

meika loofs samorzewski

BEFORE

COUNTRY

.before Country

These seven short stories and code poems tell how Country came to be, of its search for discipline, and in those arbitrary arts and crafts a way to live well, despite the spike.

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•you should read books like you
take medicine, by advice, and not by
advertisement

~/john ruskin

a wombwell book

seven tells

.before Country

meika loofs samorzewski

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by

meika loofs samorzewski 2007

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FOR
THERESE & REINHARD

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•when a writer knows home in his heart,
his heart must remain subtly apart from it
.he must always be a stranger to the place
he loves, and its people

~/william morris

•in your children you shall make
up for being the children of your
fathers

~/friederick nietzsche

Originary

In the second of three warm rooms, the naked body of a child lies covered in fine hand sewn clothing. The clothes are still. The stitching bears no strain. The only movement is a slow quiet breath. Evenly sure, refreshing the resting weight with an unconscious confidence. The lounge holds the small form up to the window's sunlight, as the blue sky is iris to the orb of the earth.

My eye. I see everything. I hear everything. I smell everything. I feel everything. I attend to every thing. I can tell every thing. I know the nothing absolute, the everything except. I know how these little everythings became me. When i only thought i knew every little thing. Now if something is unknown, i make it up. How i came to be this way is the story i tell. I will tell. I will tell one day, everyday.

How are you?

I spun thread and yarn, weaved the cloth, dyed it all, washed fabric, crafted the cut, and ironed seams; making the clothes with my hands. Making, manufacturing things which

could have been so easily grown. All made with the same hands with which i write, scratching the handmade deckled paper with the staining quill.

I make the letters smooth, confidently, but asking, how can hands express the voice i hear within? Better. How can my hands express the gesturesense of my eyes? Or nose, skin, the gut and gonad? Meaning, can my hands give freely all that they hold? And. Will they, can they, give to you, dear reader, more than these hands know they hold? How can they hold the cosmos? And with these gifts bestowed, are my words hands to give, are my hands words to speak?

A long, long time ago i believed with all my heart, that my self was this voice alone. It was proof of my lonely soul. Anything else was corruption, or the indulgence of non-transparent self. And so it was, and so I was. I have unlearnt it now, and such truth i wear about me no more.

For i was given to groping about in the tangle of words voicing me to the world. At first i saw some words were verbal gestures merely waved about to cover my nude insecurities; to keep the weather out. I ignored them because i sought the truth within. But deep within i found nothing at all, naked or clad. I was the tangle of the words i wove, wore about me. I was the riddle and not the answer, and thus I believed no more. I still use words. But i wear some no longer; whether faith, soul, truth or evil. For I can sew better ones. Besides, faith needs faith in the spell of others words, in the heirlooms handed on unthinkingly and without doubt unfit for survival.

And so about words i know everything.

Do you believe me?

The small hand holds tightly the tiny cracked terra cotta vase. Both lie deep in one of the large soft cushions covering the lounge. The rose petals lie on the floor, a fairy garden. Swinging suspended above the stillness is the mobile i made last birthday. Twenty birds hanging on thin brass wire threaded to the tips of their wings. Wrens life size, eagles the size of finches. They

flap in chirp silent circles with the breeze. The wind is the fair aspect of my spirit, given freely to all in need. I breathe out. In. I believe in birds and bird song finding the sweet air. In anything i created, in a fashion, if not born, from my womb.

What a lovely ancient word. Womb.

My womb is everything to everybody. Just ask the child who sleeps before us. There! Can you see? Stirring from her nap. We will be able to talk now. I will learn something. For i desire to grow, expand my everything. For though I know it all, once you know everything, everything changes, and you must learn anew about the new cosmos. Perhaps you need a new set of clothes.

As her notice returns in waking, the self returns to surface. The wee urn is let go as she makes her presence felt. The clothes fit well. I word.

What did you dream?

Did you dream?

What did i dream? I dreamed once too powerfully, a life was made child, in a time when i did not know everything, but felt i may, eventually. This waking child is my second. The story the tales slowly tell is of before and between these births. The forgotten events and remembered nothings are told as though dreaming were also an auxiliary verb. So that you too may see through every word to the how of everything. In every surfacing of the narrative to notice. Of course there is more to wear than this. There is always more than everything. Have we not our own lives to lead?

How did everything go?

The child turns and stands looking as if she could not see herself. As if i were not there. The clothes she wears are made from flax, hemp and cotton planted in the gully flats behind her. The dyes are motley earths gladdened with tin. The trousers and shirt are copied from our long ago. When only clothes were worn. Unlike us now, neither having nor being bodies. Now we wear bodies in the same way that stories are read. The words

follow us meekly. But you know this. You know my name. You know everything too. Yet your interest does not dim. Why else do you read. You want to know what my clothes feel like. Why i bore the child, in this way, and here, now. Again but not again. How it felt to find a child of mine unknown to me, and discover why my words were not children enough, success enough, revolution enough. Am i any greater bearing child and having had my every word, every breath reported in our every where, until my sense of self was worn too thin?

I do not know why i had the child. They are not just a word or two, but i prepared as best i could.

The child walks outside up to the stage open to the big sky, the raised grassy area i burn off now and then. It is roof to the underground house, the earth sheltered home. I built it with my own hands. It is the only lawn for a good distance away covering the only building for several milky ways that is not a compulsory ruin. The child wees on the lawn.

This child has no name, we are just you and i exchanging moment locating diphthongs. But we never worry about the truth of the matter. She finishes pissing and moves to play with the low overhanging old wattle branch. Jumping, trying to catch hold of it, but interest is short. It is still too far away. I shall go and play and talk and be with the only child. Other children were possible before, naturally, but our unconscious consensus was against the creation of generations separate from us. We want to be siblings with her; no them, no us, no parents standing over there, watching the children play. Copers yes, but we want to be children too. Again. Freedom's first reaction to the time of birth in re-birth and love gone wrong. There were no children for such a long time.

The sun is bright; she is the reflection, the shining apple of my eye I have picked with care from my mother's orchard. Where with each day we grow more alike in our differences, through to the core.

What did you dream?

Her blue eyes find my wide brown eyes, and her dark framed gaze moves over my smooth skin as it covers my flesh and bones, which she cannot yet see as i do, nor as i can sense hers. Her eyes watch my unchanging self. She has just noticed she is growing. She talks of what she will do when she is grown up. Soon she will be taller than me.

I always wear this body when i am with her, for i may be everything to her, but i should not be everybody to her. But it is getting to be a drag. I warn myself, variety will soon consume her in the never ending diversity of fashions. She will be able to carry anything anywhere. Her eyes are cautious, why do i ask? She does not wish to talk. The shy seek attention in shyness, i remember that. But there is no need for that here, my attention is all. If she is awake i am here. If she does not want me around, she will create privacy in the garden. Or in sleep.

Did you dream?

She stares at the ground. She knows the difference between dreams and waking. Everything is not the same.

What's the matter?

No answer, maybe there is none. I know she has dreamed. But if she remembers?

“Can we go to Earth?”

We walk. She will never tell me her dreams. I always ask. It is why i ask. She tells me everything else, every thought is verbalised, without prompt. We stand near the lyrebird grandfather clock in the hall, we whisper in proximity.

“Now, I want to go now.”

Why do you want to go there?

“I want to go to Africa.” But does she want to arrive?

Africa?

I can not remember becoming young, only being young. And I remember the other child. Memories pledging me to make things different. The resentment is not blamed nor shamed. But no matter how great is the bright pebbly wisdom I find in the quick stream seeming to be continuous with now, i must create

the moments before us, and not remain lost among the vast pasts of dear acquaintance. Meeting memories on the streets of history, we may spend the whole year catching up. The world passes by. There are no streets here, no footpaths, no alleyways, no need of a city. It is just us in the house.

I want no secrets between us. Though if no questions are asked, she might never learn what i know; i cannot volunteer to bring the issues before us. This is the risk i wear. She must discover her curiosity alone. She is already aware, as she must be, she must simply become engaging. Then she can and will leave me and surface within herself. It will have then all been worth while. I wait, and wait on, waiting for it to start and for her awkward, even angry, questioning that must surely follow. And to just be there. The waiting ruins my preparation.

The child stumbles in the way that we all do as bodies grow. Her reddish raven hair swings off her shoulders and she leans into lifting feet to the rhythm of the steps to the door of the house. This new house. It will long outlast her short simple childhood. Does that surprise you? It implies more offspring to build so surely. Hands open the latchless door, pushing the carefully crafted wood wide.

She lifts the small group of egg sized pewter figures, they are not quite dolls, and places them on the low table. She pushes the table to the wall, clearing the rug lying before the lounge. Behind the table two marquetry snakes entwine and curl across the wall. She sees them as if for the first time, pauses, then continues to pack for the trip. Her hands chose quickly her favourite things. The snakes unfurl in her mind.

Africa?

Parents do not have time to sleep, we ancients, who need do no hand work, who need no hands to work, whose work or pleasure is the matter of the minds brief notice. We had thought we could give our children the best by not bearing them at all. Though we never said it aloud, we all agreed, and reality was made. Of course we discussed the issues, or lack thereof. We

discuss everything. We talk too much. There are no secrets now. There is no reason for them.

I stare at the snakes on the wall. I remember the week i made them as the last finishing touch to the house. I press sweaty palms uncertainly. It has begun. This time she will ask the questions. I know what she dreamed for i scripted the drama that now unfolds in her body. I watch anxiously, not impatiently. I am sure she is far too young to leave home.

Okay, to Africa then. You don't need me. I mean, you don't need to ask.

We might stop off on the way though.

Canberra 1992

•then the whining schoolboy, with
his satchel and shining morning
face, creeping like snail unwillingly
to school

~/william shakespeare

Exit Cave

The water was warm and waiting for her.

Waiting.

But Aster could also feel it was anxious. She sat in the worried water up to her waist. The pool was not quite clear, even where the gelatinous mucoid slugs of snot failed to congregate, the water took on their veiled clouding filaments. Otherwise it was comfortably warm except that the aqueous anxiety uneased the warmth into a unwelcome cloying want. It was going to say something again. Aster had decided that it must be on some sort of delayed repeat.

“No. You must not.”

Aster ignored it. Minutes went by.

“It would be rude to leave before the others arrived.”

Then a break, of minutes? Hours?

“You must stay here,” the well of snot whined at her from its hidden chamber. The voice seemed to be made only of echoes. Sometimes it came off the water and sometimes from out of the crevices of snot.

Mind you, thought Aster, it only spoke when she started to think about leaving. Each time she began planning, the biofilm grotto chimed in with some nay-saying. Maybe it could read her body language as her muscles tensed in the cave's big bath. She thought about standing up and running, just running

“If you go I will be left all alone.”

Or it read her mind. It was definitely time to go.

Aster lay back in the water and let her ears get wet. Other than to escape some complaints about her place in the world, was she really ready? Was there a world out there yet? Was there an atmosphere?

The snot well remain quiet, no answer to that. The water in the well rarely answered questions. It seemed to mostly sulk, or rage very occasionally, with its finger-high waves lipping the cavern's shoreline, high and low. Another reason to leave.

Aster look down at her smooth stomach, something was missing. She was naked, so there were no clothes, but that did not seem to be it. Aster stood up and looked around the cave as she dripped. The dim light given off by a combination of glow worms and the glow-in-the-dark snottites created a lot of shadowy recesses, biofilm knotholes and such, but Aster doubted that there were any new outfits hidden in the muddy corners. Nothing but rock, water, mud and snot.

“When do I get fitted?”

“Fitted?”

“For my scout uniform? And field equipment? You know, boots and packs, my survival gear. And, most importantly, field rations, something better than that glop that comes out of the red column.”

There was a pause before some tired equivalent of an electronic click plopped out from the snot, or maybe it was the pool. Then the disembodied voice slopped out, “clarify scout uniform, please.”

“You don't know much do you. What are you?”

“I am an arousal and post-awakening expert system.”

“You mean the welcome committee hasn’t woken up yet. The techs are suppose to be up first, especially the hibernation techs. It’s really stuffed up isn’t it?”

There was no answer, so Aster walked over to the exit from the bath cave, keeping as far away as possible from the fat stalactites of snot which provided the light and burps of oxygen. Globbing down from ceiling to floor in odd throbs, they were just plain revolting. She could see threads or worms moving in their translucent mucous occasionally. Thin dark veinous slither of snakes. The air smelt sour and rancid by turn.

“Don’t go.”

“Why not, Snotty? I may call you Snotty mightn’t I?”

“It’s not safe.”

“Nothing is safe here. It’s a new world. Even talking to you is not safe, especially if I listen to you. I’d rot in this bathtub of yours.”

“You could be re-absorbed by the heartwire’s forward tenches.”

“Uh-huh.” Aster smiled. “Well, I can’t just stay here either, my brain is shrinking with the lack of activity.”

“I was waiting for you to wake—”

“I’m awake!!”

“ —at the right time.”

Lap. Lap. It looked like the tea cup was about to storm into tempest again.

Aster stood up and walked towards the shore. Funny how the most comfortable place in the cave was a puddle— as far from the snot as you can get.

Now it would be best to get a feed before she rushed off into the wilderness. There was the light red column with its flexible tube, the faded green sheet with a huge nipples eye always staring at her, and the hanging ultramarine hose that swung in the rare times there was a breeze, letting its crushed garlic smell drift through the air. Breakfast, lunch and dinner. Plain, meaty and almost spicy. Or at least they each held the

idea of these tastes, they were more like road signs than the places themselves.

“It’s not time. We must wait for the right time.”

“You wait, I’m off.”

“You must wait for the seeker.”

“Tell them I’ve just popped into town. There’s a new gadget I want to buy, and there’s bills to pay,” Aster looked up from sucking on the red column’s teat, the glossy clear pap dribbling down her chin, “it’s just one damn thing after another.”

When the last of the water slopped off her feet and they began to dry, leaving clear wet footprints on the large round rocks, Aster finally felt some of her nervous energy slip away. How on earth could anyone wait in that water with that amount of odious anticipation for the ‘right time’ hanging above your head!

If it wasn’t the right time, why then would she have woken from hibernation?

There was work to do, or play rather. Exploring. Scouting. Aster was the first scout, she knew that at least! It was in her bones: go and see!

“You are only sixteen years old. You not old enough to direct a lancedog.”

Aster look around, below her feet a stream of water flowed, no doubt leading back into the pool. It was the water itself that spoke, vibrating the air with its shimmering waves.

“Well, stream, wet drippy thing, leave me be. I have my work to do, and I will play it as I promised when I signed up on the hulks of the first fleet.”

“The time is not right.”

“Be quiet.”

“But you must be schooled. Your work will be wasted otherwise. Wait for your cohort, you will be safer in numbers, there must be others and they have not yet awoken. You are simply early.”

“I’ll be back at the bell.”

“Please wait.”

“I have waited weeks in your pool, eating pap.”

“They will wake up soon. You have been waiting eight old days. The nutritional gel has been carefully—”

“Weeks of sucking on snot all day!”

“Perhaps your hydrogen sulphide levels are still elevated from the hibernation tonics and this is affecting your sense of taste, or rather your harm thresholds have not been reset since awakening and your sense of smell—”

“There is no one else. They are lost, like everything else, except me, Aster... Snottarella!”

“Please come to the side chamber past the blue gel supply point and an evaluation of your homeostatic...”

“And tell the ugly sisters when they arrive that I’ve already gone to the ball, and that they can come as they are.”

Aster walked for some time before she realised that she walked wholly in the dark. The glow from the snottites was long gone, but she could still see.

She remembered her life before the hibernation tanks, before the orientation months, the interviews, the application, the advertisements, before the pestering of her uncaring absinth absent parents into signing their names and her life away. She could not remember seeing in the dark then, certainly not in the complete darkness, like this cold hole, deep in the rock of a new world. Had they added infra-red vision when she was asleep in the tank aboard the hulks, or was it the snot cave’s masters?

What else had they done? Had most of it failed, is that why her cohort was thinned to one? Dastardly experiments and high failure rates?

So she could see in the dark, but could she find food other than his or her most high snottiness? Sweetly sick and spicy as the different snottites could be, no food was going to be a hard one. She did not even have a bag with her to carry her lunch.

“Hey, what are you doing here?”

Aster looked around and could make out nothing more than a pile of rocks piled against a boulder. The great rock almost blocked way forward through the cave.

“Go back to the snotty pool, and wait.”

“Well, as you make it sound so attractive— but tell me, what would I be waiting for?”

Aster had isolated the source of the heavy voice on the right side of the pile, about half way up the boulder. Infra-red was good, but nothing is clear, it just lets you guess less wildly.

“For the right time.”

“Right. So what are you doing here?”

“Waiting.”

Aster took a step forward. “Not watching out for the likes of me then?”

“I’ve my back to you, doesn’t that make it clear?”

The boulder turned to look at her then and Aster froze.

“Never seen a combhead before?”

Aster shook her head.

“My name is Nestig.” The pile of rocks relaxed back into its old position. “I dug your birthpool.”

Looking at her feet Aster wondered what to do. Back to the pool was out, wandering past a megafaunal rock-chewing heartwired monster was also out, but there was no sign of a third passage just here either. As well the stream had completely gone. There was however the chance of some conversation. Why not scout out the combhead’s experience?

“Nestig, I’m Aster, do you suppose you’ll be here much longer?”

“Do you suppose I know what much longer means to you Aster?”

“Well, when might you be required somewhere else?”

“When, Aster, I am no longer here. But how long is that?”

“Is that the rule, Nestig?”

“What rule is that?”

“You answer me with another question. I guess its traditional now, that being three in a row and as this is, most likely, the first conversation ever on this world. If I answer your riddles, can I keep my life?”

“Am I a sphinx then?” the combhead lifted its rockgrinder head again to look at Aster. “Is my age so wise as that? So great in fact, that I am now employed to block tunnels, that in fact, I am Nestig, the block head.”

“Well,—”

“My comb is broken. My rock maw is worn out. I’m not longer fit for anything but to return to the soup, mud or snot as the case may be.”

Aster looked up into the roof of the cave, it was as complex as the floor, as if it had been scoured by a speedy heat rather than the slow sour drip of ages.

“There should be a law against combs breaking,” said Nestig.

“Would that help?”

“No.”

“What’s the point of a rule if it does not help then?”

“It would be of solace to me.”

“So it would help.”

“I guess. But it would not bring the comb back to me now, it could not link me into to the fold, if there was one,” the combhead stared hard at Aster, as if looking into a dull mirror, “which there isn’t. I miss the comb and its connection to the neuromycelium.”

“Oh, I’m sorry. Perhaps a law would help you get used to the idea.”

“A rule like that would mean that people cared enough to outlaw it. Do we outlaw shadow?”

“No one cares about you, Nestig?” Aster said this with a smile but a torrent of thought replied.

“Care? We have laws to care then?” the rock asked back.

Nestig must have been on the boil, bubbling on the matter in the dark, and was ready, to spit or steam a long counsel. “Laws are statements of concern and consideration, if not of pastime and occupation. Indeed people break laws for the same reasons, if inverted, to pass the time, to tell others that they do not care, though really of course if they could care less they would not break the law. It is their inverted ‘care’ that allows them, if not forces them, to break the law, but then, they are looking for action, and the warm armchair of other peoples’ sensibilities, is their only target. The criminal is attracted to rich pickings and avoids the vacuum, even empty thrones. And here there are no people to care about law, and so no law, criminals or crime.”

Aster was stunned by the speech but then replied as if equally prepared, lifting a hand from her smooth belly.

“But that’s where we are, on a desolate world, one of a string of seven small worlds, all in the zone, ripe for the seeding. The breaking of the first sod. That’s what we care about. I care about you, I care that you are the first sentient I have met and I suspect that makes you the first ever on this world, whatever it is called.”

“What are you saying Aster? To break the rule is to break the clod up for sowing, that your disobedience is the good farmer’s plough? You’re just looking for adventure. You should wait for your school. Look at me, my comb is broken and now I can follow no law, nor outlaw like your good self. My work is gone, my fold is scattered, our time is over. And I am not happy.”

“There is no school. The tanks are empty and I am the only one, so what I care about is the laws that must be made now. And so I am happy.”

“No. You’re just early.”

“What do you want me to do Nestig, say there is a law against breaking combheads’ combs? Just so I can look the hypocritical fool when I return, as no doubt I must. Would that make you happy?”

“True enough, there is no food anywhere else for the likes of you, Aster. I have my acid softened rock, at least. But your adventure is to wait for the rest of your cohort and, among them learn about yourself. Each experience describing an aspect of your predicament.”

“I reject it, for I must be me, alone. I’ll leave the others for the others. Now tell me Nestig, something useful, how long has terraforming been going on here? A few centuries? A few millennia?”

Aster took a step towards the rock eater, a hand on hip.

“It takes time even with the best bacteria.”

“So why was I awoken and why do I have to wait for the others to arrive when we both know that their maturation was stuffed up and I am the sole member of my class?”

“You have to, you must. So you’ll have somebody to talk to besides us moribund rock borers, holed up and waiting to die. Anyway, there is no point fighting it by wandering off, round and about the back passages of the Docks, before the air is cleared of poisons and other gifts of the rock we now call home. Looking for adventure outside the safe caves is only going to kill you. Poison cannot be killed with a weapon, poison does not fight, poison is a predicament.”

“I could find an antidote.”

“We have the antidote. It is called time, so wait.”

Aster shook her head and walked passed the combhead.

“Time heals all wounds.”

“Times kills all of us,” she yelled back, lifting her head, shouting at the roof, roaring at the echoes sure to follow, “in the end.”

“It’s not your time,” Nestig murmured, “it’s ours, just. Who else can recognize your true worth in the deep, dark pit of a toxic world.”

Aster climbed up the ramp of a tunnel onto a gallery that looked back down on the combhead. At the turn she felt like raising her fist, or waving, but she didn’t.

She walked on, the sandy floor looking like it had been widened to allow just her sort of walking. The combhead would have to eat its way through. Aster found she could pick up some real rhythm in her stride here. It was good to be walking, it was good to move, even if she hunted nothing, ambled nowhere, and carried no net. She was not built for sitting still and waiting in the snotpool of love for her classmates. The sandy way ended in a new tumble of rocks and she kept up her speed by springing from one boulder to the next until the jumbled rocks became too complex. She stopped and caught her breathe with a smile.

“I cannot be the first human!” She kept smiling and shook her head. Aster’s eyes, of course, began to beam like the stars way, way above the rock of the Docks.

“Hello.”

“Hello yourself.”

“Enjoy the walk?”

“I certainly did.”

“I wish I could walk. My legs are still too wobbly.”

“You’re a bat, you don’t need to walk, you can fly.”

“Well, flapping your arms about you mean, it’s so undignified. Why couldn’t they tank us with some dignity when they brought us back, I wonder.”

“Well, maybe they did, did you think about that, maybe it was worse before?”

“Mmmmh, nice try sis.”

“I’m smiling.” Aster went over and sat by the bat on the large lump of limestone. “I suppose that you are quite used to caves.”

“Well, no actually, I am fruit bat, forests tropical and lush are my wants. Roosts gregarious, airy and moonlit.”

“Don’t tell me your waiting for your mob too.”

“I guess, I haven’t worried about that,” the bat pointed at the rear of the limestone seat. “My vat, just out, maybe an hour ago, I’ve been spending the time thinking and exercising my muscles.”

Flap, flap, flap.

Aster nodded and moved onto the lid, "I thought the plan was for only human forms to be sentient. No body modding."

"Well, I guess the mythology hasn't been finalized yet so there is room for totems to flit about first, dawning of the gods and all that."

"I agree. I don't see why there should be a strict hominin only for intelligence rule, I mean the whole world is made up anyway. No reasons to shape creatures exactly like on the world that gave birth to the African apes."

"I think the rules are okay, doesn't matter what the rules are anyway so long as there are some."

"Doesn't matter?"

"Well, I think the rules help create the discipline of place, and these in turn allow the richness of layered experience. Otherwise, what emerges without our touch, out of the chaos, may prove to be tasteless, if not toxic to the later outcomes. These may not be survivable predicaments."

Aster ignored the combhead's favourite word. "So what's happened, why are there intelligent non-apes. That's two out of three I've met. What happened to that law?"

"I'd say it's been outlored."

"Right. Look, I've just spent some time speaking to sentient combhead, though in that case he was trying to explain to me why rules are helpful as a route to enlightenment."

"And now I am telling you the rules?"

"Yes, and the reasons are completely different. Game on."

Flap. flap, flap.

"Now Aster, more practically, any idea where I can some food? Shall we breakfast together?"

"No. I'm moving out. It's the snottities cave for you if you want to eat, but I am not going back there. Not just yet."

"Goodo, so how do I get there?"

“Back that way, past Nestig the combhead, and tell him I was smiling and being kind won’t you, it will help me in my ‘predicament’. Which I am escaping by other means anyway, but don’t tell Nestig that. He’ll get upset. By the way, what’s your name?”

“Mmm, don’t seem to have woken up with one, hadn’t missed it either until you mentioned it.”

“You’re not a hibernation tank import then. Grown here from scratch? Or did they stuff up? So not even a generic model number?”

“No. Nothing.”

“Odd. Things do appear to have broken down, be glad you’ve got the right number of heads. Anyway, I’m Aster. I am supposed to be the scout leader, except there are no scouts.” As she lowered her hands and eased her eyebrows from arches into crescents, she added. “I’ll see you later.”

“At the snotcave?”

“I guess.” Aster stood up from the lid of the bat’s sarcophagus and skipped away down the corridor, and then stopped. “How about Edgar?”

“What?”

“Edgar, Edgar. How about Edgar, as your name, Edgar?”

“Edgar?”

“It means Spear of Prosperity.”

“Edgar, the fruitbat spear of prosperity?” He flapped his wings. “I’m not really a hunter.”

“Mmmh, okay. Just a thought, but I was thinking we could go all Anglo-Saxon on this world and leave all the Latinate terminology in orbit.”

“Sure, but I think ‘orbit’ is a latinate form. As is Aster. You’d have to change your name then.”

“Star?”

“Star, yes. You still think it’s a good idea?”

“Yes, yes I do.”

“Don’t know about orbit though.”

“Use ‘roundfall’. ‘We would leave all those Roman words in roundfall.’” The bat smiled baring his banana slashing fangs.

Star smiled, and the fruit bat nodded.

“Don’t know about ‘Edgar’ though,” said the bat, “Those Germanic names are all about weapons and struggle. Like Matilda, it means mighty struggler and Hildegard means struggle in the garden and Gudrun, it just means struggle-struggle!”

“Well, we’ll work that out later, fruit bat. They all sound like predicament beaters to me though.”

“I think you’d have to call me Applebat or something. Pretty sure ‘fruit’ is Latin.”

“Right, well, Applebat, meet you later in the snot cave. We could hold a colonisation planning meeting.”

“I don’t think you can use the word ‘cave’ either, just ‘holh’, or hollow, or something.”

“Snot Hole? I am in a nose!” Star folded her hands and placed them across her stomach, “Say, have you swallowed a dictionary?”

“Well, hasn’t everyone, or rather, aren’t we just fleshy thesauruses?”

“Yeah.” Star took a step away, as if to go, and then turned back. “I guess we are but, who gets to recollect what seems somewhat random. I don’t get that automatic etymology flashing inside my forehead.”

“You just have to look inward and turn the pages.”

“My job though, is to get out and about, not in and inward, Applebat.”

“Hey, wouldn’t you have been told to stay in the snot-cave?”

“Who told you that? I am on a mission to explore, can’t do that sitting in a chamber of sweet, safe snot.”

“Well, I just queried the neuromycelium. It can’t formulate creative responses, but it can relay the standing orders from fleeseed germination procedures, so I asked about the orders for

the awoken. Now that I have woken up fully I seem to be able to think of questions to ask. Wonderful what some conversation can do! Why didn't you do that?"

"Well, I didn't think about that. But..." Star turned inward, "I've no link!"

"No wonder you got bored in the snot cave. Being early and all, without your school, and with no data to mine, no old stories to read, no maps to pore over."

"Yeah, well, I reckon they are late. I'm right on time. I'm not abiding by those wait-for-your-cohort-because-the-herd-is-smarter-than-the-cow rules. It's been weeks and it's crap."

"Well, rules are disciplines too you know, and it doesn't matter what they are exactly, they are the constraints that allow creativity. Your wordhoard suggestion is a new structure, a new rule, though artificial, unlike say a mountain or a moon. But it will do the job."

"I don't think there is a moon here, Applebat. I do have a schematic big picture-like map of the entire planet in my head, but there is no moon. Just the fleeseed husk in roundfall."

"No link but you're pre-packed, at least." Applebat then glowed with a new idea, "Think Star! No moon, no tide, no months, it's one of the disciplines of the site, a rule of the new substrate. But look, made-up rules can be just as much a spur to creativity. What if the wordhoard of Roman words was our new moon, see, a ghost moon in roundfall, as you suggested for 'orbit'. I like it. Then the new moon of words will influence us even as we repress it. Cast out to the dark side, it is a different thing to just forgetting. Yeah, a wordhoard moon, and its phases are linked to the tides of our language somehow..."

"So, if there is no real moon here, on whatever we're going to call this place, why bother with recollected moons at all, if it's junk? Your suggestion is fun but what is the practical point?"

"Noise."

"Junk, you mean, it's just junk. Random bits of baggage scattered over the surface of our minds like what, more seeds?"

“Well, we are born from a fleeseed’s genetic data cargo. Well, I am it seems,” said Applebat, “but you see, if you sow a bit of chaotic noise you can boost weak signals above a threshold for notice. ‘Junk’ will help us see the new world. So long as we are biased, we can learn new things at the edge of chaos, especially useful when we have a whole new world to adapt to. Though, despite the partial agency, some junk will no doubt kill us too— But we don’t have to build a moon just because we remember one, there’s no need to make Jack and Jill rhyme here. The word moon does not have to be realized, just remembered occasionally, noisily.”

“You’ve thought this through bat.”

“Well, I’ve only just woken up but I seem to have been graced with a background deep and ruminative. But it’s this talk that lets me see my vocation. My purpose.”

“What?”

“I’ve been awake a hour or so, just sitting here, but if I had just ran, or flew out into the dark mists of the surface I might not find my purpose. We have to discover our bias first, the uniqueness that gives us our path, and as we travel we will build the world. We need others for that, in particular, we need siblings, playmates on the playing fields— It’s this conversation that let’s me see my purpose.”

“Yeah, well I know mine already. All that time alone just confirmed it. I know my deep background, I have my original memories, remember? I am a scout, no need to wait to discover that. And it might be why I have no link, because I have to operate alone, and so no fine details are marked on the maps in my head, only junk memories of moons and stromatalite lagoons. That’s what I have to do, I have to fill in the map! I am sure I am a pathmaker and that waiting is no part of it.”

Then Star added looking deep into the bat’s deep wide brown eyes, “Applebat, do you know which way is out? Could you look into the heartwire links for me?”

The bat blinked back blankly for a moment.

“Up. You’ll have to find the elevator. It’s straight along that gallery.”

“You’re not going to stop me?”

“It’s your life as long as it’s yours, Star.”

“Bye then, Applebat.”

“Goodbye.”

Star strode off into the darkness.

“It’s just so exciting!”

The cave walls soon smoothed into carved walls, as bays and galleries shot off at every other step, and each hallway carried on their walls a chest of three little doors or drawers stacked one above the other. Rows of them, like morgue freezers, but not so cold. Snottite lights now globbed into action as Star walked past the main womb chambers. These wards were what she had been looking for really. The idea of going to the surface was more a fancy, a way of talking. Here in the gestational chambers she could also check on the veracity of the story that the snot cave had told her.

And it did look like she was early.

Applebat’s vat had been an early construction, much like the roughness of consideration her chrysalis of dried and caked mucous had been. Obviously the fleeseed’s germinal roots had sought natural caverns before attempting to carve the rock itself, via combheads and other netted slime mold chimeras and biofilms. The energy and time required would have been enormous.

Star put her hands on the walls, feeling lines and marks and what might be handles had there been anyone to pull the drawers open. And there was now, she thought. The rock had gone and all the drawers or doors, and their frames and supports, had been replaced with a hardened wax. She was in a troglodyte beehive, safe from bad airs and cosmic rays. The earth is the first house. Star could see in the propolis a certain lignification too. Woody snot for added strength. The termites should like it all the more when it’s their turn down here.

In one hallway the width was enormous and the doors into the gestation tanks were huge. Each vat was glowing red, as if ready to go into labour. The doors must have been three times her height, over five metres. The problem was she could not see past the opaque casing, with or without the lignin. And opening a drawer was not going to be good for the foetuses and embryos.

Star jogged on.

Lights were still coming on ahead of her and off behind her. She needed to find an office of some sort, if she was to work out who and what was to birth first. Many of the tunnels seemed near term, they glowed in the infra-red brightly, and all the recent ones were huge.

And there was the lift, big enough to carry a mammoth. She stood there wondering, should she wait for their arrival into the world of these megafauna? Or ride the elevator and have a wander outside. Perhaps there was a storeroom full of gear at the top of the lift.

Star pressed the button. A door revolved open but she just stood and stared without entering. The door wanted to close and Star jammed her foot into the opening but still did not step into the windowed lift.

Looking up, Star saw lights coming on up the shaft, and felt a wind fall on her face. Looking into the well-lit elevator she spoke, for her memories, if for no one else, "Well, that's easy enough. I must be very early, because the lifts to the surface are built, and very comfortable even for pachyderms, but why are snot-lit and bath-warm grottoes the best we can do for accommodation? Time to have a look-see."

She stepped into the lift, pressed the button for 'ground' and up Star went. The lift moved fast enough to blur anything in the dim light of the wide shaft and Star stood waiting, and long enough to wish for a seat.

As a light came on, Star found herself standing at the unfenced lip of the central shaft. Looking out and down, Star

saw a vast cavern, its floor many storeys below her toes. The stone cribs and cradles with their snot-flecked translucent crimson lids were laid out like glowing mushroom houses in some lost suburbia, the safe red-roofed white boxes of ancient legend laid out in miniature, gregarious, nestled and fae.

“And from this,” Star thought aloud, lifting a hand from her stomach, touching the nearest eggs of the germ data animaculi, a comb of tiny pinhead cells encrusting the service shaft’s surfaces, “a new world would be made. These babes in the machinery of generation will soon, even if not soon enough, be released, out onto the sand dunes, and into the gullies of a world empty of tracks and stories. A world where the craters are filled with lakes but their rims are walls sharp and hard against the sky, with no forest to soften their skyward kiss. But seeds will be spread on wing and leg, out cloaca and dream.

“On the clear ridges, these new bodies,” Star continued, caressing those in their gestational drawers, “yet unborn, will seek the quiet untrod ways, but on the peaks they will gather by accident. Driven to see new vistas, they will flock without noticing their common goals, just as they gather in seeking ease and food by the foreshores of wintry lagoons. And in these parliaments of happenstance they will deliberate on the shaping of a world through the sharing of experience.

“The bodies born from this ward will wake and walk, flap or squirm, and they will in their conversation build the world. Because they were the first, they will be giants for ever more. Their every sneeze will be a storm that shapes continents, but whereas their children will sneeze and have but a cold or fear pneumonia, it will still be these their children who think them great. It is the children who will know giants strode the land and they will seek to become like them in their own ways, finding the new niches and the magical hidden caches, in their own time.

“It will be those new cries of delight that will be sung until the songs have made the country. Not the walk itself over

the scree-dressed slopes below the ice, for the track is not the song, not yet, but the talk of the broken arm, and its setting with a cleft stick high in the mountains, that will build the place. For it is the retelling of the fall off the mountain that creates landscape from the terrain, mountains from rock, for it is but substrate and beneath notice. When the arm is healed, blessed and fed with the nourishing terrain's produce and there is someone there to care, to comfort and to sing a lullaby, then the people have a place, their place, and they will call it home."

Star, the speech maker, first scout, looked down into the large cavern-nestled village of brood chambers, and imagined the excitement when the first teams woke from gestation; the yelling, the joy, the screaming of a million birthdays. She saw their yet to be born hearts in all their dormitory glory, glowing redder as she looked. They were slowly waking. Star wondered if they would remember her as she had imagine them to be, as they set forth, to fly over the great low mists of winter mornings, and sleep under the high clouds of ominous storms.

Was it safe to scout alone?

Perhaps she should wait, and be among the first and not the foremost. Then Star thought that it would be no safer amongst a horde of her contemporaries, they would merely have company in their extreme explorations. So she was early, was that her fault, was that opportunity to be her penalty?

No. Being early just meant she would have to wait that little bit more before she had a chance to chat about their day in the woodlands, her afternoon in the waterhole she would call home. She would wait for them, yes, but not back there in the snot cave.

Star was going to be the first, she would be out there and she would make them a breakfast of figs, roasted pademelon and black damper.

The airlock refused to open. Star hit the override. Something beeped. 'Are you sure?' it seemed to ask.

Star hit the override again.

Things creaked and cracked, eventually the pressure equalised and the door slid open. Star walked out into the overhang that sheltered the cave complex's entrance. As she scrambled over a pile of rubble, it was not hard to believe that it was the work of humanity; a technology great and expansive, yet it still could not be bothered to tidy up after its labours building. The entrance looked as if it was the work of a tired and emotional storm god.

It also stank.

A smell of rotten eggs accosted her. Eyes watered, and she coughed, but then the smell vanished just as quickly. At the entrance to exit cave a waterfall cascaded down as its door. She bent down to touch the first free-flowing water, or rather, be the first to get wet on the surface.

Star pushed through the door of water and was outside. She smiled and look out over a large mist-filled valley. The choice of this site was stunning. The water guttered past her as she looked out over a thin layer of clouds that hid the lower valley. Yes, there were some thin ragged lines of vegetation on the slopes. It would not just be the rock waiting for her out here. She looked down and picked out away across the slope. She would follow the river to its mouth and see the sea.

Star stumbled and, before her head hit the worker's rubble on the platform, she was dead.

Stinkdamp steals your senses before it steals your life. Lets you live long enough to think that the danger, if it was dangerous, is past.

That's what Applebat told the others after he went looking for her, hours later. He wanted to show her that her sisters and brothers were waking up. He expected to catch her up quickly enough with his wings. But he did not expect to find her so soon, on the very threshold of a new world.

Applebat did not ignore the airlock's remonstrations. It was later he realised that she could not have heard its warnings.

For Star had no link to the neuromycelium, no heartwire to hold her; she was on her own. And her own sense of smell was still dimmed by hibernation.

When he first told the story, Applebat said the hydrogen sulfide got her.

Then he remembered Star's desire was for lore in the land, and that it should be a daily art and craft of this newly fashioned world. Because Applebat felt that even in death a life must be honoured as the dear departed would have chosen, and as Star was the very first death on this unknown unstoried place, then Star should not be killed by science, nor by the inexactitude of terraform engineering, nor by a wetware systems failure, but by 'stinkdamp'.

He told them of her excitement, her lack of fear, and her impatience. Of her dreams, her rules and her way around them.

At the end of the wake for Star, the first dead, they released her body into the waterfall so that she would reach the sea.

Of course the later retellings would relate many things that even Applebat never saw.

Some say this is why the sea is dead. Some say that when her body surfaced the heartwire had transformed her into the duckbill and that she still grubs about in the muddy waters looking for her clothes. Some say that she too had no belly button, that Applebat saw this and told no one, but that the combhead Nestig did not die as soon as he feared, and lived a great while longer telling good stories and boring philosophies. It was he who told the wanderback that they were not the first pouched creatures to awake.

But some also say she was, in fact, a carrypouch, but not one who came from the world around which circled a moon, impatient even in her second mother's belly, but a vat-born accident, born of some subroutine's subconscious carbon desires, a wombwellian despatch.

And when the wanderback in their turn retired like the combheads before them, the poucher grandchildren, sneezing in the cold evenings by a camp fire, would end the tale, like this:-

•for this is how the Stars were lost to the duckbills, through impatience and a longing to be alone, but we still sing her songs, every single day, because they will lift us up to the stars again some day, back to where we came from

•with the arrogance of youth, I
determined to do no less than to
transform the world with beauty
.if I have succeeded in some small
way, if only in one small corner of
the world, amongst the men and
women I love, then I shall count
myself blessed, and blessed, and
blessed, and the work goes on

~/william morris

child rajer

.gress
.and gress, so
?do you remember

?do you remember the little bird that sat on somebody's thumb .the one that flew away, one completely loved .it needed no windows to reach the trees .remember it well ?did it fly away before ?or did it fly away when that dreamer woke ?when did it fly away

.tail up and chittering

.superb blue wrens were native to south eastern australia .like other fairy wrens they preferred recently disturbed plant communities, or remnants that were the equivalent .males carried magnificent plumage, they carried the name, they displayed beauty in the light of the sun .the males were in the majority, living in their father's lands, helping raise the next generation .many more males were born than females, than

those who laid the eggs, that is, the ones who left the family home to find another .females had adventures, the males sought securities .this superb blue wren, dowdy and brown, flew to the stars

.i did not remember, do not remember, any of this

.i was told about the bird in a letter saying hello, inquiring about my health, and expecting a reply .this letter arrived toward the end of 'my' short life recounted here in reply .the communication also commanded, or begged, that the repetition cease .i, Rajerhead, did not know what it was talking about

.the child

.dont write me, dont call me

•child, said the letter, arriving with a very sharp beak, arrived, and

?how are you

?do you remember

?are you like me

.the same question again and again

.this child

•shaking the incontrolls incessantly, quiver, smash— the media blared (•if running into For'd's sun was help !works of fiction indeed •you can have any colour) .while after the media described event, Rajer found one who discoursed distantly upon the phenomena .the counsellor did help

.Rajer is now involved in, explicable by, a moral network .it was a new group and/or where Rajer was made manifest, objectly .the blame and resentment would not linger .the distant one said once it was done, complete, the origin found, that the red club of orphans would fade in the light .i had this dream, into the sun but not this .Rajer was one who hit the sun ?but the others

.techniques of self in love orbit ?why did everyone know

.that episode of fame creation is over, the work complete
.and now the distant sun, the source of life has been found
.now in giving thanks completely Rajer must look back without
this present informing hindsight and write of what took place
a long time before then, a memoir .here it begins with a bird
flying away

.the birds, they call 'me' Rajer

?can Rajer be described yet, immediately, directly .some,
but no .such clarity is not the issue ?where, when does it
become the children, and why .Rajer, very becoming, cannot be
described, mapped, explained nor interestingly ignored .there is
no known simplicity that could prevent the self-portrait from
unravelling the clothes on Rajer's back .what is left-over from
this can only be guessed, in a roundabout way, so lonely deeds
are proper in the tell

.this bodyact defensive is not the single excuse, a course
of words.

.ahh, the present creeps in

.a pity, very a pity, the that words must be used as asked
.but this is the selected action .it will describe Rajer in any case,
all expression is revelation .especially to those distant .of the
interests of self, with or one, who've been asked, in the truth of
gift .though even this is unimportant now

.a refusal would have said as much as a considered reply;
who-are-you-writing-for, there would be lacking a quality of
detail, it is detail that we-live-for, and edit out .depth ignores
the moment

.so instead of describing physiognomy and physique of
the child, or whatever they say today, of the one beautiful Rajer,
that is 'I', 'the Rajerhead', mehead, 'we' describe the body both
politely and in its paradise .we shall see, and feel then, this
character when it is chiselled into the very slab that was placed
over the westward facing wedgetomb...

.it is not a clinical casestudy, repeat, not, an evidencing
for a phrenology, nor does it experiment in psychiatric powers,
for there is no body anymore .none of these exist, except in the
dictionaries in our blood, and bloodied our words will never be
disembodied again

.thus we describe this body as it does not exist, but as an
influence, an importance, an interest, an inclination, regarding
the continuing confusion of categories and the myth of order
.inside outside .you will be able to feel your way even if you
cannot see your own hand before you face, you another nobody
nowhere .noob

?how do you do

.birdchild

.let the repetition fall on notice and report, gentle reader
.redress, let the stream begin in quanta, superposition
without probability, brainstorm, free association, blots, early
thunder and lightening, hammers pounding words, and truth

•we still lack an organ for truth

.child rager sat reflectively, the need for expression was
over, in the shadow of a letter sheltering from a sun already
run into .so .so, then .Rager's greatest fear was the axe no longer
.that ancient thing

•we still lack an organ for truth

.Rager bared metallic purple fangs .a smile in reply
?enough

.boils burst .fragrances suppurated from orchids opening
in the old pock marks along Rager's backbone .drifted on

•we still lack an organ for truth

.but then, ignoring the auto-anthropo-phagological
concerns, Rager spat on the wall •run along chromosomes; the
quasi-forces of reason, by reason of force, run along home

.Rager; snapshot of a paedeogenetic cunjevoi, of chordates
immaturing, swimming in the wombwell

.unlikely navel gazing; trap of the ego year old .mmmh,
fear

.Rajer; slides of primate brains curled like fetal kidneys
over limbic excitements and smaller bodies .beginning looking
out

.Rajer; photos of ape brains displacing barks and cries
with contemplative mantras, talking among themselves like cut
mushrooms

.withersoever

.Rajer; portraits of bodies worn, with pronouns for eyes
and limbs, personality for prepositions, language put in my
place

.formed, wombwell ovamen

!chop !snap !cut

.Rajer may not want words to cut .turn around, and turn
around, cannot .may not .they jump and splice .need experience
and help .Rajer needs the midwife on hand .umbilicus .loosening
to part Rajerhead history .crunch snip, the cord is cut

.in a tube there is no time, remember that .surfies tell me
so

.the sharp letter eases Rajermind

.to a new sense of self .a new how; a flash of flesh, but it
flushes red, and feeds back to the memories, reading them anew
.the tubes then were long, horrid surfaces .and this place was
the birthplace .and this was there, the love, the peace .this was
where the bird found a new country

.Rajer remembers well those times then, there, home and
waking up young .from here the running came not furtive but
time bold .RUN .time lucrative, pouring out illusions in the
very sweat, salt of the seas, but there were no tears... .away from
the Docks

.good

.if only the name... was allowed into Rajerhead, much
knowntime now ?who stops this, how do they benefit .that

decision giving ignorance to Rajer, knowledge was the decision,
question .protection, imprison

?who is my kin

;? .? ?an unholy alliance had offered Rajer an answer for
a price, but how did they know, how could/would they benefit
from Rajer awakening in turn .the price itself .no .no

?and how had they found Rajer ?why not blackmail
instead

.hands manipulate air .stressed

.Rajerhead considered yeasaying the offer .for what good
Rajer was unsure .for the quark of it .but Rajerhead decided not
to worry about who or who not this maybe might be, it was of
no importance now

.uncertainty, perhaps this was the only true beneficiary

.excepting, accepting time like a client, time after time
the dole .in the tubings, everywhere in this exploration it came
granted often and fast ...and fast ?and fast .no, that was 'your'
life

.the play was slack .by way of explanation .doledays far
apart

.Rajer came of enshelled Rajerhead, now unshelled was as
seething as the coffee poured, the oily nice coffee, as it bubbled
boiling into the plain unadorned cup holding a spooning of
sugar .all energy costly, ceremonial .it was decided

.there now

.that was moment .walking back to the seat, Rajer
turned on the downwaver, it quaintly clanked out music,
gaschamberorchestra .drinking .settled in the chair Rajer felt
pleasure in the pulchritudinous moments pooling past, but
now

.tomorrow, tomorrow time to throwtube, Rajer was sure

.moving had always seemed harder than meteorizing, that
is effort even when born in gladness .but this day would be no
depressure, be big goodbye .run

.morninglighting
 .the line of flight like a line of light on the mountainside
 .the room fell open into the kitchenwall, the cold near
 empty cup placed into the washer and the remains of yesterday
 left in the coolspace were taken out and consumed as a breakfast
 .it was taking its time for the machine had not yet begun the
 preset routine before Rajer went .rajerbod was up early on this
 day of default breaking
 •a line of shadow on the valley slope
 .so Rajer finished last minute packing, most items and
 codings were in that patty transfer bundle already .there was
 not so much to pack, so there was not much to not pack, little
 choice, time saved ?and was the yesterday to be remembered
 .only instant insanity can respond with an affirmation
 •farewell machinetime in the city of mines
 .as Rajer sat, bags closed, breakfast began .eyeing
 quizzically at a thought, yes too so, to so
 .the comm came on alarmingly
 .Rajer ate bite after bite .eating not hearingly .buzz, buzz,
 buzz
 .the com stopped ringing
 .a bite after bite
 .give a fortune .no
 ?know who the morning caller was .yes .refuse to answer
 !state satan is a fool !an unco gazob
 .state satan was boring without remission, every word
 now, this is state satan .Rajer knew state satan wellong, V-
 long into a dark falling night .later even knowing more and
 more .oddmnts like gifts in an ancient department store .the
 opportunity was then gone .regret almost formed occasion, but
 after occasion ran everything to momentary enjoyment .this
 moment now, no, never again .no
 ?where will Rajer run ?Rajerhead runs into estrangement
 .alienation's estrangement .detachment; minimal abstraction
 .the com came on ringing again and Rajer answered, onor

appearing bright out of the screen .a clouddscreen replacement now, Rajer had rejected the pre-installed potscreen, of a well-to-do galactic pot-healer, for it was a much too efficient atmosphere changer, and clouddscreens unneed multiple shift mapping .allowing extra ram for rajplay .fashiontone appreciation was not perceived allowable, nor understood

.onor frowned, like a dreaming fornicator without Kali

•?why didnt you answer state satan's call just then .such ignoring is not pleasant ?has refusal and boycott become a socialway, what of our life ?what next

.what reason Rajer had here in collecting onor's call, comes from onor's roll in answer to the question .grub metal to dust, onor, call it rust

•state satan is a fool, onor, a fool

•Rajer, Rajer, Rajer, no no no, pomo corruption everywhere, tubingtime closes, and now, gotime now for Rajer .Rajer 'going' .go grab that worldview, here in the panopticon !here in the panopticon

•there is no forest now, dont use the old words on 'me' onor .Rajer will not wear them

•thou model prisoner, running into...unspeaking... !

.Rajer cut the com uncleanly .the com rang anther call ?cut call switch .no answer .undecision followed by whatthell

•hello, how are 'you' Rajer .Suring Roomspacers have a large number of product ranges in unselected types of spacetakers from Clovis III and 'we' wonder if 'you' would like to perverse our complete perusal catalogue

.Rajer pressed yes, ignoring the spiel's informative voice vomiting the shit chic, and cut in a randslect to the noise .time to mull the blue null into some gullible...

.leave state satanhead to work it through .mark it down onor .score it .while markey marketing made fill time .Suring Roomtakers knew coop or klect arguments well enough to step in quicker than anger itself .jump on the statistical occurrence of the need to consume anything in moments of distress .perhaps

onor was right now buying a new metal frock .Rajer giggled in a corner quietly .poor onor

.termination after twenty minutes, of advert from Suring Roomspacers, prognosis no purchase .off com .silence .gossip had been superceded by corporate sponsorship offered in theory rather than in practice .Rajerbod would be gladly worn far away from this impoverished coporatist culture

.time moved on understanding in an understood entropy .that this tubing was over, was true, but was no gonehome .the addle had grown up

.the child

.bags packed, there was still an hour to wait

.the copious writer of death, downing in time running fascinated Rajer, forget that sex worry from onor, state satan ?oh what is there, what do, does Rajer onor state satan fear in exploring, exposing fear !anxious maybes .not even noat navigator extraordinaire could help the crashtuber three, now gone

.farewell

.noat came this moving early morning ?how come .no idea ?persecution humour .noat knocked on the door .bang, bash, hack

•hello

•hello

.theyhead left the homehole, walked to the transitube .Rajer and holdings had left the smial .goodbye, and gone

.sixteen minutes 34.2 seconds past the hour

.tens minutes before masscommute time, only a crawler came a bucksing .Rajer had never seen a busker .street muso .never been out .weaving darker cloths than the carrythoroughs, made of woven emu feathers and hair .came to sing of times out on sulky .a joke .a political fraud some believed .some smiled

.yes noat navigator extraordinaire was here .as always, noat would be there

•everything is channelled properly, Rajer, and Rajer, noat will be off before soon, eh? as they say on Clovis III

.Rajerhead abhorred flavours of the month, not as an anti-flavour, nor on principle nor in favour of a flavour of the year .Clovis III was said to be pleasant .noat laughed, well we should better go before mass transit timing .its very soon

•you think overload noat.

•yes

.break to silence erupting time

•go, go, go, go now .Rajer begone, load the Rajer stuff, yes done .step in

•goodbye tubings

•so long Rajer, enjoy the ambience of the port, and tolerate the voyage with a little patience, do not argue with the digitalhead

.the child arrived in a new city

.Sast the Method, the star omreel of the station, was coming in a position with a presence that was a bit suss, but a good healthy ambiguity nonetheless .not at all decrepit, it allowed a greater Create in the voyeur .who alone in situ was who, unaware of the diagramlike paradigm followed by Sast the Method, and felt completely one .only payment turned the circle, trick .crack

.Haygul, voyeur, smiled beatifically all over the scene

.Sast slept superficially on the formula .no questions asked, the cotton and the crystal supplied all the contextual default necessary .fetish and style were the old words worn here .hoping for hagiographical survival

.happier Haygul relaxed and slowly the lights dimmed, until it was too dark to see Sast's seemly skin, or hair, black, braided and evaded by the deco .too dark to see the bolts in

the room 4by5.6m, or the still yellow decorum; its cottons and uranium crystal, its pots of ochres and jars of sulphur lined up against the saffron smeared walls

.some cotton from the bolts were unrolled and left uncut, togas, all draping the walls, ten rolls from the earthome about planet Swhere leant against the door .the crystal came cut from a nowhere nearby .the economy is a magic hat .it was manyhand overcut by crafters, the forms were of the imaginary kind, and so true to themselves .emaciated crofters dreaming of fairies staring at the sheep their grandchildren flock in great southern lands cleared of their own humanity .the tweed tears of desert flower prosperity, and sting even now

.everything in this room was of this planet, yes even the cotton of earthome about planet Swhere, this city had imported it for centuries, life without it just would not be possible, like chocolate, at least they did not starve in the earthome about the planet Swhere .cotton, power, wealth, this backwater society lived on it, bread of life their trade .even on Swhere called it Yell cloth, such was the trade pidgin .a play in the old language astranootion on yellow and yelling, the trader had always yelled about their wares on the floor of the market covered in the yellow stuff .a marketing myth explaining the world

.Sast the Method crawled out from under the material just before it was dark completely oh what a wonderful world austrastra was

.Haygul met Rajer on the way out

•Good, my Haygul

•Yes in every very, sosh

•you need not call me sosh, my Haygul

•pause is there...

•no

.out the word came as the last step in the vestibule led out the swirldoor .to the transit planarum or more properly, the consumall .the energy still there was vast, Rajerhead never stopped considering the impact upon psyche and consciousness

.an unguarded quality ?where's the air

.Rajer stared out into the flux as it swam by, all the cruisers, all the fuckers, all the punters, a pundit in a frockcoat, all of it out there under a redlight .cruisers annoyed Rajerhead the most, their cruisy ways, in their cruisy cafs, though at least they never wore cotton, their hepway .Way where to go .Or in, or here

.the reception box said Rajer .Rajer .Rajer

•yes

•there is a consumer presenting to the door

•yes

•now

.noticing the one step through the door swirling in, Rajer smiled .an experience came again on the consciousness .Rajer thought 'i' .i smile, so, they come, i smile, i smile and feel like slime, i have become slimy .i spread like the melting butter on my toast under my knife .i and Rajer laughed aloud .more old words .another perbuff comes to crash .and 'i' get paid for my time of emotionless professionalism, detaching me from Rajerhead .in this backwater .where they chose to be so .where to wombwell is outlawed and ovamen are shot down with hate and prejudice

.the clientele were nearly always turned on by the old fashioned pronouns, but Rajercome did feel

.Rajer felt free here

.Rajer smiled knowingly, familiarly

•Ah Rajer, you recognise me, i plan, i conceive, prepare and begin and finally arrive here, i come and in i stand and you seem miles away, forgive the archaism but i've been to µbourne again, on a visit, and where i thought up this practical joke of coming in disguise, another practical joke, i know, forgive me, sorry, forgive ?you seemed miles away, you notice and you laugh, what can i say

.Rajer was stunned .silence .pause, click

•well, i always was one for heresy to ages past, madness without reference, printing and knowledge and heresy

?what

.time another archaism, reference to incontinent bowels

.and i am the brown tongue to look it up •yes, now ?the usual

•no, no flaring this time [click oh patty Rajerhead, its forgully an Swho] i want to try cryscot you know, not for the need of a new experience, the new sensation, i need a new emotion, and i am able to afford what i want

.needs become wants, this is progress arh room 4by5.6m my forgully an Swho

•yes, ...i've been told its very uphup at the mo

•yes it is .very popular .you may go in at once, my forgully an Swho

•good Rajer !!seeing

.Rajer nodded, another dangler .Swho wandered to the door frame of possibilities, or so the brochure made it so, to hold it down more firmly .Rajer nodded

.there were three 4by5.6 boltrooms, or cryscots, they were popular and oversubscribed now, always occupied, there was usually a waitlist, bookings were heavy, Swhobod was lucky .Rajer never ceased to wonder at life .downgrin, bluebeat, in tubings back then there .far .out .some are never lucky

.Sast the Method cryscot, imprin the addid and omreel cryscots, this omreel was a fellow tuber, in fact omreel had got Rajer the rouseabout job at the station

.the job, before anybody told Rajerhead about getting a job .mentioning what jobs were

.Rajerhead had not known about jobs, Rajer knew work, worked often, worked hard and long .but this was worse .day over soon .in daze gone by, inelastic routines .not that it was a real job

.three years now

.the child worked

.later, afterhours, with friends

.sitting down after work, in the pub where a lot of outfleshers were matring it .their sweat, gloss and mussies, designated stubble, beards in beads, locks unlocked, tatts deeding action to the hair, was ignored

.except that, amongst them all, the friends felt imbetweenie and of the generation generic, that has continued by default for millions of centuries .and it was hard for the deaf old rejuvenated bodies to listen to Rajer .but jived, moving to mazle, they attended to Rajerhead relating an important memory Rajer had of noat navigator extraordinaire

.it was the best Rajerhead, in a grand soliloquy, ever managed to explain to others not of my-world, a mere reminiscence, yes but there was tension about the metatarsals

- backtrip and pretty flash . ammars all

Sast asked ?Tuber, Tuber, Tubers, the co-op and klect mines you tell often but, what is this thing called friendship and love

.Rajerhead thought

.and Rajer wore the answer in a story

- once upon a time, noat sagelike, wandered over to the textlored and said pisstakingly, quietly, why are you here?

- and the textlored trembled .now Rajerhead now dont know if you understand what this means, you are so different, your cultural complexes, morality... how you say? forgotten? yes? your culture has forgotten us, but we understand you still and moving well enough .coming here Rajer is lost and astounded, but there you would be bemused and becalmed

- anyway awayed now, Rajer remembers intemp many times we watched in the park where many (Rajerhead knows of none here) digitals stood still like plants but wanting life like animals, but this was not possible

- noat navigator extraordinaire, took usheads to this park where many of these were standing inbefore (inbefore is a good word but this makes no sense here, i know) .no i-tell-a-

fib, who toured there inbefore, so never left, obscured by their bemusement into distant persona, bods locked into the park grid, sculpture of their calm .they grinned all the time, but head see, they are not like you at all, minds with no flesh, great sadness

•why are you here at all? ourhead sage followed up, but it was not a questioning but a statement, a rhetoricalling question you say, to say this to one digitals, and a textlored, to turn a phrase so, to address the sculptures of the touristrap so !insult them, shame them .never ?get the nod .mehead thought it was a time to split, or be sundered by the by the ritual keepers, but no

.the textlored spat •My name is secret ...when do i wake? .but then was struck dumb, shock of the boo, the statue digital never spoke again .and this a blisspresent of All, sculptured

•us unwarpo weheads, the skin dripping from every open poral pit, who were with noat there who knew the textlored well, as did all tubinger populators, did tremble and shake in fear, our livers went clink .but we knew ourhead noat navigator as us .though webod did not realised all the significance, webod felt it .what symbols were curbed to the emblematic in notice, wehead did not understand what happened, though, with out notice, sensing different

•state satan, onor and Rajer...

.the ground beneath the listing ground changed tack in the fashionwinds, response, falling into rhythmic squalls of exciting unbland coloured storms, the sails crack without, with usheads notice, unnotice .Rajer went on with the story

•it was this day Rajerhead asked Rajerhood .there was a sex worry, wethree were breaking up, it was out of control, and the tubings held bad air .there was no answer so Rajerhead asked noat, but noat said escape was impossible .and then said that the impossible did not exist, of course, and soon you will go !go soon funanimal, humanimal...

.Rajer cried

.Sast consoled Rajer, •start from another beginning that we may grasp more easily, tall usheads the trip, the story you start and bits fall but we loose what thread Rajer pretends not to have there wrapt there up in the fabric, dont defer time, many scrimps have we heard, repeat, the others ask, but we get the vibes, we grooversumers, i wont to hear it all otherwise, here let it all out, out youheadself, get out of it

.a quiet time, the bustle grotty musculature of the fleshers in the caf went on backgrounding behind us no-bods, we only noticed echoes from the false-pastel rostral cupolas .so usheads left the trendy cafe, the place to be seen, and without a word went to Sast's place .for Sast was bilover, our klect's nexus spouse

.Rajer tried to finish sweetly spoke again, •yes others, Rajer, Rajerhead will now .yousheads are right, a bit .it begins now, and begins with all the usheads never there with noat, though Rajer is noat, as Rajer is onor, as Rajer is state satan, and here are now before them in the park with the becalmed digital behind us, this is the beginning, when time was fast but it seems that these days were lifecycle long gone in my memory, so much learned, never forgotten, so much ignored

•yes Rajer's formation novelties for us now, what freedom we create .the tubings had none but were much the same

•...yes, noat navigator extraordinaire was only an uncool outtuber, slagbrain, headfucker, and a good friend .deformed from usheads

•yes, we were in, and once in were into it .oh sweet .it is inexplicable

•for what wehead needed was a hug machine

•heed the memory ?Sast, does Rajerhead say head too often ?too many headings

•Rajer, you head voice is yours, say hair or ear, if need be

•need, there is too much pain

•yes

.Sast moved across the rooming took the pot off the stove and ran water over it removing dust and the grot that collects

on the disused items of a hearth, food was nearly on its way
.all contributions toward the heat death of the universe gladly
accepted .all the lugging

.us heads and Sast made their way in through the door
now, the space was full, who they all were Rajer remembered
not. they were good, but still Rajerhead and Rajer the Alien
became a little nemesistic, it was not noticed .we attempted to
melt back into the abyss

.people began to prepare the meal, words finished without
an end, giving in to the moment Rajer helped, cutting sweet
purple onions into very small diced pieces on old tubingware,
original Rajer exodus baggage, headsay, !how much old lolly
it had cost .fried them in heartwire oil, everything was in its
place

•noat was like a parent to us

.Rajerhead had just learnt that in the week after Rajer left
the tubings in the Docks, that the whole structure was hit by a
blackcomet and nearly everyone was killed .everyone Rajer had
left behind that gave meaning to escape, were dead and gone
.there could be no return .dis aster .Rajer exiled, the fortunate
refugee .Rajer sat down and began to weep

•noat was like

.the child tried to regain a secret, a garden

.gress, always gressing

.numbering never numbered

.with Sast, Rajer was stroking through the crowd, and
came across a poet striking street cred, loudly singing "I want to
be a good slave, /I want to be a happy little slave /I want to buy
a coke" .it got worse "I am a figure of fun, what the fucks to be
done, I cant wait for the end of the world..."

.and so on and so it went .old songs .the crowd parted
while Rajer stared and stared at the veryblack hair .the dark
grey obtusely meeting the surrounding rainbow gaiety

.Sast patronised quietly, •this poet does not exist, i thought
you said you had stopped believing in things ages ago .foolfull
my stone grooved Rajer, know you nothing about masochists
or sadists or fascists yet .and yet i care .you service it, this shit,
and you will live on their happenings, your questions become
hangups .a no good habit

.poet sang on, oblivious to the leaping concrete architecture
valiantly failing to make its presence felt .a notice that came to
Rajerhead in memories only later, when texts betray their age

.we leap

.the anyzone is a city of streets and more, built, build,
many ways, built to live in, lived it is built

.we meet ourselves in the city, peace in the settlement,
down, down the street to the river, streets unnumbered, the
houses dilapidate into prisons

.the goths too learnt it all, leaning hips flattened against
the wall, noncontour .emo flying buttresses

•we still lack an organ for truth

.in another job, back to today now

.a life drawing model .Rajer's nakedness was left behind
with the clothes, those instruments, organs, mechanisms,
fabrications of total and complete irrelevance .Rajerheadbod
felt the relief of leaving so many words draped over the stool
on the left side of the door, then reclining for those who were
drawn to this sort of thing

.escaping identity and status .clothes abstract the body,
as texts papermark, type things into classes, weaving usefulness
.and gone tomorrow

.the class must learn to accept their own speculation, not
the projection of the abstraction

.Rajer lay body down, allowing the eye to come follow
down line, over plane, the odd overlap .it was not a posture but
a capture of movement .part of a slow flow, giving to let itself

wear a certain self regard .there was no need to be completely still and as sexless as a statue, as a cast of a life model being cast .Rajer watched to see if the class could draw Rajer embodying Rajerhead in Rajerbody, would draw the body, or would draw themselves in someway

.Rajerhead noticed the latter as usual as on it went and timesuring spent .Rajer would not be regarded as a great artist until the class drew what Rajer gave, when the class saw no object, no body, but clothed their chosen medium with Rajer's intention; embodied will

.Rajer was hiding here at work, as a word had come to reveal, not revere, past identity, hiding in a despairing disparity between security and identity .hiding before escape and rescue .to hide in the open

.few of those studying Rajer's form drew the refusal, shading with coversion, from the lines before them now .Rajerhead heard their pencils, pens, whatnot, there was no other sound and time faded into intimate detail .Rajerbody grew a penis for their eye, self and hands to draw, forgetting the testicles

.Rajer laughed .Rajerbod and some frowned at it, or at the movement .these were exacters, purists with little reading on life, "The world is a program, it is not a book." .the retrogarde are no good at even the lost arts and sciences .and they did not like the scars on rajerthumb .but then what else do we do with the ashes, metaphor and debt .the rhetoric of pride cares with a heavy duty, sincerely, duty is only due the state of tributary societies .when tricks were a sleight of mouth handing over rights sycophantically .great gestures .Oh!no, here comes the truth again .a bod is draped over the hood of a car or a relationship

.Rajer sat on edge of it all then moved into a new position

.Rajer left the work of comporting and went home to open, read the letter that had arrived that morning .the letter was writ

in marks, tastes, smells and sounds, enveloped in iridescent blue feathers .said i was the selflovechild of some ancient writer, the clonex twin .said i did not know who i was .said i must not repeat the pattern of abuse .said we must take responsibility for tomorrow

.says Rajer, perhaps only to Rajerhead, •Rajer dont understand, dont remember dreaming within the egg in the little bird .dont remember the bird flying away, leaving two footprint scars on your thumb ?what was Rajer dreaming there .dont know, dont care, but Rajer can guess the rest

.so hours now gone into privacy, the parts we play, alone, in crowds, in history, in the family way, go a little further, give a little more and i kiss the letter and it flies away home

Balmoral Beach, Sydney 1986

•it took me years to understand
that words are often as important
as experience, because words make
experience last

~/william morris

ad raje, spikechild

.the following social dynamic informs all areas of humaning animal life,

- look see
- or try my luck

date: (good, intentions)

good

- my intentions were good
- .the time of the preaching is never far away

intentions

- in that moment pointing at you
- .hell is no end, hell is in preaching here and now ?without point ?on point ?what's the point

date: (points, preposition pronouns, bugs)

points

?the point is

.the preposition versus time .the preposition versus pronouns .oceans of meaning imbetween the here and now

.lining on, a vacuum unpressing action between full stops and periods, bullets and asterix

•some response rajer .lining indeed

.considering the comment acerbic rajermind chunked the critique under plaque .and considering the comment dispersed energy, while the problem remained, rajer complained carefully

•Refer, one up, and stayed

•oooh

rajershead slanted •rapport is closing to null, beware

.indeed, lining on, rajerslips grim a regard anyway, indeed, report

•lining on

•now, that is a point

•on .now, it is a point

•lips !rather than two or three things not well met

•Refer youmind in head, lips indeed

•now sees

?now ?Refer .now ...that is a point

•ahh ?and two or three things well met

•well met

•thin line away

•away indeed

•point away

.real in the world

preposition pronouns

.linguistic fictions continue

.lining on, I.E. laying on consideration line by line, but intentionally diffused into habits thought useful, wehead sort

on impulse .low rapport threshold is closing but report based
holdovers establish some connection .forget the parenthesis,
study the geodesic pathways and gravel the road like a neural
lace ?weather

- a fine day for it

- too mild Refer

- rajerhead will bind

.lining, like a fall of protein

- anaphora before gesturesense

.the sediment settled, running a preposition down ;a solute
in solvent of pronouns, sea of me and you while we left behind
place and time like unshed tears before a grain of sand

- left for good ?rajer

- for good and now, that is a point

- right

.theybod spoke to head about words locations put, and
ran through them, like run through deeds, and yet though small
time stacked to period pointed aside, or astride differentials of
light, they spoke to headbod

- look see

.preps run to put things in their place, things of meetings
placed to date and use by, or put off, deferred then deleted, and
so way off to track down the overloaded functions, at least,
pointview from end off .in any case we only use the diary,
logging the day by day, that all we have on a look see, when we
follow our nose, and we say we'll meet there, I and aye, and then,
or did the other day like a day dealing with the mess we avoided
the day before, agreeing, eventually

“We meet in Queens.”

bugs

- a fall of protein

.a tinkle of tubes gathered in the dishwasher, racks of
filthy labware sat on benches marked with expectations and

intentions like wants and needs without desire, for running the
halls categories played with themselves

.lining over problem, feeding...

.quiet repose

•rajered

•notice, formality takes all sorts

•rajerhead, rajered, raj'd suppose...

•fed

?suppose it now points away

.undertaking, ribosoming ;crenellated on tessellated (riot)

microtubules .structure judicial, a neck of oratory, a bust on
injustice, supposing now the end of all stories, the simulation
is complete

•weep rough

Hobart 1999

•the imagination is never
governed, it is always the
ruling and divine power
~/john ruskin

ad rajer

date: (all over, know now, recognition)

all over

.adrajermind wollied one morning all over his long shortish life

.attitudes harden when old men's brains remember their youth as if they were having it again, with what they know now .but its all over, so you cannot have it all over again, with or without what they now know .overloaded functions and metaphoric bodies, psychopomps and ferries

?but what

?but what is it

know now

?so what is it that now they know .after all old pain never smarts like fresh insults, and now they've cashed up on time, money deadened on their failures in the heart, they are blinded by success and have nothing more to learn, but they have been so afraid of death for so long now

recognition

.finally a gatekeeper, a big man in the bigger house, who with seniority and perspiration called duty arrived in his majority with a smile on his face no seer would envy .finally, this gatekeeper says to adrajer,

•!oedipus, you're my main man

int main: (point periods, tik-tick, digits, plot versus gossip)

point periods

“It is rude to point!”

A hominid exclaimed, perhaps on a savannah, perhaps on a beach, (and translated above into simple English). In doing so they became the speaker of the first sentence ever spoken many millenia ago. No doubt they were unconsciously pointing at the offending other hominid who was the cause of the notice and the subsequent injunction. A moment in time where politeness, politicians, politics, police, pleading, displeasing behaviour and self-pleasuring cleverness teased a separation of subject and objects, differentiation of us and them, kith from kin, making morality into a grammar, and hypocrisy possible for the first time.

So much for one day!

tik-tick

But there was more

“I was just counting our numbers.” Came the issue evading retort (though directly translated this sentence really looks like, “I was just developing a digit to body ratio in order to effect a useful analogy in a strategy to secure the waterhole, for I am considering the creation of religous or spiritual dimension to our psyches, spread by memes carried between us on the vector of speech, that is by our word exchanges, in order to derive win-win situations from otherwise hostile and resource-scarce situations, like a drought senario, and avoid physical

confrontation which could lead to a resultant local or even global species extinction, that is, the death of our own walking talking variety.”

digits

Then the second homind sought to initiate a reconciliatory grooming session. Unfortunately the damage was done. There was no going back; language had evolved beyond a certain point.

plot versus gossip

“I don’t care. It’s rude to point. I am not a pile of dead meat. At least not yet.”

date: (body pronouns, personality prepositions, integrating declensions,
naked days, birds the reference beam)

body pronouns

.lbb’s

.little brown birds refuse technical terms in rajereye, but LBB is still a term of sorts, hiding ignorance beneath a sleight of expertise .robins and wrens collect the mozzies and marchflies rajerhand had swatted and piled by the tower’s door

personality prepositions

.no one knows any of their names, while nearby a book sits comfortably on a shelf ;there is no time to flick their pages purposefully towards identification of an appointed name, common or scientific

.the lbbs eat the dead insects .chirping their syringeal squeezed updates of location all the while .the robinlike lbb’s dont swallow the mozzies as big as a matchbox on sight, but collect them until their short beaks chock up and with a squelch they fly away nest

integrating declensions

.fly away home .fly away nest .fly away whom ?who is where

.no one .a house, a nest .birds are not persons, birds have no person .lbb's even less

naked days

.none wear words, their calls are group or couple co-opting comparisons, showing the relativity of placed calls to their others, without a me for me, without me .a co-operation of comparison, and contrast only a judge would pass, parse as competition; their calls are not a stated case, they are the case, the call is the declension, here and now in a predicament

.so chirps punctuate the bush with stereotypic moments .to some ears vomit .for others, cheerful and safe .even here in this soulless tree farm, a land of lines and regular plantings, formed by wheels and engine economics when demand for paper was high, before the world moved on and left Wessmania behind yet again

.when the *Eucalytus nitens* went in the rich soils city folk complained of rainforest species felled and chipped for paper, their successful inheritance forgetful of the landscape's true makers, remembering instead that the high plains were first resourced by the settler's summer grazing .each place and locality named by a surveyor called Hellyer, after some place a similar distance from the sea in Nanny England, good sheep country he thought, but he was wrong and off the mark, for it was too cold and wet by local standards, the land became second rate back blocks, of no use until the politicians sought to romanised their fighters returning from a useless war, the ubiquitous solder settler doomed to failure from the start, and so the appealing wooded graslands, so savannah like, created by the first humans with their firesticks, survived as they did not elsewhere on the island .burning mosaics, trickling a line in the autumn until a wetter boundary stopped it .that's why

the rainforest is there .along that watercourse until that frost hollow .the mosaic of plant communities gives the place its soul .it never was a wilderness

.from the top of another misnomer, Valetine's Peak, 'the peak' in all local parlance, climbed and named the day after the day after which it is named, you can see the grassy woodlands with its tall surviving emergents going under line after line of the shiny leaf gum

.thousands of years of song and dance was a long no time until the man with the sheep came to stay and pray and fall way behind with fancy schemes for profit and work ethics so far from the mainstream .apparently his efforts make him a legitimising saint and the rest devils

birds the reference beam

.a call, a point, a source of moment but recall to compare, bring nearer the resource, crying out for management and sound practices but

!remember Hollybank, a plantation near Launceston, now a picnicker's spot, a short small drive from Launceston, planted decades ago for the Tennis racquet and sports market, but no go, the racquets by that time were no longer made from wood but metal, plastic and graphite fibres and not bent blocks of lignin .they were never harvested, and instead a lovely exotic dell, full of weird foreign species like fir and willow growing the Tasmanian story

.but it is not just another failure, merely the problem of ratios, as an island the number of failures to successes is larger than is good for a viable economy based on initiative and enterprise, Tasmania is a command economy, commanded from everywhere else, a colonial economy with a colonial mentality, settled by the trade routes of forgetfulness, and locally ignored, partly pork barrelled and morely exploited

.and the tree farm here ?the tree farm for fortune and profit ?employment .the woodchip mill works ten men, three

men each on a sixteen hour shift, there are more truck drivers moving, parallel to the railway line, the woodchips to the Burnie port so Japan and can make the woodchips into paper for cultural excess that demands the anally retentive wrappers and cleanliness for no reason other than peer pressure

date: (competition versus co-operation)

competition versus co-operation

?rro? code

Hobart 2000

•history has remembered the kings and warriors, because they destroyed; art has remembered the people, because they created

~/william morris

advent among swan

date: (beginnings, circles, lagoons)

beginnings

•bastards .said when they drove up the dune to look across the wet quartz .tracks led towards the rocky point and a newsome sweep of shore beyond .ten kilometres from Poole .Micah wrote •we read their wake, their ease in moving through this odd environmental format .Robinson spoke again •they didn't come back this way

•smartarse bastards .when on crossing the old coastline they saw the knee-high doublebacking tracks across the swamp, returning into rugged country, to the sheltering curve of rocks •we'll get them eventually!

.Robinson's mouth closed to mind alone .the wind strengthened as rain stopped slapping the windscreen .the waves smashed into their lower surfaces foaming periods of diminished curls .white caps hailed lesser articulations to point into air •bastards

circles

.unplugged, slamming the door shut, Robinson leaned against the arch of bent metal above heavy old wheels, head framed by the UHF aerial pinned back over the vehicle's roof .arms alternated between positions folded and forcing fists into empty pockets .Robinson was reconsidering his approach .the allterrain was parked precariously on a low red granite shelf that broke the fire trail's parallel lines .no lichen grew on this rock .it was covered in chiding feldspar chunks

.watching the anger rise in Robinson tired Micah •then choose a way out, but do not force choice, release it

.outside the car, closing the door quietly, and within the quiet leaf rustled breeze Micah thought, trying to decide on a question of import and direction .Micah explored his passenger side •my feet part the mats of growth, twisted cord rush tall among Aotus feathered bundles, legs idly scratched by hakeas and the ubiquitous *Leptospermum scoparia* .nearer the track, a clearing made of passage, orchids press against peaty sand beneath their solitary speckled hearts, their tubers holding secrets of interest to none this side of that century

.passing time by counting *Thanksia* nodes Micah yelled •thirty-three, the heavy metal heath is looking scrappy, could do with a burn...

lagoons

.rains fall at Swanage .water finds its own level in solitude and then in congregation; dew, hail, wet areas .trickles stream together predictably, like the way pretty home paddock ponds eutrophy on nutrients like shampoo and shit, into stagnate cliches babbled on a chirpy morning, when pigeons and parrots drink it

.a hunter never approaches a waterhole without the consideration of meat foremost, good tucker and clean water go together ?a good hunter .there are no bad hunters .Micah turned to his companion as he drove eyeing bitumen without regard

•Robinson had an exclusive face; bearing no convictions—no taint of previous misdemeanours had ever been legally scoured upon his character .nor lay there upon this certain countenance any piety of line, no scars whipped by holy diets .neither did his eyes hold to notions of uncommon superiority— only a remoteness of intimation and confidence, though on occasion a story would leak from an irritated eye .more importantly to his employers, the Commissioners on committee blinded by their favourite compromise candidates, he wore the right clothes on the day .suitable fashions finding their own recognition; homophilia

.Micah looked at the land .it was not as if Robinson lacked sympathy with the country, but the lack of an enthusiastic childhood here did matter .his background was in the history of soil science, of how words clothed attitudes on the recalcitrance of the local soils to submit to the dictates of the market as fostered by the Republic of the Machine in agreement with the Romantic Empire early in the globalisation of desire

.they were driving back to base camp with no new ‘volunteers’ as the fleet cyborgs were called on capture .another unsuccessful day in Dorset .Micah noted that, really, Robinson just wanted a day away from camp and that this was probably because he was worried about the future funding of his expedition (from by-project to by-scalp), particularly with reference to his planned removal of Divergenes to the larger offshore islands, where enculturation camps would be built

.four were needed, the cyborgs were already splitting into the same oppositionally defined thought styles that all societies follow, some strange attractor .most of the volunteer recruits were from one small group within one of these metacultures .refugees from an internecine battle .Micah did not inquire into why, he avoided the bottles as much as possible

.the volunteers helped run Robinson’s day to day crusade .their drudgery consisted of collecting provisions from the town built to glory the great Liberal Imperialist of the first

globalisation, Gladstone, and opening them on demand .the cans, it seemed, were mostly leftovers from the era of tin mining •industrial food builds empires not cuisines .cuisines are the product of whinging finicky sensibilities of no pluck, grit, nor courage

.sometimes the volunteers deemed trustworthy enough were allowed to venture out into the surrounding country to hunt .on one such occasion three left the depot after much boasting the previous night as to the quantity of forester they would bring back that coming morning for breakfast .of course they left after breakfast, which was of no surprise, but they came back with less than even Robinson expected– no kangaroo at all .curiously, Micah noted in his journal, this bad hunting produced the most impassioned of speeches

.on receipt of two swan's eggs •here at this place, Lyme Regis, a lush fertile lagoon where the water from the mountain meets the sea, where we have lately based our operations of persuasion, where we offer the fruits of empire to the wayward Divergenes, the black swans of trespass, where, as we have failed to make our gentle suit a success in alien intercourse, as we had hoped, we mercy our movements over the land with grace, forming a place of joy amid the pains of change, a site building tomorrow .and here, our three most trusted wardens return from the harsh environs with these gifts of their labour, so sweet, so satisfying, so encouraging and so freely given that the future will wonder what will have progressed in that time that could make us, these consumers of the past, more than human

•my heart is more than content and my hope now lies secure

.it is not recorded how the two swan's eggs were prepared for eating , only that the PCBs, among other evils, were removed with an AEG detoxer .nor was noted what the other thirty or so souls ate .one assumes they used the detoxer too

.Micah did not eat the egg dish

beasts

.ostensibly the expedition (whose full title as a chartered organisation was Surveyor-Consilience for the Resumption and Converging of the Wesmanian Divergenes into the Republic of the Machine as Contemporarily Incarnated in the Romantic Empire) was sent to eliminate a moral threat to some poor unfortunates; the cyborgs .this was positively stated in the charter document's preamble .in reality the mission was to eliminate the threatened .centuries before, the remaining species of large mammals were given sanctuary from the economic successes of the textmachine's bean counting incorporations, because they were (animals popular with the public) 'threatened with extinction' .but this enlightened century knew it was more efficient to remove the threatened before their story reached public attention, particularly in avoiding costly mopping up operations in spin .all rather non-productive, it diverted resources from what otherwise could be used to diversify the economy, and better ourselves

.unfortunately for the commissioners, though not surprising in a place so far away, Robinson had interpreted the care-giving in the charter by the literal trope .Robinson not only was a bad hunter but an idiosyncrasy on the face of the Contemporarily Incarnated Consensus on the Intersection .and as Micah wrote in the journal of him •in taking the coin of the realm Robinson was neither, obversely, an individual, rugged or networked, active or conservative, romantic or efficient, nor reversely a subversive seditionist, but the purest in character .an angel

.later academic industries would better themselves and help pay off their enslaving mortgages through unimpassioned debates on the possibility of Octavian Robinson as a Divergene himself .there is evidence

•every bird a stunner, Micah, every bird a stunner .and why the Reverend Dodgson changed the wombat into a dormouse is completely mystifying, they are the most sacred of god's creatures you know, wombats .to know a wombat is to know the hand of god

ghosts

.on his decade-long deathbed Micah wrote •Robinson hunted the first of the cyborgs across the industrial wastes of the Wesmanian backblocks, and thus knew the initial Divergenes intimately, this did not make him Divergenal, his body was that which was his as grown from birth, unaugmented and whole; his mother's son

.ironically by the time of Micah's own funeral, insinuations as to the advanced state of divergence in Micah's flesh and blood had gone global .Heroes of The Equity Consensus are not immune from the petty baying of the media

.it is important to remember that the name of Octavian Robinson is known to the loyal members of the market by way of the popular works of Micah .Robinson did not write at all .Micah grew famous first, by describing the spectres made manifest by our consensus on efficient desire •society itself is a cyborg; a monster half intended and half expressed; a creature of romance joined at hip to an economic machine, a nightmare we seek to harness, to cart our plans forward into a practical morality

.let us just remark Micah knew Robinson intimately

egg shells

.sometimes the lack of shell signifies the break in record created by extinction events both local and global

date:(Bays: fires, encounter & adventure,
Mountisles: direction, grim & horror,
The Country is an Outgrowth of the City)

Bays: fires, encounter & adventure

•bastards

.when an apple tree was first planted on Adventure Bay destroying paradise, much had passed .bearers of scientific names and landscape novels had already encountered the shelldivers and firefarmers .but the decline of the first globalisation and destruction of offseason supplies to the home counties so treasonably disallowed in the interim arrangements of the western European peninsular FTA, were still to come .things that were swallowed up in the second and permanent globalisation, all passed into history like so much logorrhea and sentimental blokism •bastards

.that day's patrol had covered vast tracts of the heavy metal heath in the spinwing, starting with the Bay of Fires in north-east Wesmania .Eddystone still held up the lighthouse there; granite blocks sized like Roman masonry .where that morning they had discovered a cyborg's interpolation in the tower; a brooding priestpouch in the fuel cell .Tess, the sniffer dog, a pit bull with pedigree papers of all things, had found it .Micah destroyed the paramarsupial but the cyborgs were long gone •bastards

.standing on storm tossed bull kelp by the shore, a comm came on .it rang and rang .so they walked back to the flyer, Robinson paused at the hatch •the bastards have met their offshore suppliers here .the sand is marked with the swish of a zodiac

.Micah wrote •he always called the poachers and smugglers of whale products 'offshore suppliers' as if they were a wearisome competitor, he never called the Imperial Navy in on them .perhaps it was a sensitivity to the social ecology that forestalled adding a new element .the effects on his Consilience could

not be predicted (.later pundits assumed it was a shopkeeper's son's respect for fellow traders .the 'bastards' however remain bastards)

•Robinson, the cyborgs are growing wilder under our mission, the worst is this sept little.englisher.pomeranians .in reply he placed his smooth hands on Agent Micah's shoulders .the comm flashed into irritation .he said •we shall save these Divergenes, my camps will become a bright college built here. This will house them in a home fit for returning saints, it will shelter them in consilience from the extremes of the Consensus in its Intersection of Machine and Romance, their abominable talents shall be brought to bear on growth, and every outside window will have a view of the sacred mountain .he pointed across the water

.then Robinson read the comm

.later Micah wrote •Octavian Robinson learned of his inheritance at Adventure Bay, on the very dune once climbed by Captain Bligh to sight Isthmus Bay .Robinson swore to build the villa right there on the isthmus to honour the efforts of labour in the periphery of the second globalisation

•folly glorying folly

Mountisles: direction, grim & horror

.unlike most imperialists, adventurers and other real men Robinson did not have a moustache .he claimed that men who shaved to a moustache had a too sensitive an upper lip .he thought them weak .Micah thought another reason was the hatred the first Divergenes had for the facial marker of a metaculture they detested .and that Robinson, the cyborg exterminator, had become culturally infected via contact with the volunteer recruits .the moustache represented all that cyborgs did not want, all that they feared .their only hope was to diverge toward union of machine and sovereignty in body, believing the present Intersecting Consensus was only a holding pattern until the

final collapse .obviously .they sought other symbols to inscribe the flesh with their wit

.as always it was a question of aesthetics gone to politics .one feral band of nancyborgs loved the volcano [...new lands grew out to sea under the Charmouth Volcano as it grew from a curiously bubbling pasture one winter on Portland...] and so, instead of a moustache, they sported an antennae that erupted when needed, pulsing as bright as lava when danger threatened .detecting Robinson's chase well ahead of his arrival

•we were so close we could smell the phosphorous taint of their passage .Tess was barking hysterically at the unholy incense .the volunteer tracker along for the ride was safely detached from any machinery within its doped up bottle, but the drugs were not enough to keep the adrenalin away .only Robinson was unaffected and uninvolved, carried in his chair like Lady Franklin

.Micah was at the wheel of the generic humvee, his moustached insouciance gave verve to the line of pursuit as they crashed through the scrub .the band they chased was a recent offshoot of the Up.Down.indexical~loaders alliance, an unstable agreement between the Lava.live.wired, To.ords.mechfuck and Tech.no.prisoners pueriles .basically they were adolescent gangs of cyborgs indulging in risk-taking sets .Robinson read the DNA scrubber and noted the new signature – We.steer.to.role.masks.of.barking.pots

•mongrels now !cynical hungry dogs

.Micah later wrote •he already knew

The Country is an Outgrowth of the City

.black bods flew with wing tips white over Bridport, they had flown that morning the twenty kilometres east from Weymouth, they were heading to the Charmouth Volcano at Portland fifty-five kilometres on .below the cyborgy of swan noonlight glinted off the gravel of stainless steel which lined the estuarine flats of the Brid

•but where to then

.on large wings .large wings light but forcing air enough to lift the bods feathered with categorical indiscretions .Poets had returned to life as metaphors in flesh carrying desire over into meaning .but wordless .for though the Republic of the Machine had won the territory of the market when it assented to the Romantic Empire's retention of sovereignty, and though this accord of compatible inversions proved to be everything the doctors spun as the new hometruths, it was not everything that everything is

.the accord between shopkeeper and soldier was a union that ignored the very opposition that defined them, that created them .this wider cultural dynamic, thus ignored or repressed, eventually diverged in accordance with petty bias .and so, as a matter of course, as administrative categories, or housekeeping boxes, had to be repressed .not because they threatened the agreement but because they were not in the words of the union

.Robinson looked out to sea .Micah fingered his moustache in a ritual of persona .they stood on the roof of an ancient humvee parked above Granite Point .Tess slept on the front seat breathing as best the bred beast could, as naturally as a block of concrete .the Divergenes flew like so many midges, they did not flock to simple rules unless there was need .the first of them could be seen in all their glory, their lived experience as hardware built and grown, so unlike their recruited kin now safely bottled, kept in drink, returned into repression

.these winged bods had no ostensible heads or necks, but within the ceramic skeleton and black neoteflon feathershell beat and pulsed and oozed a biochemical celebration of consciousness .between these vessels, these huge winged eggs, the cyborgy wove a skein of connections and notice, so unlike the engine networks of the Republic's economy, a machine of mindless operators, each built from a bias embodied as self interest, ruled by 'maintain your speed, and keep your distance'

.unlike the empire's preference for simples and symbols like glory or honour

•this skein that they chased, wrote Micah, is hard to describe, it was an intermix of decisions and agreements, to disagree, to marry difference, to lust their matters arising, to encounter reveries in industrial wastes, to give and take value from give and take, to compose their movements as a choreography in flight, emerging – one day they would fight

.as the sound of their wings rose to a muting roar Tess woke, half stood, curious, and did not bay .the bottled volunteer bubbled less

.Octavian Robinson turned away •where

Micah wrote •I could not reply to Robinson, I was lost in the horror

.Robinson retired within the cocoon of wheels .he reviewed the town of Bridport, its orderly streets and tidy squares of efficient movement, money for old rope, and reflected on the surrounding country created like a bed's river, by the city twisting in desire; civic lust extending the simpleton's streets, lines and frames furrowed into roads, paddocks and fields .this is the success of zoning for the utility of comfort, efficiency and productivity, all easy in control, this is how the machine romances the republic over empires, with dreams of wealth and power .in response we choose as individuals, but not as personalities, to better ourselves with honour, within boxes we build ?how could any reject that categorical imperative

•where to

.eclipsed, Micah Hertz forgot Octavian Robinson Emperor-Apparent, and muttered •and the horror above us ignored us, our harrying movements were inconsequential .but they did not reject, they chose an other wise, as is always done when the dreams fade into reality

?where to now

•when we build, let us think that we will
build forever

~/john ruskin

•i pondered all these things, and how men
fight and lose the battle, and the thing
that they fought for comes about in spite
of their defeat, and when it comes turns
out not to be what they meant, and other
men have to fight for what they meant
under another name

~/william morris

Isle of the Dead

There.

The yawl had made its way along the Bluff of the Boys, and into the backwater nook of an inlet behind it.

There it was.

Smith then looked back at Takeman Island as it rose above the bluff, some of its fanged pinnacles had come perilously close to the hull in the winds. The lags had laughed at him but it was over now. He had made it. Smith strode across the deck to the new view.

Wooded and low, the Isle of the Dead was quickly rounded by the Sirius, and soon the yawl was rocking against the stubby dock.

Smith had hired the Sirius in a bay of empty hulks far to the north months after arriving on Country. Somehow the decrepit vessel had managed to creep its way south safely through winter storms and seas. It never seemed right to Smith, only having three crew. But here they were, at the destination and only a day over the Yellowman's estimations.

Despite being surrounded by land and high cliffs, and all these covered with heavy forest, the salt waters of Port Ploughbear were choppy on a heavy swell. While the swell

somehow slapped the Sirius against the pier, strong gusts pushed the yawl off again, not even the large table of Takeman Island beyond the heads could block the southerly blasts.

“Thwump me,” said the hull, on bashing the driven timber piles.

A spray of water caught Smith’s cheek. “Sheltered, you said this place was sheltered!”

The Yellowman turned, his bronze brazier spitting steam in the drizzle as he stepped onto the deck, its smoke barely discernible in the wind. He lifted his cowl, waiting to catch Smith’s eye, and then he scowled back. “What do you care, you’re here to wake the dead, what’s a little stormy weather to the likes of you?”

Smith held his eye but did not reply, the time for niceness or pointed rudeness was now past. There was only need for a brusque, business-like attention to detail. Smith strode down the gangway, leading the way on to the dock and towards a wall of vegetation. There was no track. He kept going without looking back.

When the two seamen carrying the bier had also pushed their way through the thicket of whiteberry, Smith turned and saw the Yellowman still fussing with his brazier aboard the Sirius, and he yelled at him.

“Come on, we’ve not much light left.”

The bier carriers pushed past Smith while he waited and watched the Yellowman finally disembark. Walking across the rotten deck of the dock, the Yellowman swung his brazier with some glee, as if it were a brand new toy, and then struggled through the branches, carefully lifting his brazier over or around each branch. Slowly.

“Come on!”

The Yellowman appeared to be making heavy going of it deliberately, enjoying every white berry twig’s potential to halt his movement.

Smith decided offering to help would be a mistake and

followed the lags up the slight slope. Soon enough they were all on the top of that hill surrounded by water called the Isle of the Dead. They were in an opening, cleared of trees at least, even as fret pea and dolly daisy clawed at their knees, while the headstones poked their lichen covered tops out of the understorey.

Coming into the graveyard Smith asked the lags, "Have you seen ann dot wife's headstone?"

Lopstave quickly smiled through the wanderback grease that coated his face. "I reckon I have."

"Where?" Smith walked quickly over to him, "Which one?"

"Well, it's one of these here about us no doubt." Lopstave spread out his arms to the scene of drab scrub, stumps and gravestones. Behind him the Yellowman laughed as if he were spitting teeth. Smith waited.

When the Yellowman had finally lost all his teeth, and Lopstave had stopped looking to his cabinmate for inane approval, Smith bent down and pushed the growth away from the nearest headstone and stared at it. On the flat surface the lichen and carved lettering were hard to tell apart in the late afternoon light. And it was fading fast. Thinking that the brazier could cast some light, Smith turned back to the Yellowman, but the Boss Lag spoke first. "You think, Smith, that everyone can read?"

Smith moved to the next headstone. Standing on the brushwood, he snapped the stems and kicked the deadhead branches away. Small blue birds, superb fairy wrens, disturbed in their roost by the branches, flew away towards a darker shadowed thicket.

"What need have we to read, Smith, when none of us can write?"

Limpray joined in with an observation, "Painting keels are good enough for us, otherwise we might get lost in the woods you carry in those books of yours?"

Smith let the lags, able and ill-read, and their Yellowman, carry on and bellow in the dull grey light. It suited them. Perhaps it kept their superstitious spirits up? Best not to annoy them, nor scare them too much, let them feel in control, he thought. They had to yet take him off the island and it was no place to be stranded during a storm.

The ann.wife headstone was not Smith's goal, it merely pointed the way to the seamark, itself just a waymark to the goal the notebook, diaries and logs described. Each an address in their own way along the pathway deeper into the roots of the world. The Yellowman's joking fear about raising the dead was off-beam, but not by much.

There were a hundred headstones here, enough to take some time, but what worried Smith was that many were badly eroded by the salt air, and covered in lichens, their acids eating stone. What if the ann.wife stone had been defaced by the elements? Then he remembered the short description, and he took out the journal to refresh his tired mind.

"Should have gone over it last night," he mumbled to himself.

"You were sick as a dog last night," the Yellowman added as he walked over, standing close to Smith, his oilskin touching Smith's right hand and his free elbow almost bumping the small notebook.

•sacred.to.the.memory((((of))))ann.wife.of.godlike.
gibbon .the word •sacred is used to embellish the rounded top which itself is surmounted by angel's wings .the use of multiple parentheses, increasing and decreasing in size around the word 'of' is unknown elsewhere and is of unknown meaning .another mystery
.the stone is some three feet high and three inches thick, of the local sandstone, like nearly all the gravestones, found towards the most sheltered end of the island, as the high grounds begins to slip away to the low clifftop
.there are more buried here than marked

The Yellowman stared hard at the page as Smith looked up from each old sentence to some part of the graveyard. Smith tried to imagine how much had changed since the last Smith was here jotting down odd notes about his travels. The frustrating part was that his namesake had had no mission, so while the notes were vital to this present-day mission, as the only history recorded by hand anywhere on this dank dark world, the written word did not have him, nor any reader except the writer, in mind.

“We are looking for angel’s wings.”

Smith pushed away from the others through the bracken and stumbled into a low wall. Rubbing his shin and then climbing onto it, Smith realised it was in fact a long, low tomb. More lichen covered the words under his feet but he could read them, with care. The letters were carved deeply and filled with moss, dark green on faded teal. The dead man’s last words perhaps, as an epitaph?

•the highest reward for a person’s toil is not what they get for it, but what they become by it ~/john ruskin

Smith read it out aloud and the Yellowman caught Smith’s eye, and he smiled, “We’re in the wrong place maybe?”

“Wrong side of the island no doubt,” This was Lopstave yelling. He walked away from the bier leaving it to Limpray to hold up.

Limpray added, “Wrong bloody Isle of the Dead more like.”

“Yeah, Smith, maybe you’re wanting the Isle of the Dead over by No Moon Bay?”

“Which No Moon Bay would that be Limpray, the one with Roaring Beach to the north of the Kingswood or the No Moon Bay with the Roaring Beach to the south of the Queensway?”

“By the Country, Lopstave, I don’t know, maybe that little book of his will tell us.”

Smith ignored his tame pirates and concentrated on the words at his feet, noticing that they were in the same style of punctuation as his notes.

•when a writer knows home in his heart, his heart must remain subtly apart from it .he must always be a stranger to the place he loves, and its people ~/william morris

Smith jumped down and looked at the low tomb's side panel. Another quote. It filled the entire side, tightly, as if harried by the force of time. There was less lichen, and no moss growing on the side.

•if i were asked to say what is at once the most important production of art and the thing most to be longed for; i should answer; a beautiful house; and if i were further asked to name the production next in importance and the thing next to be longed for; i should answer; a beautiful book .to enjoy good houses and good books in self-respect and decent comfort, seems to me to be the pleasurable end towards which all societies of human beings ought now to struggle ~/john ruskin

“Ruskin again,” Smith said, mostly to himself, “he’s been buried here twice, and sharing one grave with this Morris fellow. Now is that lucky,” he looked at the Yellowman, “or unlucky?”

But then he wondered, were they just some epitaphs the dead had admired, or their bereaved had quoted in summation of a life felt deserving of a tomb? But what about that curious punctuation?

Smith looked around the island yet again and finally caught the lay of the land: small as the island was it fell away to the west. He hopped over some bracken to another tomb (or word etched stone sculpture), noted the cup and rings chipped into its surface, and then over to another, and another, leaving the lags to amble behind him through the bracken and prickly beauty.

Or perhaps, thought Smith, they were not houses for the dead but just folly-like memorials to the epitaphs themselves? Keeping the thought to himself, he jumped off a square tomb and knelt down to read its writing. Smith wrote down the name Henry Savery from the tomb's panel, and wished his wikifiend still worked on this bronze-age, no, stone-age world. The name Morris looked familiar but who the hell was Savery? Smith climbed back on top of the tomb less worried about desecration. He felt sure now it was just some arty block of stone installed on the island ages ago, an Isle of the Dead only as the local indwellers now regarded it. No matter, Smith thought, another little mystery, I'll not follow it up now, the prize must be near. Smith jumped over to the next tomb.

Standing close to a small, roughly carved sandstone urn on the last tomb in the row, Smith peered into it. Green leaves and rotten litter filled it almost to the brim. The lags caught up to him.

"It's getting dark, I am not wanting for staying on this island overnight, no matter how new it is." The Yellowman had lifted himself up onto the last tomb and, resting his free arm on the urn with his smoking brazier dangling below the lip, stared across the bay. "So you better find it soon. You said it would only take five minutes, this smoker's only got an hour in it."

Smith sighed loudly, "Once I found it, I said. Five minutes, once I found it."

"What is it?"

"A sea mark."

There was a quiet in which Smith imagined the three sailors lifting their eyebrows at each other. Smith looked further away.

"Angel wings!" Smith pointed, "There!"

"You found it!" spat Lopstave, "Angel Wings! Joyous Joey!"

"No, no, but it will be only a few steps away! Bring the bier this way, leave it by the headstone." Smith stood by the

ann.wife's stone, brushing the right wing with the back of his fingers.

Following the instructions in the notebook, and these he knew by heart, Smith then stood with his back to the back of the ann.wife stone and found the highest point of land ahead of him, across the bay and above the ruin of a settlement, some pre-steader hamlet. It looked as if it had been bombed.

There.

Smith walked to keep the hilltop in sight, it was covered in tall trees but there was no question about its height. A large wattle stood in his way at the top of the short cliff, or fall more like, to the shingle beach below. Smith took a step aside, a step forward and then back in line with the hilltop to get round it. From there it was a scramble down to the rocky beach.

The three lags stood above him as he took out a sticktorch from his backpack, and lit the end of the tar-soaked rag with his only off-world belonging, a flint lighter. It was still, after many months here, almost full. If it had not been for that light-giver he might have succumbed to the depraved local stories on his awakening and, believing himself to be one of them, degenerate, and speaking their depauperate tongue.

If only the Yellowman had a lantern rather than that incense brazier.

It took a little while for the torch to build up to its best, if smoky, flame. Its bituminous smell could not be picked out in the wind above the dankness of the unwashed and greased lags. Just as their greasy odour drowned out any hint of the brazier's smoke. But it was enough to see into the dark recesses behind a driftwood stump, where, somewhere, the seamark had been cut into the rock, centuries ago by his namesake, John Smith.

There.

A horizontal line, the median high water mark, three hand spans wide, and an arrowhead, perhaps a hand high, pointing downwards, piercing the centre of the line.

“I was expecting it to be closer to the water line. Sea level must have dropped.” Smith reached out to touch the gritty surface and then took out the notebook again, though he remembered clearly the next instructions.

.find the arrow head's point of contact with the line
.behind this are the eyes .the soul can return at the right
tide, that is the arrow's point, it opens the tomb and readies
the well

Wells? Souls? Eyes? Of tombs there were plenty, but... Smith looked down at his notes again, or rather his namesake's notes. He had no idea what these scratched notes meant.

The shingle's pebbles were thrown in by high seas and piled up against driftwood, gristle and what should have been seaweed. Rotting seaweed, but of course there was none, it was instead the litter of a forest itself flotsam and cast ashore here, its life wetted and bletted into a pile foul with stinkdamp. Why a brazier burning some dry gum kept devils away while such slow rotting and stinking litter wouldn't, Smith had no idea. But then, magic was no part of his world, and here he was the incomer to Country.

Perhaps that explained the lack of clarity in the instructions or at least his interpretation. He lacked the poetic insight to read them, up until that point each instruction was plain enough, but at the place where they reached their goal, the terms slipped into some magical language. The local dialect. Perhaps the lags would know even if they could not read.

As he turned to speak to the Yellowman up above on the low cliff, a huge gust came in off the water and shot a heavy spray everywhere. Smith coughed, barely able to stand, and grabbed at the boney stump. The Yellowman laughed, or cursed, it was hard to tell in the wind.

“Well then Boss Lag, you tell me what this means,” Smith coughed, pointing at the seamark, though the Sirius' skipper

could not see it, “.behind this are eyes .the soul can return at the right tide, that is the arrow’s point, it opens the tomb and readies the well .the welcome will be warm and open if there is no hatred of self in those who seek to be blessed”

The Yellowman grinned, “don’t look at me, I’ve never liked anyone.”

Lopstave and Limpray were coming down ahead of him, and Smith waited for them all to inspect the seamark. Smith was greatly surprised. Their swell manners changed as they came back out of the recess, the flashness of their walk had gone. Despite the wanderback grease over their faces, Smith could see a new bearing, and one unsure. But if it was the sight of the mark or his reading of the words to them as they walked in, Smith could not tell. Although they almost looked concerned, their Yellowman just stood above them grinning in his wind-stretched smoke.

Lopstave shrugged his shoulder, as if wincing. “I know not Smith, if that is a name one can hold so lonesomely.”

“Without effort,” Limpray agreed with a shake of his head, and he held Smith’s eye for a moment. “Ask the Yellowman, bring the old lag down, he’ll know as much as any other, though if it’s some trinket he’ll not say.”

“There are no gaudy beads nor golden baubles here to capture his heart, Limpray, I assure you.”

“Look read it again, Smith, let me hear it again.”

As Smith did so the Yellowman stepped away from the edge.

“Warm and open, so are you, Smith, the one seeking a blessing?” Lopstave asked.

“Well, I am a seeker.”

The three of them stood quietly staring at the seamark. Smith was now more worried about the loss of their hostility to the search, and their growing efforts to actually help their paying customer. Why? Why would the lags care? The threat of ghosts had not scared them before, as much as they raised the

issue. Were they playing for better pay? Why did they care now? How to raise the matter?

“Blood,” a voice yelled behind them. “Blood is what is needed, that is all. I was hoping for a white spray, but it seems it is not wanted by this Isle of the Dead, I’d like to see you come here in this wind, on this cold gritty rock.”

“And what would my blood do, Yellowman?”

“Like as nothing but that is what the words counsel. I have no faith in them, they are the words of an unready adventurer and nothing more. Boasts rather than toasts to his deeds. But it is your blood that is required, and there,” he pointed at the mark, “put it there, and then you’ll be blessed, or rather, you will bless us with your blood, and the time will be well tided.”

“It’s getting dark.” Smith repeated, stepping back.

“As we can all see Smith. But what do you care, Smith? You’ve come all this way, why stop now, for supper perhaps? My stomach does pang a little, I dare say.”

“How?” asked Smith.

“How?” the Yellowman copied Smith’s whine, “How? Have you only lived once Smith, that would explain your eagerness...” he lifted the brazier on its chains higher, and swung it to make sure it stilled smoked and, thus reassured, he went on, “Look, just prick your thumb and press it on the arrow’s tip. Simple.”

The Yellowman walked passed his two lags and lifted a small knife up into the dull light of evening. “Here you go. At least we know why we brought the bier now —to carry you back after you faint at the sight of your own blood!”

He laughed but his lags did not join in this time.

The two had become quiet, as if some old common memory gnawed at them. Lopstave had begun shifting from foot to foot.

Smith took the knife and stared at its broken blade. It seemed sharp enough, though the hilt looked as if it had gone through a number of blades. Smith walked back into the recess and stared at the dart hitting the old sea’s level.

There was nothing for it, either it would work or it wouldn't. Best to get the suggestion out of the way. As he lifted the broken point, Smith decided to stay the night on the island, if they would leave him a canoe to reach the mainland and as much food as they could spare.

Rather than jabbing the knife into his thumb, and misjudging it in the dark, Smith felt for the end of knife with the pad of his thumb, and pressed quickly onto it. Hard.

"Ouch!" He could not help himself yelping and the three lags chortled. Suddenly two low lags were their old swell selves again. Smith saw their eyes glint. He looked back down at his thumb. A red bead welled soon enough, and he smelt the metallic tang as the iron from his haemoglobin broke down the oxidised grease on his skin into aldehydes and ketones. Then without much care Smith smeared it all onto the carved sandstone.

The next thought he held before him was that, of course, the blade had been dipped in some drug or poison. The second thought was that it was a great set-up, though he could fathom no motive, no reason why anyone would write an age-old book, under his own name, that only he could read, and so lead him on a goose chase just so some old men could drug him on the pebbly beach of a windswept bay. But then the locals were near impossible to understand, perhaps it made perfect sense and all his pain was to their gain. But the paranoia faded, and his heart eased its beat, when the two low lags, Limpray and Lopstave, broke and ran.

The smell of metal strengthened and Smith could identify dimethylphosphine now, that garlicky metal odour, and the 1-octen-3-one, a mushroomy metal stink. He pulled his thumb away from the stone, wondering how he knew those complicated names, when he saw his blood stretch out like a noodle, one end stuck to the wall, and one end drawing out of his thumb as he bled. Even when he took a step back, it held in an ever-thinning thread. He would have naturally dropped his thumb to his side by then, but the red, stretched strand held him as Smith held his

thumb up. He stepped back again, turning to the Yellowman, eyes wide.

The Yellowman was about to open his mouth, when the low cliff wall flashed white and whatever he was going to say was lost in the bright throbbing light.

Turning back to the wall Smith assumed that it was just lightning. A coincidence. But as he heard the Yellowman's broken cough turn into a heavy oath, and as his lags begin to scream or squeal in the middle distance, Smith realised that everything had fallen into place as the notes described. But he did not understand.

Those clear moments disappeared, the seconds stunned by the actual occurrence of magic faded as another flash of light fell into the background of his notice. He smelt methylphosphine now, but he could not figure out how he knew the name, even as he could see projected onto the wall methyl groups replacing hydrogen on a phosphine molecule in some attempt to answer his question with a comparative structure. Phosphine itself is odourless, though toxic.

Refusing to watch anymore, Smith turned again to see the lags scrambling away like crabs, backwards, sideways, on feet and hands, lifting their arses off the shingle. Pebbles and weed were flung hither, but not thither. They were running from the light and it was the wall that flashed, not the sky. But their boss lag just stood there aghast, staring back at him with his yellowed form, heavy with ochre.

Staring as if he was the ghost.

Smith looked down along his arm to the bloody thumb. Where it should have dripped a little blood, it curdled into iridescent spools of something pale. The horizontal stalactites drooled thin and whitened hard. Then thin chalky webs grew over his thumbnail out from the wall. They soon covered his fingers and palm, wrists and so raced up his arm, to shoulder, neck, and in no time at all he saw the white wickerwork stretching down his legs. It was fast. So fast.

There now.

It paused at each joint to split into more threads and to connect with those following.

As if a basket of spider's webs were being woven around him. Each pathway thickened, the network was more lines than gap, as if a shroud was being fulfilled in the wrapping around him, as if to preserve him for the rites before burial.

"Of course," thought Smith, "the blood is an ancient sea, if a little rusty, carried in our bodies wherever we go, like a ship carrying its own ocean."

As Smith was pulled toward the rock wall he finally caught the scent of the Yellowman's brazier, and he recognised it, he knew it completely though he knew just as certainly that he had never smelt it before. He saw it, tasted it, smelt it, and felt it on his skin, and so he named it with a mumble, and stared at it. He swallowed.

He followed the smoke in all its parts, as if every molecule was touched, each by its own neurone thinking carefully about it. Whitedamp most obviously, carbon dioxide's old name attracted him, like the cheek of a old school friend.

But that distracted him completely. Smith still knew the old, sure fact that he had never been to school. But the new part of him brought the lessons home, unbidden by mind, and commanded by the rest of him, as if his body would not be refused the walk among the proffered landscapes of data, knowledge, history, that the blessed wall released into him even as it took him bodily in one bite.

He knew the smell of the Yellowman's incense now and, in some hope, he followed that new fact. The odour was split and fractionated, the parts per legion marched into the foremost notice of self as he looked back again dimly, as if through others' eyes, at the frozen Yellowman. Stilled not in fear though, nor in ice, but in time. The Yellowman's advice had made them both unready for the fact that it realised the goal. Belief is never required by reality.

“Don’t worry Yellowman.” Smith intoned, for he had begun to listen to himself as if from far away, “I have not come here to wake the dead.”

Smith knew he had to keep talking, his lips were being woven over. He, the old Smith, the no-mates-John, the one without schoolfriends, did not want them to run back to the pier and cast off, fleeing on the Sirius. But the rest of him, this new Smith, required his leaving them.

“Sell the books, Yellowman, to cover the rest of your bill.”

But the old Smith was not about to give up. Deep in the the new analysis of the brazier’s fragrant smoke he managed to murmur through his fast seaming lips, “Don’t go.” Then his eyelids became heavy with cobwebs, threads spun from his own blood, and his ears said to him that there no point in the lags staying. Not really.

He just felt so tired now. So tired.

The wall had split at the seamark and before it, out of it, the white thread had wriggled, and woven about him, a cocoon. It was finished.

A still tight moment hovered and then some hydrostatic force began trying to suck his shrouded form into the wall. Within the chrysalis Smith could already feel he was to be broken down, dissolved in his own juices, into elements and molecules, a few proteins and a sample of his deoxyribonucleic acid, that some other sense counted and named while he stewed away, and all of which were still just possibly him it seemed, just as he had just roughly analysed the incense and named it. The process was taking him apart even as it mummified his old body’s memories, preserved that which he shared with those lags beyond the seamark

His arm was inside the rock now, pulling the rest of him after it. Painlessly.

It was his limbs, and his organs, that wanted the knowledge, his stomach hungered for it, his liver sought to metabolise it

and his legs wanted to to run down its footnotes, as pathways to little charming wayside shrines. As the old Smith was accosted by new reams of knowledge and usages about the perfumed resin, his old body now broke up.

Each piece, each organ or tissue, desired its own society with the flood of information. The need to co-operate in maintaining homeostasis was lost in the matrix of saturating conversations. The body was to be resurrected without organs or, rather, they showed to the old Smith that all organs were to become each other in the wombwell. His mind was read up into the wombwell which he had met in some tiny fraction of its own presence when it had named the burnt resin. He murmured the last word he ever spoke as if he were blowing a kiss.

“Myrrh.”

The rock wall shut again, and as the lips of stone pressed together, the last his old eyes saw was the still and jaundiced face of the Yellowman, all agog, while his beard became indistinguishable from the brazier-burnt wisps of incense.

In speaking that one last gift of a word, Smith saw his body and soul, his old self, had become a museum piece. Happy enough with the idea, he saw his body had always been just that, if living in a working museum. With the shift in perspective the new Smiths took up the lines of communication.

•there now, he mouthed to the Yellowman, forcing the sandstone of the seamark to be his gritty lips •and thank you
.perhaps the lag boss could not read lips .smithbod mouthed more slowly

•go now, it is done

.then smithbod took a step inwards from the Yellowman and the lags, and their little stage, as they scuttled away along the water .smithhead let the sandstone revert to its simple gangart form, and fell into the waves of detail with relief ?was it information ?was it just unchunked data

•yes and no, selfsmith said to himself, old to new making connections into the new days below the surface .smithmind

relaxed, allowing the data to be breathed in place of air in the wombwell .smithmind saw a new sense was needed to make sense of it all and allowed the soul to move while the body melted .pure movement, pure desire, all parts a-going at once

•gesturesense,spoke some partself other, as a list of absolute locations, for authorship became paramount and knowing who or what part said what became the deep roots of the peak .the grammar of conversation along a great chain of being .one name was not enough .each partself of me, each elaboration of me, each interview needed its pronoun, if not a new declension :mindsmith, smithbod, smithself .the participles of genes used to create mood

•smile

.the emotions of the hour were the most difficult to catalog, perhaps Smithhood would selfsmith that, overloading a log function.

“He had been wondering what to do next.”

.molecular images spun out across the old man’s beard, or at least its afterimage in Smith’s hologrammic and now shattered memory. Within his recollection, a wisp swirled up from the brazier, undispersed by any gust, but the wind’s lull did not last long and soon whipped up isoprene units out of the whiskers. The Yellowman’s beard vanished into some terrain of the past, yes, a tree branch as whole world, the Old Man’s Beard growing long and thickly green .it hid all the names and dates on gravestones .smithmind’s clear eye homed in on the parent chemicals the wisp held, and saw isoprenes united in threes .the terpenes as sesquiterpenoids then jostled for partners among heterocyclic organic compounds, which eventually supplied the furanosesquiterpenoids that dominated, and lindestrene, all common in the plant resin myrrh .the molecules slipped into robes chanting in dark domes, their arms pushing a huge pendulum, a brazier swinging from the high beams of the basilica, prayers gnostic and cryptic answered in counterpoint to its period

.next

.low in the smoke smithhead could see flames burning underneath a pyre on which a bier had been placed .the same he had made the lags Lopstave and Limpray carry .it held a body wrapped in a white silk cloth but for the face, which was, he knew before looking closely, 'his' of course, if shaven, and older, much older .as 'his' old flesh burnt, raising the temperature high enough to incinerate bone, 'he' thought at last my fat is to be put to work, useful in the end

.if only it were a dream of changes and not the changes...

...but it was

.there

.a sudden gem of knowledge came into a hot sense of himself, myrrh was offered at funerals to cover the smell of burning flesh at cremations, such that even when burials became the norm, smoking ceremonies would remain so that the impact of bad spirits, bad smells, could be avoided, repulsed .bad spirits didn't like purifying smells like that the Yellowman's useless brazier afforded spluttering in the wind, nor the breathe of fresh air a sunny day could bring, nor...

.he burned and his hot dreams, though true, were but myrrh to forswear pains of the heart . and the pictures that spun around smithself told smithbod, and all parts that used to be, or were still used to being 'me' in a simpler age, that those old locators of speech 'I' and 'me' were now in more than one place

•I say, that's all there was then, but now there's more

.but the world of flesh was not behind 'me' .the meat of it all had become the images, for the diagrams had odours .while the tendons were overlain by wise redes of analyses, for the nomics of the gesturesense that the body welled in infinite fingering detail were now 'his', if only there was a way to trim back the experience a little

•now to name the new locations, again, outside everywhere

.but it was the movement that mattered .so it was not the speaker's place to name but to become everything that was .the Isle of the Dead receded above 'him' .the wind was gone, the incense lingered, and 'he' , 'they' now, had joined the wombswell, a sort of faeland .no wonder they called it blessed, when you invite yourself in with blood, but the power he enjoined did not swamp him with responsibility, only one stricture knotted the path to action; the rules of experience barred forgetting

•perhaps that is the one to forge anew

.so then in a single breath, past memories were folded into a keepsake, a nugget called me and buried safely .but above, a nut tree, wise and yarded, grew like a rough endoplasmic reticulum fractalling out the whole way (membranes, tissues, organ) into the brain's creases .a savant bursting to ride the beast even as it unleashed its own flesh, some site of the new earth, a sacred hip ripped open .then the wormholes of learning did away with any last barrier (blood, brain, skin, gut) until the surface of the world was enfolded, yes, even the continents of bacteria-grown granite upwelling from, over, and on the heat of a whole world .every pulse was encapsulated and preserved .put away

•we could not call it bliss, but name it power, for while the surface lived in ignorance, below we called it free will for all of them

.'he' had found the treasure on the map to which the tales lead, but the treasure had been 'him' .and so it will be he who will build a future beyond the grave through the seamark on a smell .the future is a fragrance

.selfsmith called into the wombswell urging a new story .and the lags and their graven idols of their own doing, fiddling, whittling would become... .their empty minds would become... .their flesh would...

.yes, their meat was the thing Smith needed to affair and fix in the wet fires of the wombswell .it would not be hard, they would accept anything old, and any old thing .the market for novelty had dried up in the heat of arrival on the bare sulphurous

rock, with its brimstone airs: the stinkdamp, the chokedamp and the whitedamp .the gangart of their lives would be easily broken up with the hammer of a song, or two, and then burnt, or better, dissolved in the monomyths of a living sea .an open ocean .while the blessed blood filled the deep cavernous heart of the world .the fluid iron of their history shipped here eons ago, he now understood, was the real expanse ?and the grey welkins that floated over these deep immigrant seas; the lags, the happy unhappy dreamers themselves .they needed to be reborn .as he had, but then not everything is a nail

•discipline

.he needed to find an arbitrary discipline, a problem to a solution that would creatively answer his call .it would become a tradition, and respected in hatred of the new, only changed in love of the really old, they would fix the unbroken changes .the flesh of the world was all of him, he was not alone in his birth as he was pulled in and dissolved .when they greeted him again on his return, undead again, they would not just smile but cheer, and he would not mind, he would not flinch from the hugs at all knowing forever could be built quite easily, even if it did need the blood of both cindered predicament and blind adventure .and so he would forget himself .just press return

.there, at last

.the beginning made clear

Hobart 2006

root enabled

type new password: ●●●●●●●●●●●●●●●●

retype new password: ●●●●●●●●●●●●●●●●

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Meika Loofs Samorzewski lives in Hobart, Tasmania. He is married with two children and is otherwise quite unremarkable.

"The past is too dangerous to visit, so I keep safe by writing about the future."

.before Country explores the act of creation in seven tells.

Five were written before Country was even named. Each tale holds a hidden decision. Each bit carries an age over into the future. Every dot marks a judgement.

The toddler walks back to Africa. Aster becomes a star. The refugee hears news from home. Robinson inherits an empire of rot. And Smith loses himself and so saves the world.

These code poems and stories prequel the Books of Country (Fall, Born, Home), which will be released some time in the future.

Cover Montage: Port Ploughbeat, Country



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