



'Speed's Milk Bar.' *B&W. 5.5"X 8.5" zinc plate. Earlwood.*

I grew up in milk bar for nearly twenty years and my father was known famously as Speedie as he was considered very slow in serving customers. Although it was noted that Speed was very quick whenever he raced off to the TAB across the road. My mother was 'Mrs Speed'; while myself, my sister and brother were all 'Little Speeds.' It was also a never-ending source of curiosity as to why all three siblings had auburn hair. (At school I was sometimes referred to as the 'rare red-headed wog'). This etching is based on a classic sepia photo of the milk bar which I have since 'misplaced.' The milkshake maker in the foreground remains a 'family totem' to this day. Despite the very long hours of tough labour it was a very lively, interesting way to spend one's youth. Yet as my brother recalls the racism was rife (with a few brawls etc) and we bore the brunt of it until Australia finally became a more tolerant society (on the surface at least) when the 'social accent' thankfully shifted to multiculturalism. Yet, there are many good memories such as my brother and I playing the Wests brothers in a best-of-five 'WOGLCON' pinball series which had all the atmosphere of a Grand Final at the S.C.G. (CON stands for convicts. At the time Space Invaders was also a popular electronic game). The shop was also a little bohemian with a lot of suburban and political philosophy being espoused by a varied assortment of regular customers from all walks of life with even the occasional celebrity popping in to buy ciggies or whatever. I could rave on as the nostalgia always gets the better of me but I should add that although my extremely hardworking mother had to also raise three kids my very temperamental 'larger than life' father was definitely the 'star of the show' being both 'tyrant' and witty 'comical satirist' and thus I leave you with the following poem:

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