

# Sun Moon's Mother



Mark Young

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### acknowledgements

Some of these poems have previously appeared, sometimes in different versions, in *AnotherSun*, *Another Toronto Quarterly*, *Big Bridge*, *brief*, *can we have our ball back?*, *Idiom #23*, *Jack*, *Jacket*, *Moria*, *The Muse Apprentice Guild*, *New Zealand Electronic Poetry Centre*, *Pettycoat Relaxer*, *Poems Niedergasse*, *Poetry NZ*, *Sendecki.com*, *Shampoo*, *sidereality*, *Snow Monkey*, *Tin Lustre Mobile*, *Word for / Word & zNine*.

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## Synopsis

### Crescent Valley High

In this week's episode. Joel is caught with a cheat-sheet in the American History 1990-2000 exam. Amelia explores the mysteries of flagellation with her new friend Emily. After last week's revelation that the boy she thought would be the love of her life is actually her half-brother given away before birth, Maple delves further into her family history. She finds that her mother and father may not really be her parents despite her being their biological offspring. The Halperin twins are arrested for stealing washing machines. Sun Moon's mother experiences the joys of making tagliatelle.

## Backtracking in the Early Nineties

The dispersed pieces of a former life  
fly together like a film  
run backwards. A single word  
sets them off — *Owsley*, king of the  
acid chemists, the eponymous chapter heading  
of a remaindered detective novel bought for  
\$1 in a Woolworths variety store. I see it  
as I turn the page; & associations  
pile up so fast I confuse the front porch  
with Freud's casting couch. Dear Doctor, I  
dropped a tab for the first time on an  
afternoon in spring some twenty-five years  
ago. No-one else was then & there  
though I do recall the cushions were this  
amazing shade of purple that sang  
to me, & a sudden satori gave me insight  
into the hidden meaning of the cover of  
*Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*  
& the deeper mysteries that lay beyond.

In the here & now the cushions are red,  
have a black ideogram embossed on them  
to match the cane suite  
that they rest upon. The birds are back  
but it is the sun that sings above a lawn  
that is mowed & watered regularly. Each  
month the bank deducts the mortgage  
& the car payments automatically; & I am  
writing this on a PC paid for by  
credit card. *Sic transit gloria mundi*. Then  
into it all comes this chapter heading  
& I am out of it again. One word that  
probably cost me one quarter-millionth of  
one dollar & gave the writer even less  
dissolves the entire environment & once again  
I race through stainless steel tunnels  
where lights bounce back from the shiny walls  
faster than words, slower than the eye can see.

## The Baggage Card

I move & my baggage comes with me.  
I stand still. It snaps at my ankles then rises up  
& wraps around me like a cloak or  
kaftan. (I prefer these images to that  
of a bodybag which also comes to mind.)

I try heading off in unexpected directions  
but it gets there before me. I visit friends. My baggage  
is peering out their window, waving me away. I go  
to speak & my words come out as echoes  
of what it has already said, pre-empting  
my thoughts. Silence is my last defence.

My baggage has become more than me  
while I am becoming less; & that  
is not becoming. I waste away. It tours the world,  
gets written up in the social pages taking in openings  
& art galleries, is seen at a bullfight in the  
Camargue, flyfishing in New Zealand, wearing leather  
in San Francisco. I break my silence, beg it  
to come back. Now it becomes the mute.

Finally

I receive a postcard of a Louis Vuitton valise  
with a Guadeloupe postmark. My name & address  
are written in an elegant cursive script. There is  
no message but the message  
is clear. My baggage has moved up  
in the world & I am on my own. Unaccompanied.

## **I Populate a Private Europe**

On most warm nights you will find us walking the streets on the edges of the inner city. Sandstone terrace houses come right up to the pavement, there are no lawns, no patios. People sit on their stoops or first-floor balconies to take the air. Sycamores grown up over the last two centuries blunt the streetlights. Their branches stretch to the houses, we walk beneath them, shutting each other out of our thoughts in the same way the trees shut out much of the light. I drift through the mixed metaphors of a private Europe, populate my dreamy avenues with those I'd like to find there. You prefer to watch the passers-by, to take them on some private dance, up the street down the street round the corner where the real action starts. They're innocent you say as I question your glances. I reply that innocence is a presumption, something you lay tenuous claim to in the hope no evidence will be forthcoming that proves you otherwise. In the dimness I risk the moral high ground. There is no innocence in the way either of us interact with our separate populations.

## The Ideogram

It is the rain, initially, that acts as catalyst to combine the static elements. A thin patina of it on the road, & the slope of the hill behind provides the perspective that forces the shadows of the park sign, the gum trees & the low log fence around the park into the core of an image, an ideogram drawn upon the road. To concentrate the brightness, add low cloud with the city lights reflecting off it, & sodium lights above the intersection hidden by the houses at the top of the hill. Arrange the ingredients thus; cloud cover, sodium lights, gum trees, park sign, fence, rain on the road. I do not know what the ideogram means, but I archive it anyway, store it as a zipfile in my mind.

The ideogram is augmented later. A story on the 10.30 news has as backdrop to the newsreader a stylised image of a Japanese gate. Now I know what I am reminded of, & reach beyond it, through a simple gate of similar shape. To Akira Kurosawa's *Rashomon*, & that image of Mifune in the rain, bound with ropes but still defiant, the mud-smearing murderer in a story that has four tellings. Foretelling.

In the morning, without backlighting, the road is nothing more than wet asphalt. I bring in the newspaper. The death of Kurosawa is reported on an inside page.

## Self Analysis

Neatly, ever so neatly, I have taken the top off my skull. Spread mesh across the opening to create co-ordinates & am now gently excavating the contents & sifting them to see what appears. I am pleased to report that I have found no fossils though there is a midden where previous inhabitants have apparently come down to the waterside to eat the shellfish they found there.

Already the diggings cover half the backyard. I have raised up some rows in which to plant potatoes, will train runner beans to follow the neural pathways that are drying in the sun. & I have in mind if I had a mind to have it in an exquisite bonsai maple which will sit perfectly in the brain cavity.

## Lunch with Frank O'Hara

The invitation was accompanied by a new poem "dashed off" — your words — to celebrate the beginning of Senghor's seventh year as president of the republic of Senegal. An ode to *négritude*, it wove together the work of Césaire with Apollinaire's song of the ill-loved. Aimé, mal-aimé.

It came with its own travelling case, it was almost a book. On the front a drawing of you by Larry Rivers superimposed on slabs of Mayakovsky in the original Cyrillic. The back was a collage of newspaper clippings — Billie Holiday's death, the visit of Krushchev to the United Nations, that famous photograph doctored to show him beating his shoe upon poems by Vosnesensky & Yevtushenko.

Between the covers were a series of made objects cut to postcard size & kept in place by a rubber band. Amongst them a de Kooning nude, body on body with that nude of Duchamp's that you didn't think about away from work, a couple of poems about painters, an abstract of a monograph expressing your thoughts on Jackson Pollock & a pixilated Lichtenstein with a soup can in the speech balloon. Oh yes, & another drawing by Rivers, of you in cowboy gear, with the caption "Pistol Packing MoMA".

The invitation was written on the back of a postcard.

*Let's do lunch. As you can see I'm on  
Fire Island, but I'll be back in New York  
at the beginning of August. Ring me  
here, or drop me a line at home.*

I reacted nervously, started off to write a letter declining the invitation, to say that I would be unavailable at the time suggested, would be in Paris, at a meteorological conference to be held in the iron surrounds of the Eiffel Tower. But halfway through, swayed by the thought of lunch with you amongst those hum-coloured cabs, decided what the hell & rang. To be told you weren't in, were down on the beach & not expected back until the evening. I'll ring later I said,

but didn't leave name or number; preferring  
to wait, to see if my bravado could also be  
expected back after sunset. Went out shopping &  
gallery-hopping, passing the afternoon  
knowing you would be happy that at least one  
person amongst the 8,000,000 was thinking of you  
& myself happy that I was that person. Only  
to overhear in an uptown *pasticceria*  
fragments of a conversation — Fire Island...first  
automobile fatality ever...poet; & suddenly realise  
that the meteorological conference had just been  
washed out, that lunch was over, that many others  
would be thinking of you today, for all

/ the wrong reasons.

## **I Never Did Get To See Nijinski Dance**

I hurry through the streets of the Principality, towards the theatre where the Ballet Russe is performing, refusing the entreaties of the dealers & street whores who are as prevalent here as in any other time. I dodge the Ducattis & the occasional Hispano Souza on the roads, the Gatsbys & Grimaldis on the sidewalks. Looking around I see that my research has not been all it should have been, hope that the synthetic fibre of my tuxedo will not be noticed. I stay in the background, sidle into the theatre, take my seat as unobtrusively as possible. The lights go up just before going down again & I see several well-known faces in the loges. Diaghilev is in the audience tonight, hosting a party of his friends, amongst them Cocteau who will reprise the structure of this scene twenty-five years later in his Testament of Orpheus. Then the overture starts, the Bakst curtain rises, the dancers enter. I do not recognise the soloist. "Where is Nijinski?" I ask. "Sshh!" says the person on my right. The one on my left tells me Nijinski quit the company ten years ago, is now hopelessly insane. "Such a shame" she adds. I am forced to agree.

## Mirror / Images

The thoroughness of your disappearance is outstanding  
**Michele Leggott**

It's simple really — all done with mirrors.  
Wormholes in space & time, & which,  
depending on what medium you're currently  
working in or watching, connect quadrant  
to quadrant, dimension to dimension, either  
through some sort of oesophagus down  
which you slide or else an aqueous  
membrane that opens like a snake's iris  
to show the black pupil in behind. In which I  
see myself grinning at such an outrageous  
overlay of symbolism. Black holes / heart  
of darkness / the sophistry of shadow worlds.

I could leave it there, let you use Boolean logic  
or a structured query language to search the  
poetic database for clues & keywords. There is  
an A-Z of those whose images I have pursued  
perused & used. Mirrors appear & disappear  
at regular intervals, looking at what I am whilst  
you are / looking at what made me. Or I could  
take your hand & pass through the mirror, from the  
interrogation room to the watching post behind —  
one-way glass, the old good cop / bad cop routine  
where I play both the roles — & turning say: Now  
look at me. I am here, & yet within that room  
I still exist, still "watch the mirrors / watching me".  
We reinvent our selves continually, but keep  
the major templates safe, in another room.

& in another room **MacArthur Park** is once more  
playing, although where once was vinyl & Richard  
Harris is now Jimmy Webb on CD. Technological  
advances & a return to the song's source — we  
move in both directions simultaneously. For every  
action...Newton's third law, classical not quantum  
physics. It's simple really, & all to do with mirrors. &  
smoke. This is no big bang theory of the universe  
but rather big bang prestidigitation. Go out on a  
high & leave the audience clamouring for more  
whilst you reappear in a different city learning  
how to do the simple street tricks that were once  
beneath you. With no assistants. & no tuxedo.

## Codex

When I entered the country I told the immigration authorities I was a gatherer of bones, a polisher of stones, adding that I didn't mind if the activities were reversed. They were sceptical at first, doubting that these were legitimate occupations, but a search confirmed it so they let me in, muttering that there were cemeteries for the first, rivers for the second, that if I didn't find a job within three months I would be deported.

When I applied at the employment office their records revealed that it had been years since they'd last had a vacancy for the line of work I laid claim to. In the meantime however, there were part time jobs available in either an ossuary or a quarry that might help keep my hand in while I waited.

Which is how I wound up cataloguing storage bins of bones. A set of threes — three floors of a building in the old part of town, a common repository for the relics of three orthodox religions & which encompassed at least three centuries of active accumulation. It was an eclectic collection, incorporating anything that had the slightest connection with the religions without concern as to the provenance of the items. In the first few days I recorded five femurs supposed to have come from the one saint, discovered that polydactylism seemed to be a prerequisite for beatitude, that to become a patriarch in the fifteenth & sixteenth centuries demanded a bone in the penis. I was especially intrigued by the relics of someone identified only by a sigil, whom I nicknamed Saint Fibonacci because of the way the number of his metacarpals seemed to increase, & who, it was rumoured, wasn't even dead yet.

Despite all this I started out with good intentions, sought diligently for the correctly labelled specimens to complete skeletons which were then interred in perspex coffins in a reliquary that had been specifically built for this purpose several years before. Then expediency — & the fact that there were so many unidentified bones lying around — took over. I began to fill in missing parts, but still maintained the integrity of my own records, staying clear of scientific fraud in my determination to become the Bertillon of bones. But the fact that the papers I wrote appeared in non-paying journals whilst the reliquary drew an ever-increasing number of customers finally changed my attitude.

I began selling to traditional chinese medicine outlets bone fragments guaranteed to extend life expectancy. I crossed over from *The Journal of the Proceedings of The International Conference of Osteopaths* to *The Southern Enquiring Truth* with articles such as **Widespread syndactylism a generation removed disproves the myths surrounding Saint Epimenides the Celibate.** & then the activity which caused my dismissal, bringing out a calendar in which each page featured the bones of a saint whose day fell within the month, probably because of the context in which I placed them: "Miss July seeks solace with the ulna of St Theophrastus."

I have been working at the quarry for three months now. Very soon, a burial plot for a previously unknown schismatic seventeenth century sect will be discovered, complete with contemporary artefacts, their age able to be confirmed by carbon dating. I have learnt well.

## Terra Nullius

December 1. Supposedly the day on which the season changed. Someone's arbitrary determination after they had shifted hemispheres & found their world turned upside down. A quick fix, rendering the present so it reflected a particular past, done by attaching the unfamiliar & throwing familiar to the unfamiliar & throwing names around to overwrite the land. Fine at the time, but pets rearrange themselves as pest to them- overruns it. New grains don't hold the soil together the way the native grasses used to do. & where the traditional owners of the land sometimes admitted six, sometimes two, depending upon what the weather was actually doing, now the seasons come around on the first of the month, every three months, a regular reminder of the debts outstanding on something that was taken, never loaned.

**Terra Nullius, *Empty Land*, the principle England relied on to claim ownership of the Australian continent despite the fact that it was already inhabited.**

## Left Behind

The transitional episodes of his life are defined by what was left behind rather than what happened. At various times, but never at the same time, he owned a Sun Records' 78 of Elvis singing *Mystery Train*, a complete collection of *Le Surrealism au service de la Revolution* with titles that glowed in the dark & a 2ml Jena syringe from Switzerland whose plunger was made of bottle-blue glass. Not any more. There were other things, but as example this truncated list will do for now. He can remember where he acquired each of them, where he left them, what & when & who he left behind as he & that particular possession parted company. He has brought with him scars on the right ankle & the left foot that come from shooting Nembutal & missing the vein. On a much less physical level there are also *The New American Poetry*, a biography of Paracelsus & a piece of schist in which burnt grass is encased for all time. He cannot recall where he obtained any of them, though knows that at a certain point when other things were left behind he had them all. Still has them; but wonders if a time will come when he remembers leaving them behind & thus restore the memory of where he found them. He will never know when the scars were obtained.

## **A Done Deal**

He refused to talk about the past. It's a done deal he would say, something you cannot change even if you wanted to. That was the public face; privately he was reinventing it, rearranging it in a way that made it more palatable to remember, more profitable for a later presentation.

## **Nemesis or: Painting By Numbers**

*for Michele Leggott*

### **1. The spelling**

is probably wrong but, as  
someone once said, the Greeks  
have a word for everything.  
This one is *νεμεσις*, divine  
retribution, a pre-ordained  
pre-destined fate.

### **2. Pre-destined.**

If only it were / that easy. Begin  
with a word; & from there on in  
it is all downhill. No need to think,  
to struggle over images & how  
they hold together. Instead the  
remaining words are pre-determined;  
you only have to keep your fingers  
on the keys, & let them do the walking.

### **3. Michele**

what have you started? That formal letter  
nine months ago; & I have spent  
much of the time since then  
working my way through the  
grey box of old poems, picking &  
polishing, rewriting some histories  
& leaving others well alone. But what  
to do with those that talk about some  
distant form of me, & yet still say  
"I am part-done; & with some work  
can be / completed"?

### **4. Elsewhere**

I've talked of reliving the past, through  
books & discs that I replace as I  
wear them out. But this is different,  
this is me, unable to be digitally  
remastered or re-released in paperback.

### **5. Cézanne**

was once asked, when trying

to sell for ten francs a still-life that included ten apples sitting in a bowl on a table, whether he would accept one franc / for just one apple.

## 6. In calculus

we learn of sequences & series; & I realise that working on the poems has created a convergent sequence of three terms. The first is the original grey box that now sits on the table, too full to close with additional revisions & emails & photocopies all mixed in. The second is two sub-directories on the PC. & the third is the stack of laser-printed pages with a 24-point title on the top sheet & on the next the not quite complete ISBN that identifies it as a book about to come to term.

## 7. *Perihelion*

is one of the / part-done poems. Excluded from the box it is the only one left that I still want to do something with. Encased in Byzantine references to Yeats & interspersed with intimations of my own mortality that are some twenty-five years out of date, there are these lines about Che Guevara that I still like. & want to keep, even if it means I have to take some tangential line to the original intent. So now, with Che reinterred in Cuba & myself resurrected in a western suburb of Sydney, I have crafted this format in which to lay the lines to rest.

## 8. & on the bus

*I have been reading guevara's 'bolivian diary',  
day by day, each day more tragic &  
everything so fucking inescapable I could not  
bring myself to read the last few pages  
& reach the one he never wrote.*

## The Collected Shorter Poems of Kenneth Rexroth

I am a man with no ambitions  
And few friends, wholly incapable  
Of making a living

**Kenneth Rexroth:** *The Advantages of Learning*

That quality. That white.

**Kenneth Rexroth:** *Phronesis*

In Aristotle's ethics (*phronesis*) is the complete  
excellence of the practical intelligence, the  
counterpart of *sophia* in the theoretical sphere.

*The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*

In another time  
he would spend long evenings reading  
the works of Juvenal & Pliny in the  
original Latin & later debate the authors  
through until morning about what he had read.  
For relaxation he would translate *tanka*,  
working from obscure & often anonymous  
scrolls & woodblock editions, a kind of literary  
*ukiyo-e*, poems of the floating world. He  
found a threefold pleasure in it — the shape  
of the poems & their calligraphy; the gradual  
unlocking of the subtleties of a culture not  
his own; the recognition of the inherent  
universality of it all. Some kind of renaissance  
man, as familiar with Gödel as he was with  
goshawks, as experienced in climbing mountains  
& describing their intricate geology  
as he was with discoursing upon the similarities  
that exist between all religions whether centred  
on one or many gods. & all the time enamoured  
of those twin daughters of Aristotle — Sophia  
with whom he shared his life, & Phronesis whom he  
desired more but was never able to bed. Twelve  
thousand lines to one, twelve to the other. It is  
the twelve that are the love song. Are the lemma.

## The Science Lesson

The constructs. Had been  
unaware that he carried them  
round with him until some small thing  
escaped & he had to put it back. Found  
the traces of them then, in finding  
that he did not know  
where that single item went.

Realised these were probably not  
things that came back at him  
out of a mirror. Still  
it was the first place he went looking.

He saw nothing in his reflection;  
but behind & beside him  
were dried flowers in a twist & an  
origami bird of folded foil. Also  
some Escher drawings  
which evoked the similar symmetries  
of the tiles of the Alhambra but without  
the strange loops. He recalled  
a photograph of that "square brutal fortress"  
in Bronowski's *The Ascent of Man*, the  
sky behind it turquoise. No clouds.

Thought Spain, thought music, wondered  
which version of the *Concierto de Aranjuez*  
he liked best. Remembered the  
first record he ever bought. Realised  
that he had grown up unaware  
of the Sierra Nevada on the  
opposite side of the world. There were  
more mountains in there somewhere  
plus rivers & the winter sea. Tamarind trees  
in North Queensland & the mouthfeel  
of a mango (though these came  
later). Silk — or was it cinnamon?  
Aretha Franklin singing. A lion statuette  
from Sri Lanka. The sound of bees.

It was his first lesson in the nature of constructs.

## The Masters

1.  
Is the Master you follow Basho or Bosch?  
Is your glass half empty or half full?

If it's Basho then empty your glass  
& your mind along with it. But if it's Bosch  
then you'll probably need to augment it  
with a whole lot of things. Maraschino  
cherries, coloured ice cubes, maybe one  
of those little umbrellas. & that's just for  
starters. There'll be so many additions  
by the time you've finished that a  
single glass could never hold them all.

2.  
I am often told that what is left out  
can be just as important as what's  
included. &, moreover, I adhere to the  
precept, unlike those Flemish Masters who  
include so much in their paintings that it's  
impossible to tell if anything is missing.  
I mean, who'd notice the absence of the  
kiwi in Bosch's *Garden of Earthly Delights*,  
painted several centuries before New Zealand  
was discovered by Europeans, if it  
wasn't there? & who but a New Zealander  
would notice the damn thing anyway  
in that mosaic of activity? But Hieronymous  
manages to give it the right balance, the right  
to be there, even though it took a couple  
of hundred years for that imagining to be  
realised, & meant ignoring his patron  
pleading from the studio door for  
more naked lovers, fewer flightless birds.

## Inside & Out

I distrust elevators, am made  
uneasy by the way they miss out floors  
& I have to go up to 50 & come  
back down again to get to 47.  
Am totally turned off being told  
by an artificial unfeminine voice  
that I'm on the ground  
when the display shows 4. What am I  
missing out on here? I get around it  
by using alleyways, entering  
through the back door or the basement carpark  
& coming up the fire stairs. It keeps me fit  
but it keeps me in the dark. Which is  
why I am unaware that the moon  
is dying above me, presenting  
as a dull orange crescent  
forced downwards by the outlined  
ball of ashes that records its burning.  
Is falling, & not about to stop at any floor.

## Lunch in Glebe

The nose & mouth of Akhenaten opened the week, a postcard out of The Metropolitan Museum of Art sent to me from New York by Michele Leggott on her way to or from a writers' festival in Germany. The televised death of Allen Ginsberg in his apartment in New York, at the end of a documentary on his life, rounded it off. & somewhere in between an email from John Parkyn, now living in Mexico but going to New York in a week's time, bringing me up to date with what people are doing two suburbs away from me &, seemingly apropos of nothing, telling how I had introduced him to the work of Lorca.

In the same logging on I discover through a fortuitous combination of keywords that there is a review of *The right foot of the giant* in the latest issue of *Landfall*. Search the on-line catalogues of the local university libraries to see who holds the journal, find it listed at Sydney University, go there on Saturday & track it down. See that it's by Ian Wedde so skim it with some trepidation but it's a favourable review. I photocopy it on the only machine that still takes cash & leave; & on the way back to the car drop in at Gleebooks, the first time I've been there since the launch of Nigel Roberts' book six years ago. I buy *The Magic Mountain* for Lauren & a \$5 book of translations of Apollinaire for myself.

I'm feeling pretty good by now so a little further up the road stop off to have lunch — two sandwiches & a flat white coffee — & read the review again. Am flattered by the association with LeRoi Jones, bemused by the congruence of having lunch whilst reading references to Frank O'Hara's *Lunch Poems* & to O'Hara having lunch with LeRoi in New York & wonder, apropos of everything, if it was Lorca's *Poet in New York* that triggered John's memory.

& my memory is triggered by  
Ian's comments on my Robert Desnos poem  
of a much earlier email from Michele  
in which she tells me of going out to buy  
a book of poems by Desnos after  
reading that poem. I momentarily  
wonder if this is to be my lot  
in life, an introduction agency for dead  
poets, with today's special Apollinaire.

But the thought recedes as some of those  
with whom I've shared the week turn up  
to share my lunch. Frank O'Hara &  
LeRoi Jones arrive together, are  
joined by Desnos & John Parkyn  
& Ian Wedde & Apollinaire & Lorca  
& Thomas Mann & Nigel Roberts. At  
first it's a bit of a boys' club; but before too long  
there are so many people having lunch  
with me in Glebe that when Akhenaten  
shows up there is no room for him  
inside. I see him from my table, face  
pressed against the glass, nose & mouth  
prominent. I buy a disposable camera  
from some Korean tourists who have a  
duty-free bag full of them & take a  
photo. Shall print it off later & send  
it to Michele, to open up her week.

## The Right Foot of the Giant

One thing remains —  
where did the right foot of the giant  
find to come to earth again?  
*In Passing* (1964)

It's taken forty years, but I've finally found the answer. In a vanity search of the Web I come across a mention of the right foot of the giant on the home page of some quasi-Egyptian Rite out of Ireland calling itself the Secrets of Isis & listing amongst its sources of inspiration *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* & the *Bhagavad Gita* as well as a generous serving of Greek mythology. Up until now I'd always considered **World Music** the most grab-bag name for a collection of disparity but this is equally amusing. & yet bits catch the eye when taken out of context. The part of the ritual which contains the giant takes place whilst the constellation Scorpio is predominant in the night sky, & that's my star sign. The foot is described as resting on the head of a serpent, just like the universe in *Pipe Dream*, another poem of mine. But taken overall it is a theological fricassée made prescient by the presence of sufficient material of sufficient vagueness to ensure there'll always be a measure of personal relevance able to be found in it. One thing remains — to pause instead of passing & belatedly set the right foot of my giant down so forcefully it triggers shock waves that blow the borrowers away but leave the library intact.

## Now's the Time

when I was so young and had so much to learn.

**Miles Davis:** *The Autobiography*

The reed of Charlie Parker's sax squeaks from the car cassette player as I drive down the motorway towards the city. It is a Miles Davis compilation, his early work, old 78s that have been "digitally remastered"; & this the oldest track on the album, *Now's the Time*, by Charlie Parker's Reeboppers. Caught up by the rhythm of it, my thoughts move in a different direction to the one in which I am driving. Away from the exam I am about to sit, where I will be expected to display my erudition by writing page after page on management processes & systems, & measuring that supposed exposition of knowledge against the ability of these musicians to express so much in three minutes. I am thinking of the friend who ended a letter with an apology for its length, regretting that she did not have the time to make it short. Of Borges whose *Ficciones* each compressed into a few pages what most others would take volumes to express. & of the Japanese black-ink painters who let the viewer's heart fill in the outlines. Then the toll booth brings me back to the now of it. Parker drops in a phrase from *Willow, weep for me* just as I drop my dollar fifty into the basket; & as I drive out the other side we separate. The musicians are back on 52nd Street creating history with their pre-vinyl haiku as I merge with the traffic flow again, an indistinguishable part of what my textbooks describe as an infinite population whose arrival at the toll gates followed a Poisson probability distribution, & whose service times were exponentially distributed.

But what it says is that our youth has gone.

**Amiri Baraka:** *When Miles Split*

## **From the Pristine Vocabulary**

Hidden away  
we probably all have  
a cache of  
special words we  
rarely get to use  
if ever. I am  
delighted, then, when  
I go outside for a cigarette  
& find a quincunx  
of olive-backed orioles  
perched on  
the rotary clothesline.

## **A Small Stone for Alan Brunton's Cairn**

It is the last Saturday in June, well into the southern winter, the wind coming off unseen mountains to bring the big chill up to the door of the backroom where I sit at the computer, the cat on the stool beside me & the hissing heater keeping us company. I am surrounded by books, many of which I have read over & over, as I replay favourite tracks from tapes & CDs — Youssou N'Dour & Neneh Cherry singing *7 Seconds*, Miles Davis' *Time after Time*. I am surrounded by instruments of memory.

I am surrounded by words, many of which I use over & over, time after time. There are also those of which I was enamoured but never got to use, save all together, in the one poem. & there are some that I have kept hidden, in pristine state, mainly adjectives, because I never found the proper noun to give them to.

I am isolated by instruments of memory. Even when the computer is turned off Michele's email is retained as an image burnt on the eyes as the light departs. "He's gone." & the sound system is the one on which I listened to the *Big Smoke* tape & heard Alan's voice for the first time, was caught by it & drew from out of the secret stash to give to him

**mellifluous.**

Isolate, desolate, surrounded by instruments of memory, I will read Michele's email over & over even if I never see it again; & though I retain the sound & the sensation of the tape, I know that when the wind dies down I will play it once more, to listen to that voice again, as sweet as honey.

**December 6, 2002**

Fish & chips for tea, cricket on the radio.  
A new moon with the old one sitting in its lap.  
That's what my father used to say  
when he saw it like this; & even as a bare crescent  
he would turn whatever silver coins he had  
over in his pocket & bow  
seven times in its direction to ensure  
fortune favoured us in the coming month.

Across the Tasman, in another time zone,  
the Memorial Concert for Alan will  
just be finishing. I've seen the program. Eight minutes  
for this performer, five for another. All  
spelled out, such temporal precision.  
Hope it went off okay,  
wish I could have been there to be part of it.

Though in a way I was. My poem for Alan  
went up on the website last night. First time  
I've looked at it for five months. Still like what  
it says although a small part of its construction  
irritates. I want to change a couple of words, feel  
a bit guilty that I do, engage myself in  
some sort of internal debate over whether you should  
leave what was written as a reaction to something  
as it was first written or revise it later  
when the critic kicks in & kicks out  
some of the emotion. Decide to change my  
paper copy & leave the electronic version as it is.

Lauren should be home soon so I  
turn on the carport light, find five minutes afterwards  
that an armada of Christmas beetles has invaded  
the illuminated space, arriving out of nowhere  
to throw themselves in a kamikaze frenzy  
against the walls, the concrete, the cat's  
water bowl. A prototype clone army —  
such fanaticism, such uniformity, all  
the same size, the same bronze colour.

Confronted with this display of karmic inevitability  
I wonder about the power of my father's  
eccentricities. Would Alan have been safe  
if he'd carried silver guilders &  
turned them over in his pocket as he bowed  
to the moon? From what I know about him

nobody would have thought  
the actions strange. Don't know if he  
would have shared the superstition.

So cold when I was told the news of his  
death. So hot now. Bush fires ring the city,  
fanned by the same winds that brought  
that big chill earlier. Two hours ago,  
as the concert was beginning, a procession  
of helicopters were doing the round trip  
to the latest fire, off to catch their  
15 seconds of flame for the evening  
news bulletins. An hour later, at intermission,  
with twilight making it too dangerous  
to fly at the low height necessary in its  
current role as a dive bombing super watertanker,  
the giant skycrane nicknamed Elvis  
after its home port of Memphis, Tennessee  
rumbled overhead returning to its temporary base  
& six hours of overnight maintenance. Now

the concert is over & I am alone with the beetles.  
I put one of the Modern Jazz Quartet's recordings  
of the *Concierto de Aranjuez* on the CD  
player, am reminded that I'd always wondered  
why Chris Bourke used their *Django* in the  
*Big Smoke* broadcasts. It's fifties music after all.

Tomorrow is the anniversary of Pearl Harbour.  
Think I'll celebrate it by putting together  
a ragtag armada & launching a pre-emptive strike  
against the Americans & their weapons  
of mass destruction. Take Elvis along, liberate  
the *Spirit of St Louis* & the Wright brothers' *Flyer*  
from the Smithsonian — a delightful irony, &  
I have the floor plans on a T-shirt. Then there's  
the *Gossamer Albatross* that crossed the Atlantic  
under pedal power, the hotair balloon  
in which Steve Fossey circumnavigated  
the globe, da Vinci's flying machines. An airshow  
for Alan. Unprogrammed. Unrehearsed.

Then again, tomorrow in the USA will be today.  
Or maybe it's today that is tomorrow. I can handle  
the time zone differences in hours ahead or behind  
but the days confuse me. It's why I've  
always thought JFK was assassinated on November 23.  
I decide to wait one more day. Then I will act.

## **One Thousand & One, Two Thousand & Two**

I get strung out writing  
didactic poems. They  
swallow me up, & I never  
seem able to achieve  
resolution. The new year  
is half-way over before I  
realise it. By the time  
I work out if the smoke  
comes from fireworks or  
bushfires the rainy season  
has begun. The lightning  
that punctuates it frightens  
me, but I manage to calm  
myself by counting the  
number of seconds it takes  
for the thunder to arrive.

## **The artist in residence**

Structure is easy. Bits  
of board, the occasional nail, string  
if nothing else comes  
easily to hand. A centre post;  
or strategic posts with a hole  
for the smoke to escape  
through. Palm fronds plaited  
to form the roof. No manuals  
necessary. Merely the human form  
& a box to keep it in. Alive.  
Optional windows. A necessary door.

## Chaos Theory Does Hollywood

Have just watched *Blade Runner* on DVD, enjoyed it as I always do even though a small part of me sits there running a reality check. It's the risk you take when writing about the future; having it reviewed at a point that is closer to the concept than the conception. Pan-Am didn't even make it to 2001 let alone the time this movie is set. The arse has fallen out of the yen & though Sony still owns Columbia not everyone speaks Japanese & most of the noodle bars are owned by immigrants from Vietnam or Mainland China. Two days ago I bought an album by Youssou N'Dour & the next day Senegal surprised by beating France in the opening round of soccer's World Cup. Maybe that's the way to influence the universe. Don't just make the movie, change something small in the real world & eventually the film may be seen as *cinema vérité* by the time its time has come. Forgo those fastfood franchised tie-ins. Instead give everyone a butterfly to kill.

## **Flirting**

*for Eileen Tabios*

It is a dance in  
two parts. Is ritual.

Pop song from the  
Forties. A trip to the moon.

The bull, the matador.  
Dance, ritual, death.

Whose death? *A las  
cinco de la tarde?*

Usually the bull. Sometimes  
the matador. Provocation

can have unexpected results.  
A procession of flagellants

passes by. I am drunk on the  
smell of fermented mangoes.

Red sand blood white.  
What colour are your eyes?

So the distances are Galatea  
and one does fall in love  
**Charles Olson:** *The Distances*

## The Large Glass

We have folded our tents & rolled north. To Rockhampton on the Tropic of Capricorn, a city one per cent the size of the one where we've spent the last thirty years. It is nominally mid-winter, but I'm sitting outside in shorts & a short-sleeved shirt wondering how I'll cope when summer comes. The sky at night is vivid black & it seems that we've been given a whole new set of stars to be guided by. I'd previously placed no faith in the heavenly maps drawn up by the ancients. Two millennia of fuzzy interpretation had already worn them out before they were further dimmed by the light pollution that a city of four million people generates. But now I see what they were getting at as I sit beneath Jimi Hendrix' guitar & pick out in a more distant quadrant Madonna's pointy bra, Man Ray's Iron.

## The Accidental Intersection

for Daniela Stehlik

Plain beginnings. I am here  
with Lauren, dropping off a bar fridge  
that we'd bought on special  
for her office. Down the hall  
you are packing for your move  
across the continent, the room full  
of unsealed cartons. My eye  
isolates a book by Umberto Eco  
on top of one of them; I am surprised  
to see it here. Not in this  
specific place — I do not know you,  
know your tastes — but in the wider space  
that is Rockhampton. It took the  
local bookshop six weeks to bring in  
*Baudolino* for me & I forget  
how many times I had to spell  
the author's name, the book's  
title. (Alberto? Echo? Bordello?)  
I make a comment on it. You spontaneously  
give it to me. An unwrapped gift; but the panel  
from Bosch's *Temptation of St Anthony*  
that decorates the front cover  
is better than any wrapping. Triggered  
by some spark, an arc in the air  
that adds to them, impetuous presents  
are so often the best. & *Serendipities*  
is such an appropriate title in this  
happy & accidental intersection where I  
have gained from your generosity.

## Pi, Pythagoras & I

Given that  
you can determine  
the length of  
any side of a  
right-angled triangle  
by the fact that the  
square on the hypotenuse  
is equal to  
the sum of the squares  
on the other  
two sides  
& calculate  
the area  
under a curve  
by integration provided  
the equation  
of the line that the  
curve follows  
is known  
or be tested to see  
if you are pre-disposed  
to diabetes or ms  
or even cancer  
by the make-up of  
particular genes &  
the use of  
instantaneous  
sequencing machines  
why can't I  
by assigning weights  
to all those things  
I love or hate or  
am indifferent to  
arrive at a formula  
that can easily  
determine who  
I am & what is pre-  
destined for me?

kurosawa movies with  
mifune in them tropical  
thunderstorms self-  
propagated macadamia trees  
ready to drop their fruit  
driving long distances up &  
down the coastline little  
frogs that cling to the  
security screens bach the  
sun just before it goes  
behind the hills lemon drink  
night skies full of stars the  
poems of frank o'hara living  
with lauren certain species of  
birds that I find exciting  
because of how they look  
how they sound fruit bats  
tasty cheese umberto eco a  
whiter shade of pale heard  
for the first time broadcast  
on a.m. radio 1700  
kilometres away & still  
sounding great despite the  
static stone gardens  
meerkats overgrown  
gardens my cat certain  
tokens that were given or  
found & have acquired a  
patina of magic ray charles  
& aretha franklin together is  
a duet i would really like to  
hear whales south park  
black-ink paintings with their  
zen over- & undertones the  
sound & sight of the sea at  
all times but especially when  
it's stormy vietnamese food  
fifty years of miles davis  
unseen trains & seen  
mountains the croak of frogs  
below the window rené  
magritte a new moon with  
the old one sitting in its lap  
the chime of bellbirds along  
isolate forest roads. an  
extreme distrust of right-  
wing amerika

## **a is for absinthe**

ambition is the cruellest month  
bravado comes creeping on little cat feet  
courage & the slithy toves did gyre & gimble  
death spreadeagled in the empty air of existence  
ethics has a man in it. he is transparent  
fame is glazed by rain water  
greed considered as a  
hunger of semi-precious stones  
inventiveness we trust  
justice comme je suis  
karma just happened to come along  
liberty at five in the afternoon  
minestrone wears a glove on which his crimes cannot be read  
nature died in the church & was buried along with her name. nobody came  
optimism loses all the time  
prejudice is poisonous but pretty in autumn  
quietness bent over a blue guitar  
rapaciousness is no country for old men  
sleep in whom I dream angels  
tension was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair  
unhappiness saw him disembark in the unanimous night  
vanishing species on the left hand side of the beach like a motorcycle club  
water was ours before we were the land's  
xenophobia breaks where no sun shines  
youth your rooster crows at the break of dawn  
zodiac signs with few friends & no ambitions

## **The Schwarzvogel *Ficcione***

Elsebet Schwarzvogel, consumptive  
third daughter of the fourth  
Grand Duke of Lower Saxony,  
is reputed to have been  
so enraptured by the resonance  
of the cello she gave instructions  
& a large sum of her father's money  
that on her death her intestines  
were to be taken out & stretched  
& strung on a quintet of instruments  
she had had especially made  
by those craftsmen from Cremona.  
She also commissioned small works  
from some of the greatest composers  
of the time, & asked, without  
the accompaniment of money, that  
they be performed on each  
anniversary of her passing. Sadly  
nothing now is left except the tale  
& a fragment of music  
that emerged in the 1930s as  
*Bye Bye Blackbird* & was  
also destined for erasure until re-  
vitalised by this recording made,  
in a nice twist of synchronicity,  
on the tercentenary of her death  
by that great quintet of Miles Davis  
from the early fifties, with Coltrane  
on tenor & Philly Joe Jones driving it  
along. Close your eyes. Listen for  
the cello breathing in the background.

## Serendipity

They were alive and they spoke to me!

**Henry Miller:** *The Books in my Life*

No matter how large the library,

the book I wanted was never in

or else it was forbidden me.

**Henry Miller:** *The Time of the Assassins*

Years ago, in the belief  
that it was a book of  
short stories by Arthur Miller  
whom I knew of as the author  
of *Death of a Salesman* & the  
husband of Marilyn Monroe,  
I picked up a paperback  
from amongst the detritus  
left by the previous tenants  
of a house into which friends  
of mine were moving, & was half-  
way through it before I realised  
it was by a different Miller, first  
name Henry, whom I didn't  
know existed until then.

The writing was alive & it  
spoke to me! & the  
titles! Someone  
who could come up with  
*The Alcoholic Veteran with the Washboard Cranium*  
was someone I wanted to  
read more of. But life  
imitated art. Many of Miller's  
books were banned; most  
of those that weren't  
were out of print; & I could find  
nothing more of his until, in a  
second-hand bookshop,  
I unearthed *The Time of the Assassins*,  
about some French poet, first  
name Arthur, second name Rimbaud,  
whom I also didn't know  
existed until then.

## A Season in Hell

Came down by abyssinian camel train,  
rimbaud riding shotgun & wearing a  
sweatshirt emblazoned with the head  
of de sade & the enscribed legend:  
'voici le temps des ASSASSINS'.

Came down  
through somaliland, heading for harar &  
addis adiba, stopping over in various  
villages where we fucked the young boys  
given us nightly by the local chieftains.

Sold some guns / bought bhang / drank  
absinthe / fought camels / got fucked by  
the local chieftain. Young boys came down  
on donkeys, de sade came down with his prick  
up the arse of a male goat, rimbaud  
came down with malaria & raved for days.

Sold more guns to an enemy village, but  
salved what little conscience we had left  
by acting as neutral nurses in the ensuing  
battle, crucifying the dying or tying  
their limbs to camels which we whipped in  
opposite directions. Gathered up the guns  
left by the dead, smoked bhang, pulled each  
other off & came over icons of the coptic  
saints. Drank absinthe till we stank /  
of wormwood.

The sand burned our eyes & throats, & even  
the prettiest of the young boys couldn't  
put the fires out. Sold the re-acquired guns  
to those left living at exorbitant prices —  
many slaves, much ivory; even myrrh &  
frankincense & gold which we bargained for off  
three senile fools who'd got lost while searching  
for some star. Fucked them also. & their  
camels. Then set the slaves to diddling  
themselves with elephant-tusk dildoes. Went  
to sleep dreaming of some place called bethlehem.

Moved off on  
sudanese asses, me riding shotgun, rimbaud  
tied to the leading donkey with another  
bout of fever. Fell partway off so his head  
traced runes in the sand. Raved about quinine

but couldn't find a rhyme to go with it. Up-  
right by khartoum, so we went looking for the mahdi  
& instead found verlaine who was / looking for the  
harbour. Three days spent drinking with him,  
until he suddenly pulled a gun & shot rimbaud  
in the wrist. It healed quickly — he always  
was a bad shot — but we'd had enough by then, &  
consigned him to the Nile & a blowjob from a  
crocodile that left him screaming for his wife  
& mother-in-law. Gave him a good funeral, though —  
the barge he sat in, like a burnish'd throne,  
burn'd on the water; purple the sails, & so perfumed  
that we saved on the incense.

But even in Cairo we could  
still smell it, so we moved east. Waited for the  
Red Sea to open, then on to Aden to arrange another  
arms consignment. The night spent in a whorehouse,  
& off on a dhow before dawn, bound for Zanzibar.

## The Armory Show

Flying in from Adelaide  
on a Friday evening, caught in the  
usual end of week holding pattern  
above this busiest of airports. It has  
been raining & the roads below  
are shiny black because of it. Long  
chains of car lights animate  
the electric calligraphy, each block an  
ideogram: & in the complexity I pick out  
runic patterns, crop circles, fractals.  
It is a continuum of mythic symbology  
that elates me. At home, a week or so  
later, I am drawn outside by an  
ever-increasing roar. See nothing at first;  
but then remember an item in the morning newspaper  
about security preparations for the  
coming Olympics so search within the noise  
to find six Black Hawk helicopters, in tight  
formation, flying low & without lights,  
following the line of the motorway into  
the city. They are almost invisible, taking on form  
only because of the cloud behind & even then  
indeterminate, like fish in a river. All  
previous contact I have had with them  
has been at one remove, just as their  
entry here is filtered through a press release  
where they are presented as protectors.  
But as eyes accustom to the night  
the angularity that defines their purpose  
becomes more clear. They have  
an obscenity about them I had not  
previously been aware of; & though  
they come across in this environment more  
as classical mythic archetype it is easy now  
to understand how they became the feedstock  
for modern urban myth. Above / below, where  
I saw animation / they see threat. Which is  
how I finally see them. There is  
no longer any script. As they move  
across the sky the myths dissolve.

## 9/13

This written for the future,  
something to look back on, to see  
what my thoughts were  
at the time. A commentary on what  
is now before me, how you feast  
on the dead, play replay after replay,  
from different angles, rewritten  
as choreography, a Hollywood blockbuster  
with the producers wanting to make sure  
the audience gets its money's worth. It is  
what you've come to expect; but most  
movies are cleaner, have stars that are  
paid more for their one performance  
than this whole episode would have cost  
to carry out. Think on it. Brood on the  
implications of what you've learnt  
in the two days since. The stand-in pilots  
had work visas, lived next door,  
supported themselves & contributed to  
the economy of the country  
they have just put on notice. The airlines  
paid for & provided the bombs.  
The extras paid for their own parts.  
There was no need for rehearsal.

## **Causa Belli**

The waiters on the  
Trans-Continental Railway  
each speak at least three  
languages & display  
their linguistic skills by not  
saying very much at all. They  
hover around The President,  
daring him to order some  
unfamiliar item from the menu  
so they can pretend  
not to understand what it is  
he wants, ask him to point  
it out, then enunciate  
the name of the dish with  
precise & perfect intonation  
& such an undercurrent  
of disdain that he ends up  
meekly ordering a soda water  
& a club sandwich to go.

## All Things Bright &

On an otherwise uneventful day  
the sun turns an angry  
shade of burgundy, birds  
fall screaming to the ground  
& the whole cicada universe  
rises in a stirring rendition of  
*Bohemian Rhapsody*. There is  
an underlying humming  
which is unsettling everyone.

In this land where lemmings  
are unknown, it falls to the  
lemurs to be the first to throw  
themselves en masse off The Gap,  
the local focal point of ultimate  
reconciliation for those for whom  
the parts of their lives were  
previously irreconcilable. Llamas  
& meerkats watch in trepidation  
as the humming grows louder.  
Rising from a bunker deep below  
an organic mink farm in the Rockies  
what started off sounding like some  
tantric mantra has finally resolved  
into a tuneless anthem. After many  
false beginnings the content now  
seems settled on. ***There is an axis  
of evil that threatens the world.  
The Homeland must be protected.***

Armed men stream forth to make  
it happen. They are adorned with  
blackened faces & head mikes, symbolic  
decoration to show just how far beyond  
the godless underdogs this nation  
under god has progressed in a  
sesqui-century — all the way  
from minstrel shows to Madonna  
concerts. They roam pro-  
claiming they are on a holy  
mission, a jihad to rid the world of  
something so insidious it cannot  
be seen, can only be identified  
by scanning equipment that picks up  
aberrations in the brain's alpha  
waves. Billions are dead before

it is realised the equipment is so imprecise that any brain activity is considered to be aberrant.

When no one else remains  
the missionaries turn upon themselves  
fearing that they too may have been  
contaminated. Leaving behind  
only the cicadas continuing to work  
their way through the Queen songbook;  
the mink who, finally freed from  
enforced separation & a diet of  
vegetables & vitamin supplements,  
are frantically fucking their tiny tits off  
as they prepare to inherit & ultimately  
overrun the earth; & someone somewhere  
saying "See, Gaia. I promised you  
a fur coat, & Daddy always delivers."

## George W's Language Primer

He put words in my mouth.

I do not like the taste  
of them, I said. Certainly  
I have used them all before  
but they feel strange  
in this context, have no real  
meaning to me. This is not  
how I would arrange them.

Spit them out & let me  
look at them again, he said.

So I did. Out they came —  
American terrorists fucking.  
Arab mother burning.  
Anti-hate flag.

An advisor hurried up &  
whispered in his ear. Let me re-  
arrange them for you said  
George W. when the advisor  
had finished. Swallow them  
again, taste them, roll them around  
in your mouth & see how they feel  
now, how they sound. Say  
them over & over, like one  
of those Buddhist monterey's or  
manta rays or whatever  
they are called. Remember too  
that you are either for us or  
against us, a friend or an enemy —  
there is no middle ground.

I put his words in my mouth again.  
I tried what he said. Tasted them  
as they came out. This time  
they had a ring to them that I could learn  
to live with. Hate mother-fucking anti-  
American flag-burning Arab terrorists.

I tried them again & they felt even  
better the second time around. Now  
I use them all the time. I am proud  
to be called a friend of the President .

## The Road to Damascus

What does not change / is the will to change  
**Charles Olson:** *The Kingfishers*

There is shouting in the street.  
Children's voices. It seems  
too late for them to be out &  
about. I cannot help myself. I go  
to the window even though  
the television screen at the other end  
of the room is showing the downward  
plunge of missiles, the subsequent  
eruptions. No colour as we normally  
think of it. Instead the washed-out  
green & white of night vision lenses.

When birds dive for food  
part of their flight inevitably follows  
the same parabolic curve that missiles  
take. Kingfishers start from a  
branch above the river. Flashes of real  
colour as they plunge. The water  
broken & then broken again with the  
upward thrust. They take only  
what is needed when needed, return  
by the same path to the same spot  
save for the time spent under water.  
Would that missiles would do the same.

## The Return of the Hapsburgs

Take the old shotgun  
out of the cupboard & give it  
a thorough inspection. You feel safe  
with it around but it's been there for so long  
it has probably rusted. It's time for an  
upgrade. Think how much safer  
a well-oiled Uzi would make you feel.

\*

It's time to take down all the crucifixions.  
They come across like early Mapplethorpes  
before he discovered foreign objects. Put them  
in museums. These days it's  
gospel halls that outdo shopping malls, all  
praise the lord & pass the collection plate.

\*

Burn the balaclavas & the  
makeshift body armour, the placards  
extolling anti-globalisation. What  
makes you think you can win  
by using force against force? You're amateurs  
playing power games against self-interested  
Masters. There are other stratagems  
& the accessories are still there  
in the bottom drawer  
longing to be used again. Take to the streets  
wearing ankhs & amulets. The time  
is once more right for. Dancing.  
It's one of those things you don't forget.

\*

Terminator Arnie's one-man army  
is on the march to Sacramento, the victory celebrations  
compered by a talkshow host. Maybe  
the whole set-up is the lead-in  
to another Jay Leno one-liner. The comparisons  
are with Reagan, but he was just a fuckwit  
puppet. It's Jesse The Body Ventura  
who's got a lot to answer for.

## **Their Given Names**

*for Chris Murray*

If we wanted or  
needed to, we could  
find out the names  
of not just the nine  
that prompted your poems  
but all the coalition personnel  
who have died in Iraq. We  
won't, however, see any  
TV footage of the  
ceremonial choreography  
when their bodies are  
returned to the States –  
the visual documentation  
of the nightly disassembly line  
that was the daily dead  
coming back from Vietnam  
put paid to that forever.  
We do see footage  
of the unscripted funerals of  
Iraqi civilians, some of it  
anyway. There aren't  
enough camera crews around  
to cover them all. Nor enough  
time. But try finding out  
their numbers & their names  
in the sanitised anonymity  
of acceptable collateral damage  
a category whose equation  
seems to have no upper limit  
unless we give it one. & that  
won't come until we  
give them back their given  
names. & write about them.

## **Pelican Dreaming**

Later he would walk down to the lagoon to look for the pelicans. They were his touchstone, the way their solid bodies gave substance to the landscape, a centre to it. Only when they found him would he return.



## **Mark Young**

Recently published work includes a collaborative e-chap with Jukka-Pekka Kervinen, *The Oracular Sonnets* (Meritage Press) & an e-book, calligraphies, from xPressed. He maintains two weblogs, *pelican dreaming* & *mark young's Series Magritte*. He has an author's page at the New Zealand electronic poetry centre.

email: [l.m.young@bigpond.com](mailto:l.m.young@bigpond.com)

