSES).* Grove Press, Inc. New York. 1959. Extract from *Asphodel, That Greeny Flower* by William Carlos Williams from his *ASPHODEL, THAT GREENY*

FLOWER & OTHER LOVE POEMS. New Directions. 1994. Extracts from *ENDE DER WEKT/END OF THE WORLD* by Richard Huelsenbeck. (Translation by Ralph Manheim) in *Primer of Experimental Poetry 1. 1870-1922*. Edited by Edward Lucie-Smith. Rapp & Whiting. (Andre Deutsch). 1971.

9. In Atlas Groans there is a footnote transcript of Charles Bukowski's poem: *CRIME & PUNISHMENT.* Black Sparrow Press. 1999. (From an original one page Black Sparrow Press sheet with this poem. In author's possession).

10. *The Imperial* poem by Laurie Duggan was discovered on page 53 of *Writers in the Park: the book. 1985/86*. Editors: Carol Christie. Kim O'Brien. FAB Press. Surry Hills. 1986.

11. Quotes by Marcus Aurelius from *MEDITATIONS.* Penguin Books as translated by Maxwell Staniforth. 1964.

The RAFT notes are from an AGNSW exhibition catalogue. There are also a smattering of lyrics in the text & wish to also acknowledge the varied use of words sung from the likes of Neil Murray, Joe Gia, Warumpi Band, Dave Warner, Redgum, Lou Reed, the Sex Pistols, Dean Martin, Noel Coward, Marianne Faithful, Elvis Presley, K.D.Lang, Deborah Conway, Mikelangelo & the Black Sea Gentlemen, & Masala.

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* Many other versions of the Bible were looked at (such as the Jerusalem Bible, Revised Standard Version, King James Version, Gideons & so forth; nevertheless, most biblical quotations in the text – unless otherwise stated - have come from the NIV).

'L.I.S.A' MSS SYNOPSIS *

LISA does not have chapters as such; rather the narrative is broken up into 'chance' paragraphs with individual headings which allows the novel the freedom to not always move along a normal linear discourse. In fact, I nonchalantly consider the manuscript as having a more circular - even organic development - progressing and flowing if you will in different directions - but along branches all connected to the same trunk. (Book as sacred tree). However, the MSS is in three major parts: NIGHT, DAY, ETERNITY. The theme of each part will now be discussed.

Prologue. (Somewhere on the North Coast of New South Wales)

I. NIGHT. The Heart of the Beast.

II. DAY. The Sanctuary of the Subconscious.

III. ETERNITY. The Motion of the Stars.

NIGHT. The Heart of the Beast.

Michael, a Greek-Cypriot friend of Lisa's visits where she is living on the NSW north coast. He reminisces meeting Lisa in inner-city Sydney on a night when she was distraught: she is splitting up with her boyfriend Danny.

Lisa is pregnant and Dan does not want the child.

Michael and Lisa attend a fire show which is held outside the Supreme Courts in Darlinghurst. Lisa recalls a previous break-up with an other boyfriend named Timothy. He is bisexual. Lisa contracts A.I.D.S from Timothy.

On this awry night Lisa ends up sleeping in Michael's old Holden. Michael leaves her there and going for a walk meets Dan and heads with him to the Hopetoun Hotel, Surry Hills.

Virgil, an Andy Warhol look-a-like lawyer friend of Dan's, takes them on a night excursion through Oxford Street.

At this point it should be pointed out that the three-part schema of the novel loosely follows Dante's Divine Comedy. NIGHT in a general way relates to the Inferno.

The narrative in NIGHT leads back to the north coast and to people such as Margaret, a woman in her fifties, who will support Lisa through her illness.

Michael learns of Lisa's medical condition on the north coast.

With her young Downes Syndrome daughter - Melissa - Lisa will move to Sydney for further treatment.

DAY. Sanctuary of the Subconscious..

This second part revolves around Melissa's christening. This act initiated by Lisa is meant to be seen as an act of defiance by the probable early death of both herself and her daughter.

Purgatory is time waiting and we learn of Lisa's time in Sydney as she 'waits' for her death.

When Lisa moves back to Sydney she first stays with Cat. He is a 'musician friend' of Michael's who has just returned from the U.S.A. He is a self-styled, drunken street prophet who rightly perceives the U.S.A as a grand imperial power.

Cat sees Lisa as a marginalized person in terms that relate her predicament to a wider macro-level which deals with the powerful and the powerless. Those on the social margin are methodically kept there by those who maintain their strong position in the center.

The general theme of human mortality is also considered especially in relation to the idea that all physical mortality seems so inevitable that a structure as immense as the universe also faces death.

A possible alternative point-of-view which provides hope is given by the elderly minister at the christening. He notes that medieval pilgrims – who recognized how earthly power crucified the saint – placed their faith in the 'Eternal Rose' i.e. those on the earthly margin who place their faith in a divine love may enter into a divine center. (the basic premise is that the spiritual will outlast the physical). It is the same point made by Dante.

It should be noted that allusions to life as a life-sapping labyrinth are made throughout the novel (such as references to the Minotaur). The minister provides a positive alternative 'mandala' to this negative view.

ETERNITY. Motion of the Stars.

This last section opens up with a despondent Michael at a Gods & Angels party. Against the background of this party (with references by Cat to 'ancient fates' as faced by the likes of Achilles and Polyxena) Lisa's fate is considered: she has died; yet through a cultural response she has arrived at 'eternity.': she has painted a cloth which will be presented at her funeral. It is based on an Aboriginal design – thus recognizing the original spirituality of this continent. Significantly, it is those who live on Australia's social circumference who provide the cultural/spiritual opportunity for Lisa to be 'centered.'

Like the christening, Lisa finds a sort of 'immortal resolution' by 'contacting eternity' in the face of certain death. It is something belatedly recognized as Michael, Margaret and Melissa throw Lisa's ashes into the sea off Dover Heights and look up to see Venus – named after the goddess of love – at the end of the novel.

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* This synopsis was written in January 2005 to this novel that was formerly titled: Lisa's World; then was titled LISA.