



Galleries and Drift:  
Mapping Undermined Landscapes

# Galleries & Drift

## Mapping Undermined Landscapes

Submitted by Pauline Liu-Devereux to the University of Exeter as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English, January 2011.

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Pauline Liu-Devereux.

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## ABSTRACT

This is a creative/critical project, a collection of narratives inspired by critical discourse that map a local landscape and chart a personal topography. As a result of interdisciplinary study, particularly in the area of cultural geography and map making, I found new ways to explore ideas about Cornwall's heritage, her undermined landscape and expand upon issues raised in my MA dissertation. Recognising the instability and partiality of maps provided insight and mapping became method as newly revealed pathways and subtly shifting perspectives inspired fresh narratives which challenge stereotypical images of Cornwall and reveal the sometimes dark realities of rurality.

The more personal narratives in this collection reveal a different undermined landscape: ideas about romantic constructions and inheritance led to explorations of nostalgia, memory and identity. Life events became life writing and many of these narratives reflect a search for direction and for a missing person: the artist I once was. But there are other disappearances in these narratives and the final chapter gives an account of family events that had to be recorded but which raise ethical questions that life writers cannot ignore. We must take responsibility for the way we write about vulnerable subjects and recognise what this writing tells us about ourselves: that, as Nancy K. Miller has suggested, by exposing our lives to others through life writing, we too become vulnerable subjects.

The essay accompanying these narratives reflects upon process and finds ways of giving an account of the writer writing. It uncovers contemporary theories that are embedded in the narratives and I describe it as an orouboros, a creature that continuously eats its own tail. Like the text it subjects to scrutiny, the essay is a life narrative, an autobiographical act that merges creative and critical thinking and this amalgamation has been my aim since my studies began.

## GALLERIES & DRIFT

### Mapping Undermined Landscapes.

In 1963, I was twelve and my grandfather was sixty-two and under-manager of a coal mine on the Lancashire moors. He helped to sink the mine shaft when he was thirteen and now his job was to close the mine, to remove the pumps and flood it. He took a small party, which included my mother and me, underground to show us where he had spent his working life. We could only visit the upper levels because the lower levels of the mine were already filling with water. The thing I remember most about that day, apart from the walk into the blackness down the sloping drift, is dark water. I remember a heavy steel door in a wall and I remember standing on tip toe to see through a spyhole; I remember the light on my helmet illuminating a path across an expanse of dark water. This image returns to me in dreams but I don't believe my memories any more. I don't think that tiny light could shine so brightly and I don't believe any door could have held back the weight of water. Now there is no-one left alive to ask, I think I might have conjured this image from my imagination and it has become part of my personal mythology.

I have chosen to begin this critical essay with an autobiographical account of a trip to a mine because, as a life writer, I recognise that the essay, like the text it reflects upon, is autobiographical. On the visit to the mine, I travelled backwards, on a journey with family into family history, via a way of work dating from the beginning of the twentieth century and deeper, through geological time to arrive at a landscape which may or may not be fictional. This journey into the heart of things is a metaphor for the experience of the life writer writing and mirrors the process of memory mining and myth making which provide the foundations for creating life narratives. The essay explores the ways memories are retrieved and how, in these juxtaposed fragments of experience, the creative imagination identifies patterns and creates new mythologies. It considers the difficulties of giving an account of this process and turns to other disciplines to provide a method. While mining provides a metaphor for memory work, cultural geography and contemporary theories about map making provide a framework for describing the creative critical interaction which generates the narrative and begins to expose the theories embedded in its structure.

The autobiographical 'I', though already a presence in this critical essay, was never intended as the focus of the creative project. Rather than to explore a personal topography, the narrative set out to create a portrait of the idealised, but undermined landscape of post industrial Cornwall. My earlier research focused on the effects of Cornwall's pervasive romantic construction, which emerged from the need to promote tourism and has been promulgated by the visual arts, drama and literature. As a result, visitors to the area remain blissfully unaware that, until recently, Cornwall received EU Objective One funding. This marks Cornwall, an escapist idyll for outsiders, as one of the most impoverished areas in Europe. It was the idea of a fragile landscape, an arcadia undermined by a dark reality that this project set out to explore and portray. Since the end of tin mining and the decline in fishing revenue Cornwall's economy has relied on tourism, but the arts provide an alternative and increasingly significant source of income. The abstract art of the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century St.Ives School achieved world recognition and this was confirmed by the opening of Tate St.Ives in 1993. Frequently inspired by the Cornish landscape, these abstracted depictions of moorland and harbour contribute to the romantic construction in that they present aesthetically pleasing, sanitised and essentially, depopulated landscapes. More recent and much less potent artistic output has been designed to appeal to the tourist market, while others promote stereotypical ideas of Celtic otherness through drama and fiction. As an artist returned to academic study, no longer satisfied with presenting pleasing pictorial accounts of domesticity, I began to look for contemporary art which more accurately reflected Cornwall's challenging reality and my own intellectual interests. When I embarked on this PhD project I intended that this art would create points of reference, signposts in a text which set out to explore ideas about landscape, place and identity and offer an alternative narrative of Cornwall.

The creative writing in this dissertation does not intend to evoke a particular response but rather to promote an exploration of ideas, therefore, this essay will not analyse the text of *Galleries and Drift* for meaning but will describe the process of its making and the ways that the project evolved. The focus of the dissertation eventually shifted and later chapters began to explore a more personal landscape and this is the prerogative of the life writer caught up in life events. Original research began with contemporary artists who were relating to landscape in interesting ways and also, not unnaturally, looked to writers whose writing explicated contemporary notions of place. As a result, this essay will discuss methods of narrative construction employed by W.G.Seald in *Rings of Saturn* and by the Australian academic and

writer Stephen Muecke, whose *No Road Bitumen All the Way* (1997) is a seminal work of ficto criticism. Also in relation to ideas of place explored in the dissertation, the essay will examine methods employed by psychogeographers, briefly interrogate theories concerning perception and contest phenomenological approaches to landscape and the environment. Later sections of the essay acknowledge the increasingly autobiographical nature of the dissertation and turn to literary theory and life writing theory and the contemporary discourse about identity and displacement to reflect upon my motivations and upon the complicated ethical issues raised by writing a life narrative. The essay begins by recognising the challenges that providing a critical discourse on one's own creative practice presents.

In 2008, in *TEXT*, an Australian journal that provides a forum for the discussion of creative writing within academic institutions, Camilla Nelson stated that creative writing, like other practice based disciplines, lacked a 'critical framework capable of dealing with the concept of making'. Nelson quotes Stephen Muecke, who, in a workshop on practice as research held at the University of Technology, Sydney in 2007, suggested that, for students who are not providing commentary on the work of others but focussing on their own methods of 'production and assemblage', there is a need to develop a 'productive, post critical research vocabulary'. Muecke went on: 'We will be tempted then, instead of mining the text for meanings, to follow and analyse the experience of the writer writing and the reader reading'. Nelson defines this method as 'forging a body of knowledge through practice and about process...to articulate what it means to understand the world and the text from the ground of production' (2). As previously suggested, the focus of this essay is on the experience of the writer writing and it is not the text that will be mined for meaning but the process.

The mining process provides many metaphors for a (the) work of memory. As an alternative to a shaft, which plunges to lower levels, the drift is a gentle incline to the tunnels and galleries where the workings are. In my grandfather's day, the seam was drilled and dynamited at the face, then the excavated ore was dragged up the drift to the surface to be processed. In a coal mine this process cleanses the coal of impurities and coal is classified according to the amount of carbon or energy it contains. The processing of tin is longer and more complex and the workings above ground are extensive. Ore is crushed in giant stamps, then repeatedly washed and sifted for minerals and tin only emerges after several stages of



extraction. There are many processes and by-products and some are toxic. Subliming causes gaseous oxides to solidify and young boys were employed to crawl inside chambers called cathedrals to collect arsenical solids which adhered to the walls. They did not lead long lives. Whereas the detritus of a coal mine is heaped into mounds of slag, which will eventually be grassed and landscaped to provide parks and playgrounds, the detritus of a tin mine is stored in tailings dams, returned to the depths to lie submerged. Over time toxins resurface, seeping into surrounding countryside, poisoning rivers and agricultural land. This pollution is not Cornwall's only industrial inheritance; evidence of mining activity also exists in the preserved ruins of engine houses and in mouldering great houses built on the proceeds, if not the spoil heaps, of tin. All that work, all those memories and only tourist haunts and dereliction to show for them.

The memory work of a life writer is in the digging down and equally in the processing: sifting, sorting and measuring what has been excavated and brought to the surface, while not ignoring what seeps into the landscape unbidden, are the founding stages of creating a life narrative. Describing the processing of memory as 'meaning making' (22) Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson identified two models of memory identified by James Olney in his analysis of Augustine's *Confessions*, the archaeological and processual. 'The archaeological model of memory is spatial, "a site where... [he] can dig down through layer after layer of deposits to recover what he seeks"; memories so recovered will be unchanged if decaying over time (*Memory and Narrative* 19). In contrast, the processual model for memory is temporal, "bring[ing] forth ever different memorial configurations and an ever newly shaped self" (20-21)' (23). As a life writer from a coal mining area who migrated to an area where tin was mined, I find the archaeological metaphor less workable, not so apt, as the mining metaphor. While archaeology exhumes evidence of a relatively recent past, mining reaches deeper into formative history/memory. Olney claims that memories retrieved using the archaeological method will remain unchanged, though decaying, but what is decay if not change? Archaeologists retrieve many fragments that remain unidentified until processed and until re-assembly, change, takes place, their relevance or value is mute. Therefore, change is an integral part of the process. The mining model of memory work does not contrast with the temporal model but is a combination of temporal and spatial models.

But this is past work, these metaphors and memories are meaningful but how are they ordered and formed into story? Recently, in a call for papers for the literary journal, *Literary Compass*, Meg Jensen and Margaretta Jolly, stated:

critical practice is becoming increasingly self-reflective, with first person writing inflecting academic texts...on the other hand...life writing...texts reflect growing awareness of, and engagement with, critical and theoretical debates.

The appearance of the autobiographical I in literary criticism and the acknowledgment that life writing is sometimes 'just' another way of exploring theory seems to indicate a pre-existing critical framework for the analysis of a creative/critical text which is autobiographical. However, despite this suggestion that the divide between critical and creative practice is narrowing, literary criticism and life writing theory, or a conjunction of the two, do not provide a satisfactory model for describing and understanding the process of making. Robyn Stewart suggests that practitioner/ researchers pose a 'challenge to the traditional theory practice duality' by investigating process from an insider's perspective; their stories are 'placed in historical, social and cultural contexts and when shaped through autobiography, become a form of self portraiture, the mirroring of experience.' For Stewart this is a process in which theory and practice become inextricably linked and mutually dependent'. However, whilst the maker working within an academic institution is exposed to critical perspectives and contextualisation of making occurs within an academic framework, my problem was how to describe the dialogue between theory and practice in my own work. That is, whilst the creativity and reflexivity of life writing may shed light on the processes of critical research, the methods of theory are not so easily applicable or available to the life writer. As Jensen and Jolly suggest, literary critics and life writing practitioners still 'remain mutually suspicious and their relationship [is] under-theorised'. Stewart suggests that, to validate their research, practitioners draw on their own experience of making and create an interaction between these insights and existing theory from inside and outside their own disciplines. Describing practitioner research as a hybrid which blurs boundaries 'in an effort to reflect the complex dynamics involved' Stewart quoted the art critic Griselda Pollock:

Methodology only becomes apparent, that is different from the normalised procedures of the discipline, when a different set of questions is posed and demands new ways of being answered. (1996)

Because of the disparate set of questions my text posed, I needed to cross disciplinary boundaries to contextualise its eclectic, exploratory process and find what Muecke called a productive vocabulary. So it was serendipitous that, as a result of an interdisciplinary project of geographers and literary scholars at the University of Exeter, I discovered the experiential/experimental emphasis of recently developed theories about the process of mapping. This link between mapping and narrative is a crucial one for my project. The project could have been titled 'Galleries and Drift in an Undermined Landscape' but referring to mapping in the title foregrounds the way mapping theories, which define and explore the concept of making, also describe motivations, methods and outcomes in my own writing. Denis Cosgrove writes:

To map is in one way or another to take the measure of a world and...to figure the measure so taken in such a way that it can be communicated...Mapping's record... includes the remembered, the imagined, the contemplated...Acts of mapping are creative, sometimes anxious, moments in coming to knowledge of the world...Maps are naturalised but not natural...they are also troubling...their apparent stability [dissolves] with recognition of their partiality...embodiment of intention, imaginative and creative capacities, their mythical qualities appeal to reverie...their silences and their powers of deception. At the same time their spaces of representation can appear liberating, their dimensionality freeing the reader from both the controlling linearity of narrative description and the confining perspective of photographic or painted images. (2)

Narrative form has been subject to the same post modern scrutiny and re-negotiation as the process of mapping; I contest the idea of a controlling linearity of narrative description, for example: life writers now rarely imprison their subjects inside the controlling linearity of a birth to death narrative and description is frequently generated from multiple perspectives. As to confines of visual perspective, photographers are limited by the framing device of the camera's viewfinder but the processes they subject their photographic images to are many and various and defy bland definitions. Contemporary artists do not conform to the rules of perspective unless they have reason to, nor are they governed by a particular dimensionality, but even if other types of contemporary art are discounted, the history of art teems with paintings that explore alternative ways of seeing and it is not necessary to travel from St.Ives to find examples. It may be that, when the naive painter Alfred Wallis was painting *St.Ives Harbour*, he depicted streets of houses parallel to the sides of the painting as well as to the

top and bottom because he was unaware of how to paint perspective and, as Cosgrove suggests it might be, the result is liberating, and importantly, it played a role in liberating the vision of others. But the Cornish artist Peter Lanyon was no naive: he knew the rules of perspective and chose to ignore them or, rather, to bend them to his own ends. Lanyon, who declared ‘I belong therefore I am’, put himself at the centre of the landscape he laid claim to and made paintings with four horizons. However, though I do not agree with him entirely, Cosgrove could easily be describing the processes, complexities and uncertainties I experienced when writing *Galleries & Drift: Mapping Undermined Landscapes*.

Just as the apparent stability of a map dissolves when the subjectivity of the measure and its figuration is taken into account, so a life narrative cannot and should not hope to reproduce, fix or impose upon a life. James Corner describes the open ended potential of a creative approach to mapping as an unfolding process of encounters with, and exploration of, possibilities. He cites Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari:

Make a map not a tracing!...What distinguishes the map from the tracing is that it is entirely oriented toward an experiment in contact with the real. The map does not reproduce an unconscious closed in upon itself; it constructs the unconscious. It fosters connections between fields...the map has to do with performance, whereas the tracing always involves an alleged competence. (213)

In terms of life writing, a tracing, that is the recorded facts and figures of a life, produces a strict (and restricted) version of the past but does not engage with the momentum of a life. After all, a subject has led many lives, has a past, present and future and is constituted from these multiple selves. Corner provides a description of how an account of these multiple selves or their worlds might occur: ‘mappings discover new worlds within past and present ones; they inaugurate new grounds upon the hidden traces of a living context. The capacity to reformulate what already exists is the important step’ (214). This description of the process of founding new grounds on traces of the old seems to parallel and provide an application for Olney’s account of memory work in the configuration and creation of a newly shaped self. When remembering and contemplating the web of interactions between past and present and, in terms of life writing, acknowledging the mutability of relations between self, selves and others, new possibilities and unfolding mythologies begin to emerge. These examples of the way contemporary theories about the process of mapping mesh with the process of life writing are central to my technique. If maps are sometimes anxious moments

in coming to knowledge of the world, what better way to describe my own experiment in contact with the real?

Here the work of W.G. Sebald is pertinent. In 2001, in an interview with Sebald, Joseph Cuomo suggested to Sebald that, in *Rings of Saturn*, he had ‘reinvented the narrative form...there seems to be no artificial mechanism, no construct mediating between the reader and the experience of the page’ (93). Sebald took a relaxed approach and claimed the form arose from a process, ‘of unsystematic searching’, that his walk had led him to ‘find things ...you would never find in London...odd details which lead you somewhere else’. Sebald went on to compare his method to ‘the way a dog runs through a field...following the advice of his nose, he traverses a plot of land in a completely unplotable manner. And he invariably finds what he is looking for...as I’ve always had dogs, I’ve learned from them how to do this’ (94). Unlike the dog, which is satisfied to leave what he sniffs behind him, Sebald takes his supposedly haphazard accumulations home and this is where the serious work begins, the work of the imagination, to make connections between them. He warns against assembling things ‘like the things that you have looked for before...obviously they will connect up. But only...in an obvious sort of way...you have to take heterogeneous materials in order to get your mind to do something it hasn’t done before’ (95).

A return to Corner enables a comparison of mapping and narrative construction. In a section titled Mapping Operations, Corner describes how the design of the field ‘schematically the analogical equivalent of the ground itself’ (229) is one of the most creative acts in mapping:

Obviously a field that has multiple frameworks and entryways is likely to be more inclusive...more likely to precipitate new findings...extracts are selected, isolated and pulled out of their original seamlessness with other things...different field systems will lead to different arrangements of the extracts, revealing alternative patterns and possibilities. (230)

Corner could be re-iterating Sebald’s method of bringing together extracts or, indeed, the narrative method I employed in constructing Galleries and Drift. Cuomo appears to suggest Sebald presents an unmediated version of reality, but, since that could not be further from the truth, Sebald contradicts him. Although Sebald describes his method of gathering as unsystematic and haphazard, he makes plain that the real work of the imagination is not. If

Sebald had not attended to the business of assemblage, of drawing out and organising the connections, readers would not be able to follow or make sense of the discursive and sometimes labyrinthine pathways of his narrative.

Corner describes layering and drift as emerging techniques of mapping; certainly both are methods that can be employed in the construction of narrative. Layering is used in the planning stages of large landscape projects when detailed layers of information are assembled. Corner suggests that ‘these mappings array an enabling geometry’ when the independent layers are superimposed, ‘a stratified amalgam of relationships among parts appears...a complex fabric...the layering of independently structured conditions leads to a mosaic like field of multiple orders’ (235). Building a text in this way, bringing together and overlapping separate narratives, layering them one upon another, reveals and fosters relationships and pathways; coincidences emerge and, in life narratives, meaning is generated when connections between stratified memories are revealed.

Layering does not only describe a way of constructing narrative but also the way what we think of as ‘theory’ might be embedded, particularly in what is now becoming known as ficto-criticism. Ficto-criticism provides another useful way of describing my narrative technique. Michel de Certeau describes theory in what he calls a ‘light-hearted way’:

Theory favours a pluralist epistemology composed of a “multiplicity of points of view, each of them having roughly an equal power of generality.” It is an art of “circulating along paths or fibers” an art of transportation and intersection; for theory progress is an “interlacing”. (199)

In texts where layers of narrative are transparently superimposed on layers of theory, the points at which narrative intersects with theory are easy to spot and the relationship of theory to text is clear. But the montage technique results in less hierarchical forms of construction where the intersection is blurred. De Certeau’s description of the way the narrative of theory unfolds recalls the way in which in ficto criticism theory is folded into story. Ficto criticism doesn’t superimpose narrative on theory, instead theory and story metamorphose into each other and, when they are interlaced, the narrative progresses. In *No Road*, under the heading ‘sites’, Muecke writes, as if with de Certeau in mind, ‘our aim is to keep theory moving’ and then notes how Lord Macalpine, who became rich from selling bitumen, had restored the town of Broome ‘to a point less than zero. Basically he took the town ‘back to the future’ (42). Muecke introduces ideas of movement and inertia, nostalgia and the discourse of

exploitation, to his assemblage but within a line or two he's back on the road, moving the story on.

Processes of collaging, recycling and assembling new from old, have a long tradition in the visual arts. The fragmented narrative defined Modernist literature, though it can be traced back at least as far as Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*. But it is in contemporary music where it is currently most prominent and innovative. Musicians layer together multiple samples from other artistes and genres to create what Corner calls 'a frenzied cacophony of associations' (236). Perhaps in an effort to reclaim the method and reinvigorate the narrative possibilities of these multiple associations, the technique is taken to extremes in David Shields' controversial book *Reality Hunger: a Manifesto* which Nancy K Miller, at the IABA conference at the University of Sussex in June 2010, slyly referred to as the 'hip hop album of the year'. Shields' text is an assemblage of unattributed quotations, numbered from one to 617, for example, in a section called 'collage', number 179 is 'Memory loves to go hunting in the dark'. Number 460, in a section called 'autobio', is 'In, for example, Naipaul's *A Way in the World*', Sebald's *The Emigrants*, Hilton Als's *The Women*', each chapter when considered singly, is relatively straightforwardly autobiographical, but when the book is read as a whole and tilted at just the right angle, it refracts brilliant, harsh light back on the author' (pages are un-numbered). Though these quotations are unattributed in Shields' 'narrative' because, I think, they would impede the relationship between it and the reader, Shields reluctantly includes them, at the behest of lawyers, at the end of the book, though he asks readers not to refer to them. However, 460 is unattributed even there, perhaps because it is attributable to Shields who, in this way, may be manipulating the tilt, though this would go against the democratisation of the text which seems to be his aim. Shields offers his readers multiple points of view and options; he has withdrawn the connecting thread from the montage and readers are expected to make their own way and come to their own conclusions as to whether any narrative emerges from his accumulations. But this is a risky business and for writers with stories to tell, the connecting thread, even though it may wander and slacken, provides forward momentum.

The wandering connecting thread in *Rings of Saturn* is the walk. In 'Galleries and Drift' there are other means of transport, but walking is how the story sets out. In the title, drift refers to a method of access to an underground terrain but it also refers to a particular way of

travelling across any landscape which brings us to what has become known as ‘psycho-geography’. As a technique of mapping, Corner describes drift as radical, effecting ‘perceptions and practices of space’ (231). This particular use of the word drift emerges from the vocabulary of the Situationistes. In an article from the *Internationale Situationniste*, 1958, Guy Debord describes drift (also known as the *derive*) as a ‘technique of transient passage through varied ambiances [which] entails playful-constructive behaviour and awareness of psycho-geographical effects...persons...let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there.’(703). Debord warns against habituation, the following of certain established currents. The method and this warning against habit seem to be echoed by Sebald but his walk in *Rings of Saturn*, unlike a drift, which normally takes place in a city, followed a pre-ordained route across the countryside of eastern England. Describing the way Debord, whose stated aim was to transform urban life, re-configured maps of Paris according to his aimless derives, Corner calls the results ‘a form of cognitive mapping...mapping alternative itineraries and subverting dominant readings and authoritarian regimes’ (235). In *Psychogeography* Merlin Coverley claims urban walking is the subversive element of psychogeography because walking ‘is contrary to the spirit of the modern city’ and as a result ‘becomes bound up in psychogeography’s characteristic opposition to authority’ (12). In Corner’s descriptions, mapping is a process of exploration not of attempting to stabilise or control; he compares the mapper to a ‘nomadic grazer [who] detours around the obvious to engage with what remains hidden’ [225]. My project began with the idea of accessing and negotiating hidden topographies and the text visits fragile destabilised landscapes, so it seemed for a while that psychogeography might provide ways to describe my method. However my writing is located in a rural landscape and when I looked beyond Debord, into the roots of psychogeography to the ‘occult sense of place’ and the neo-romantic visions that Coverley suggests link and define psychogeographic activities, I shuddered and realised that I was travelling from a different location and would have to find my own way.

Mapping/Navigating/Knowing came as a result of an initial reaction to mapping theory. I confess it had not occurred to me to read a map as a text and wonder about its intentions and omissions. Attracted to the idea of landscape as a palimpsest, I was aware of erosion and secretion and that a map marks only a particular moment, but geological time moves so slowly and maps appeared to provide an adequate response to, and graphic representation of,



landscape. Such a questioning of the stability and authority of conventional mapping is not only the result, according to Cosgrove, of technical advances that allow the world to be seen differently, for instance by satellite photography, but a response to global political, economical and cultural shifts that have rendered boundaries permeable and so called fixed and distinct spaces and structures 'contingent and unstable' (5). Once I recognised similarities between narrative construction and mapping I realised that unreliable narrators inhabited many worlds and that maps change according to events, power structures and partiality, even fashion, and could no longer be considered neutral.

My first idea was to make a map of my own. I would create a map of Cornwall that subverted tourist guides by mapping house repossessions. Then I began to consider mapping suicides. Many people come to West Penwith to commit suicide; foreigners favour Lands End while locals, like Chloe who is mentioned in the text, tend to choose Hell's Mouth. In the end, those maps were not made, though a more personal one was and is found later in the narrative. Also a later chapter includes a description of a visit to an exhibition in Blackpool, 'Rank', which featured many maps that provided alternatives to traditional forms of cartography, for example a series of graphical images in which territory relates to GDP. Once maps begin to speak many different languages the problem of how to read them arises; however, since traditional maps reflected the language of authority, this process of democratisation, at times bemusing, is to be celebrated. 'Mapping/Navigating/Knowing' is about misdirections, the confusing nature of signs and the real dangers of misreading them; it raises issues of belonging, dislocation and identity and therefore raises issues of method. If mining provides metaphors for memory recovery and mapping theory a vocabulary to describe the design and assembly of narrative, what is the story? Again, *No Road Bitumen* provides the beginnings of an answer. Under the heading 'writing (in theory)' Muecke writes: 'Genres of writing are apparatuses of capture...You can tell the genre by the mode of capture and the feeling is the snare: fear, amusement, sadness. Writers capture readers in this way, but authors in turn, as objects of recognition, are captured writers...they cease to become writers if they forget their first impulse, writing and its ideas (160). He then goes on, in 'writing (in practice)' to write about a trip to see old friends in the Haute-Savoie. So while I was metaphorically underground, Muecke was drinking chinon and making music in France. What he and others never mention, however, is how the revelations that result from reflecting on writing which has itself resulted from an insider's myopic perspective, might affect the

reader/writer. Perspectives alter when the position of the mirror changes or when it is tilted at just the right angle and refracts brilliant, harsh light back on the author (Shields 2010). I took time to realise that this introductory section was not the beginning of 'Mapping Cornwall', a projected series of meditations about place, but was the beginning of an account of a journey across a fragile personal topography in search of a lost self. In this reader it generates equal feelings of frustration, fear, amusement and sadness.

De Certeau writes about stories as metaphors for movement and change:

Every story is a travel story...a spatial practice...from the alphabet of spatial indication ...the beginning of a story the rest of which is written by footsteps...these [are] narrated adventures, simultaneously producing geographies of actions and drifting into the commonplace of an order...In reality, they organise walks. They make the journey, before or during the time the feet perform it. (115)

The route the story takes evolves during its performance, the story maker sets out and later finds the walk has covered unexpected ground. This has certainly been the case in the creation of this story. I set out with the intention of mapping the place where I now live and carried with me a set of previously explored ideas about the undermined nature of the Cornish landscape. Some began to be burdens and when I found they impeded progress they were discarded, others in the way of ideas, were re-imagined and re-assessed along the way. But the idea of movement is important to my process; it is the only way that the story unfolds and is propelled by a deep rooted need. I need to rectify an omission: while I have been writing about the writer writing I have ignored the other creative who haunts this text: the artist.

I am a displaced person and I write from the shifting perspectives of a transient outsider. When I was studying for a BA in English I was asked to prepare a piece of writing about who I was. Apart from one student, who said that because she grew up in Southport she had not realised she was black until she saw other black people on a visit to Liverpool ten miles away, I was the only person who did not talk about where I was from. Students younger than me reminisced about their town, their estate, their road, their house, but I produced a collection of receipts, bills and bank statements. When the lecturer asked how long I had felt so alienated it seemed a damning criticism, because I had only tried to tell another story, to

acknowledge one of several versions of who I was. I had spent over twenty years as an artist, so why did I not describe myself as such? I know now that it was because the process of displacement was under way and like the girl from Southport, I was in the act of realising what I was not, so I chose instead to define my identity in terms of cash withdrawals and economic exchange.

In *The Future of Nostalgia* Svetlana Boym defines modern nostalgia:

Nostalgia is a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed...a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one's own fantasy ...A cinematic image of nostalgia is a double exposure, or a superimposition of two images—of home and abroad, past and present. (XIV)

If I am nostalgic it is not for a particular location but for another kind of home, an outdated image of myself. As a young artist, I had everything I needed and didn't bother to look back, but these days my identity as an artist is no longer stable, has turned fugitive and faint. I chose to live in Cornwall because I was seduced by ideas of artist colonies and bohemian behaviour in a wild unspoiled landscape. What I found was not what I'd imagined. I found poverty, a society in mourning for a golden past of productivity, incapable of looking forward and hampered by a tourist industry that paid minimum wages and demanded maximum compliance to uphold the lucrative concept of the idyll. I found a community divided into locals and incomers. Longing emerges from redundancy and exclusion, but if, as my idea of myself as an artist began to fade, I looked back to a rosy, secure version of my childhood home, it was only to rediscover what I had rebelled against, because if I could find a trace of the rebellion that propelled me away, perhaps I could restart a stalled process. Boym makes a distinction between two types of nostalgia, restorative and reflective. Restorative nostalgia seeks a return to a past which is perfectly preserved, 'the re-establishment of stasis', whereas, she suggests

Reflective nostalgia cherishes shattered fragments of memory and temporalises space ...reflective nostalgia does not pretend to rebuild the mythical place called home... Nostalgics of [this] type are aware of the gap between identity and resemblance... This defamiliarisation and sense of distance drives them to tell their story, to narrate the relationship between past, present and future...the modern nostalgic realises that the goal of the odyssey is the rendez-vous with oneself. (50)

Though this story originates from a particular landscape, my footsteps visit many others and all of them are fragile and the dwellings in them never provide safe or permanent shelter. So there was a need to keep moving, to avoid standing still on this foolish errand that I now realise set out to re-discover and reconstruct a romantic construction which for many years had sustained me but, like all such constructions, was inherently unstable.

As a painter I had reached a dead end so I was looking for new ways of working; because of my recently discovered interest in maps, I was attracted to the work of Richard Long. I thought I understood something of Long's method and motivations. Corner says that although Long

shares little of the political and strategic agenda of the Situationists, his systematic play with maps and landscapes is very much in the same vein as the derive...[he] experience[s] the land through what is an unusual walk or journey and...trace[s] upon it (albeit lightly or even only in memory ) an alternative gesture. (233)

I had not imagined Long was setting out to undermine bourgeois culture but enjoyed the idea of an alternative gesture and assumed that because he was making maps that challenged the orthodoxy of Ordnance Survey, Long's gesture was subversive. I thought there was a political and historical awareness underpinning his work and this opinion is echoed by Wytan Curnow, who writes about the 'walk-works' of Richard Long and Hamish Fulton:

Rather than deconstructing the inscribed maps, they revive a method of mapping which predates it, and implicitly contests its authority. Theirs are maps structured by the journey or itinerary, and they give voice to what, as J.B.Hartley noted, the pages of contemporary road atlases silence: the variety of nature, the history of the landscape, and the space-time experience of it'. (258)

I thought that I had discovered an artist who was doing what I longed to. For a long time I had been trapped in a commercial exchange, my creativity for cash, and though I knew Long was a very successful artist I thought that his work challenged the commodification of art and transcended commercial considerations. I thought he was making statements about landscape that were contributions to an important debate about our relationship with the environment. And I thought his work, that took him to the loneliest places and required prolonged commitment and rigorous concentration, came from a passion and need to create that could

not be ignored. So when I went to hear him speak and the first thing he said was ‘I am not a political artist,’ and soon afterwards, ‘If I was the last person on earth I would not make art because there would be no-one to look at it,’ I was taken aback. The measure of how taken aback is played out in the chapter ‘Walking Anti Clockwise’ in which I repeat Long’s walk along the coastal footpath. The linear nature of the walk dictates the structure of the chapter but because I felt Long left so much unsaid, maintained the silences, the narrative takes the form of a dialogue, a reply to Long and also to the voice of Peter Kirby, his partner in the walk.

It is not necessary to detour from the coastal path to encounter some of the contentious issues that affect Cornwall and undermine Cornish society. Almost at the beginning of Long’s walk he passed through the depredations of Wheal Charlotte mine. It is hard to imagine that he did not notice the acres of scorched earth and the mountain of red shale sliding down to the sea. A few miles further, he arrived at Nancekuke, probably the most oppressive place in Cornwall, possessing an eerie silence that, if J.B.Hartley is to be believed, Long might have been expected to vocalise. Though Nancekuke does not appear on any maps he could not have missed it because he skirted its triple barbed wired boundary, walked past its ominous warning notices. It was at this point on the walk that, for me, this coastline began to evoke more personal connections. Muecke reminds us that for Freud ‘the question “where do children come from?” is the foundation of the desire for knowledge’ (120), but isn’t the question ‘where do adults go to?’ as important? Muecke recalls crossing a road in Paris on his way to hear Barthes lecture and comments that it was here that Barthes met his death by laundry van two years later. He even has a photograph of himself sitting on Barthes’ grave. But Muecke says it is not really him in the photograph, ‘it is an example, an image of subjectivity the kind of subjectivity traditionally alien to academic writing now increasingly common...It is not the desire to speak to the dead that is driving me, rather I wanted to write about something more personally nostalgic (and hence perhaps destined to failure) (171). Now I think of it, this statement could have provided an epigraph to this essay. On the twenty six mile walk I had passed locations I associate with seven deaths: four suicides, a heroic death as a result of terrorism, the death of a close friend from AIDS and of an artist whose cancer came as a result of an accident while working. Since reading Muecke I realise that I was allowing my subjective response to this particular landscape to affect the way I thought Long should respond to it. This might explain the anger and sense of loss expressed

in 'Walking Anti-Clockwise' but it does not totally explain what was disconcerting about the way Long described his walk, the things he chose to ignore or simply failed to notice.

In 2007 when the walk took place and I was researching Long, he described his work on his official website under the heading 'Art as a formal and holistic description of the real space and experience of landscape and its most elemental materials'. Throughout his career Long has situated his work in the landscape and it is the record of it that is exhibited in galleries in the form of maps, text works or photographs. One of his earliest works, in 1967, was '*A Line Made By Walking*', temporary marks made on the landscape by crossing and re-crossing a stretch of grass until he had created a line. Other works take the form of installations in the landscape made from sources he has found there; it is this rootedness, this grounding of the work in the landscape, together with the website statement in 2007, which suggests Long is influenced by the phenomenological approaches to landscape first explored by Maurice Merleau-Ponty in *Phenomenology of Perception* in 1962. Merleau-Ponty has had a lasting influence on attitudes to landscape and there has been a recent renewal of interest in his ideas. Amongst Merleau-Ponty's most enthusiastic recent advocates is John Wylie, who describes these approaches as promoting 'a view of human beings as engaged actors rather than distanced observers; they define a view of human being as embodied "being-in-the-world" as "caught in the fabric of the world" to use Maurice Merleau-Ponty's...felicitous phrase'(46). Wylie goes on to describe how this 'being-in-the-world' breaks down distinctions that had been the basis of understandings of 'self-landscape relations' and instead 'identifies and attends to a realm of lived experience...in which self and world are already necessarily intertwined' (46) . Although his use of the word 'felicitous' seems to indicate commitment to Merleau-Ponty's approach, Wylie later acknowledges that 'the phenomenological project regarding landscape often falters' (49) and raises the 'vexed' issue of mediation, suggesting Merleau-Ponty's idea of 'fusion' might appear to promote, in terms of responses to landscape, an 'impoverished language'. However, Wylie suggests this has not been the result because literary responses to immersion in landscape have a 'decidedly 'literary character... explained by the fact that their ethos and modus operandi [that] are descriptive and interpretative rather than analytical' (47). Yet, earlier in his essay, Wylie expresses concerns about the myopia of the insider view and reminds us of the need for distance and the application of academic methods in order to gain perspective and understanding. If short sightedness, or, at the very least selective vision, is characteristic of a phenomenological

approach it explains why Long was so blissfully unaware of what was under his feet, the nature of the land. Wylie, who declares the lack of a genre of 'landscape writing' ( which makes one wonder where he has been for decades) begins to question the idea of fusion in terms of its denial of absence and estrangement and carries out his own experiment in 'landscape writing'. Of an evening in Connemara Wylie writes:

Inaccessible landscape... the setting sun diffused...the sky already huge, grew apocalyptic in scale and flame, until the entire landscape was a crucible burnished gold and copper. When the sun approached the horizon it was like a bell tolling...some unimpeded rays of light cathedraled the peaks and hollows of the surrounding mountains...as if a giant lens had somehow focused on the whole panorama, bringing it closer...or as if our eyes themselves had been suddenly enhanced and granted a capacity for outlandish perceptions '. (51)

I include this long quotation not as an admirer of its style (though how brave to instigate a new genre) but because, in his introduction to *Landscape* in 2007 Wylie had discussed the ideas of the visual theorist Jonathon Crary and concluded a section titled 'Proximity/distance' by stating 'To visualise is to set at a distance' ( *Landscape* 4). However, the passage quoted seems to indicate that by 2010 Wylie was more than ever in thrall to Merleau-Ponty, who was also given to wordy contemplations of the sky. Setting aside Wylie's use of the word 'cathedraled', it is Wylie's idea that perception is enhanced not by clear sighted analysis, but by a fuzzy denial of science, and that we gain insight about our relationship with our environment through 'a magical sense of passage' (50) that is most disturbing.

Anybody who has learned to draw knows that you have to be able to distance yourself, stand back from the subject, in order to gain its measure and understand its proportions. *Landscape* has on its cover one of Cezanne's paintings of Mont Saint-Victoire and Wylie describes how Merleau-Ponty made much of a letter written by Cezanne in which he wrote 'the landscape thinks itself in me...and I am its conscience' (2). Merleau-Ponty, Wylie reports, argued 'Cezanne's art was testimony to...inescapable involvement, the artist plunging into landscape' (3) and took this as proof that the artist was entwined with the landscape and this relationship exemplified a phenomenological approach.

It is true that Cezanne's vision was exemplary but not as Wylie describes it or Merleau-Ponty saw it. One clue to the flaw in this argument comes at the outset of Wylie's book when he describes some of Cezanne's images of the mountain: 'some of these paintings are just abstract sketches, lines and smudges of colour' (1). This is to misunderstand the function of a sketch, possibly because when the price of an artist's work escalates, especially after his or her death, sketches take on a financial value the artist never meant them to have. When an artist sketches it is the equivalent of a writer making notes. If I write a list in my notebook:

Beer bottle, rubber glove. White rapids. Air care products. KG Projects.

A rusting container. Danger of Death

it is not, and should never be regarded as, a poem about a suburb of St.Austell. It is a list of jottings that will aid my memory. In the case of Cezanne's sketches, the marks made do not predate abstraction, they are workings out, the equivalent of note taking and the smudges of colour are just that, colour notes that he will refer to at another time. Because, for all his obsession with this particular landscape, Cezanne's paintings, descriptive and interpretative as they were, were also, without doubt, analytical. On 15 April 1904 Cezanne wrote to the young painter Emile Bernard:

I repeat what I told you here: treat nature by means of the cylinder, the sphere, the cone, everything brought into proper perspective so that each side of an object or a plane is directed towards a central point. Lines parallel to the horizon give breadth [...] Lines perpendicular to this horizon give depth. (33)

And on 25 July 1904 he wrote:

There is only nature and the eye is trained through contact with her...I mean to say that in an orange, an apple, a ball, a head, there is a culminating point and this point is always, in spite of the tremendous effect; light and shade, colour sensations, the closest to our eye; the edges of the objects flee towards a centre on our horizon. (34)

Cezanne is describing a method of seeing and painting landscape which is scientific and which contradicts Merleau-Ponty's ideas of immersion and interlaced experience. I do not contest that Cezanne wrote about being the landscape's conscience or that 'the landscape thinks itself into me' but perhaps this denotes the opposite of the kind of florid 'poetic'



response that phenomenology promotes. The idea of conscience entering into the relationship between artist and landscape is what is interesting here. I do not want to take Merleau-Ponty's method or Wylie's and bend Cezanne's words for my own ends, but, in times of great change, of rural depopulation and urban growth, could an awareness of the vulnerability of the landscape with which he had become so familiar be what Cezanne is pondering? I raise this question for obvious reasons: while Merleau-Ponty, Wylie and Long contemplate the sky, they are oblivious to events on and in Long's case, under, the ground. Wylie declares he is no fan of Seamus Heaney's work 'by virtue of its conflicted, ambivalent nature but also because of its grounding in locality and tradition, its down-to-earthness, its bogginess' (Process 50). This comes as no particular surprise, since Heaney's poems are the epitome of conscience, they raise consciousness out of the bog of history and serve it up, not in the overheated vocabulary of Wylie's account of a Connemara sunset but as a sober warning of what can happen when fantasy overrides history in the framing of experience.

In a chapter of my text called 'Imaginary Journeys' there is a section called 'The Dark Monarch' in which I visit an exhibition and seminar at Tate St.Ives. The fact that this exhibition occurred in October 2009 is testament to a resurgence of interest in the sort of ideas that phenomenology supports: sublime epiphanies, magical passages and occult responses to landscape, were the central themes of the exhibition. As I relate in the text, at the seminar, Michael Bracewell, one of the exhibition's curators, referred to work on show as the 'art of recuperation' as much of it was made in response to the First and Second World Wars. I explored the origins of this type of work in my BA dissertation and will not discuss it in any depth here, except to say that the escape from reality, though understandable in terms of reaction to, and recovery from, trauma, is far less understandable in present circumstances. Art reflects society, so when post First World War neo-romantics were creating idyllic landscapes they were responding to a national need to redefine Englishness in terms of a return to arcadia after the destructions of war. But, historically, art work produced in times of war engages with the horror and widens awareness of it: the First World War poets did not try to ignore their circumstances, they wrote about their experiences and conveyed the message of the bloody pointlessness of it all. A retreat into magic and ecstatic visions is an indulgence in times of trauma and this is no time for recuperation or distraction from the bleak realities of the twenty first century, whether economical or ecological. Although phenomenology is about being-in-the-world, it promotes a blinkered, unscientific response to

the environment, one that I imagine would have appalled a conscience stricken artist who could see clearly, such as Cezanne.

I have discussed these ideas about perception and perspective, of seeing clearly and ultimately, of bearing witness, at length here, not only to justify my angry reaction to Long's comments at the Tate gallery and to explain the motivations for my own walk, but because they are explored in one way or another in all the chapters that follow. By 2010 the statement on Richard Long's website had changed to:

In the nature of things: art about mobility, lightness and freedom. Simple creative acts of walking and marking, about place, locality, time, distance and measurement. Works using raw materials and my human scale in the reality of landscapes. The music of stones, paths of shared footmarks, sleeping by the rivers roar.

This statement suggests Long would no longer relish being entwined or caught in the fabric of the landscape, which sounds like entrapment and is the opposite of lightness and free mobility, but when was a creative act ever simple?

I began the chapter 'To the Occupier' with simple intentions: to write about an exhibition held in an old house I knew well. The reason I knew the house was because I became a tour guide there when I gave up painting. The house was in a poor state of repair and the owners were fighting to shore it up and to keep it. On my first day of training, when I heard John Schofield say that the fortunes of the family who owned the house mirrored the fortunes of Cornish tin, I knew they were in deep trouble. Whereas the construction of the previous chapter was based on a walk that followed a designated footpath over an undermined landscape, the construction of this chapter is more complex because it is designed around a tour, a visit to each room of the house. But, though the tour guide/storyteller sounds sure of herself, the house is crumbling, the corridors between the rooms are in danger of collapsing and some of the rooms are already closed off to the public. A layered plan of the house, or the narrative construction, would show collapsing foundations and reveal the deteriorating structure of the property, as well as large areas that have already been demolished. Add to this plan a framing device, which looks back from not one visit to the house but two, and the whole narrative framework appears dangerously unstable. The house becomes a metaphor for

redundancy and loss and since it has now been acquired by the National Trust, who plan to renovate it and re-package its history to convert it into tourist accommodation, the narrative becomes an allegory for the Cornish experience. The chapter opens with graffiti that asks what the future might be for Cornish youth but the graffiti is not the work of teenagers: it was created by an FE lecturer now employed at the Eden Project. More redolent of the disenfranchisement of Cornwall's young is the obliteration of the letter L in the word Pool on the regeneration site and the pointless direction to Eat Pork, on the vandalised signpost to Releath and Porkellis..

The idea of inheritance is explored not only in terms of the house or Cornwall's de-industrialisation, but in relation to the artists Peter Lanyon and his son, Andrew. When Merleau Ponty published *Phenomenology of Perception* in 1962, Lanyon had only two more years to live, but, had Merleau-Ponty been aware of his painting, Lanyon would have exemplified the idea of being rooted, caught in the fabric of his world. Apart from when he was flying above it, observing it from his glider, Lanyon was grounded, entwined in the Cornish landscape. When painting he challenged perspective and denied horizons in order to place himself in the landscape he felt he owned and was owned by. His paintings truly reflect the fusion of experience and expression Wylie refers to. But the flaw in this argument is Lanyon's conflicted attitude to his family association with the tin industry. Lanyon's family, like the owners of Godolphin to whom they are related, grew rich on the proceeds of tin. Lanyon lamented the closure of the mines but also recognised the terrible nature of the work. In *Peter Lanyon: Modernism and the Land* Andrew Causey quotes an interview with Lionel Miskin in 1962, during which Lanyon said:

the shame that I feel for instance when going along the coast and seeing these ruined mines...monumental to a social system which is absolutely criminal...The maintenance of the mining machinery could be so vicious and wicked that the men would be killed by its pure rusting out or its pure bad engineering. You can't escape it, if you walk along this coast, you can't escape its shame...There's a great pressure of human suffering that has gone on...St. Just itself for instance is like a town waiting for something terrible to happen...This is something I feel very deeply, I mean in the human history of the country. (120)

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of October 1919 31 men lost their lives at the Levant mine when the man engine that transported miners underground failed; it is this accident that Lanyon was referring to in the above quotation and in the painting, *St. Just* 1953. This painting was the first in a series of landscapes that feature crucifixions: the mine shaft that separates the painting vertically is also a depiction of Christ on the cross and the barbed wire at the top of the shaft forms a crown of thorns. Although the sketch exhibited at Godolphin is a much later work and to see it is a sensual and seductive encounter, the quotation comes from the same period and shows that Lanyon, who declared 'I belong therefore I am', was haunted by the real costs of his inheritance.

While his father's sketch was revealed for two hours in the King's Room, Andrew Lanyon staged a four day exhibition at Godolphin in a poly tunnel. That Andrew staged his temporary museum of fairy archaeology in such a transparent structure is all part of the show. The archaeology, memory work, is constructed by Andrew from found objects. Though each object has served its purpose and has a history of its own, by bringing the fragments together in unexpected ways Andrew creates a new and obviously false history. He is parodying the work of memory and by situating his flimsy structure in the grounds of a historic house, subverting ideas of heritage.

Conflicting dualities are integral to the construction of this chapter. Private ownership of the house allowed public access for a small fee, whereas the National Trust intends to severely limit access to the general public. The Schofields' policy of repair employed modern methods and materials because they intended their interventions as another visible layer of the house's history. The National Trust intends to undo this work and employ old methods and materials so that their renovations will go unnoticed. The Trust seeks to return the house to its past perfection and laminate its history, in order to accommodate tourists at high cost. These different approaches mirror Bohm's definition of the conditions of reflective and restorative nostalgia. It is ironic, and thought provoking, that it may be the undermining of the house that prevents tourism and the house, like Cornwall's attempt to return to its industrial past, is probably doomed.

Distance, has provided new insights into the way I have written about Andrew Lanyon. On reflection I think the text is somewhat unfair to him, that my reaction to him is complicated because Andrew, like me, may be exhibiting signs of nostalgia. According to Bohm:

To confront the unknown, particular and unpredictable, one has to risk embarrassment, the loss of mastery and composure. On the other side of ironic estrangement might be emotion and longing; they are yoked as two sides of a coin. In this moment of nostalgic embarrassment one can begin to recognise the nostalgic fantasies of the other and learn not trample on them. (354)

Now I look back on my encounter with Andrew, having re-gained my composure, I recognise that, as the son of a celebrated artist of passion and potency, his inheritance mirrors the many challenges and contradictions inherited by Cornish youth. How do you become an artist in the shadow of such a father and how do you live a productive life after ‘the end of work’? Andrew’s art, which could be mistaken for whimsy, is deadly serious and in its way, at least as revealing as the Eat Pork sign.

The narrative of this chapter escapes the sinking house to visit other insubstantial structures, a series of temporary dwellings that the writing process sets up only to abandon: a storm threatened tent in France and the works of Do Ho Suh and Rachael Whiteread at the *Psycho Buildings* exhibition. Do Ho Suh’s constructions are re-workings of the immigrant experience, *Fallen Star I-V*, his two homes colliding and being destroyed in the process, *Staircase V*, his staircase a trap, both alluring and unsafe. In Whiteread’s *Place (Village)* miniature houses temporarily seduce, but this soon gives way to the sense that they are haunted, that something bad happened here. These works of transition offer approximations of safety but they symbolise uprootedness and loss.

If identity is lodged in a whole series of disintegrating localities then my narrative of displacement began long before my identity as an artist began to fray, or even before I left my parents’ home to become an artist. It began in my early childhood when, because of my mother’s potentially terminal illness, I looked to the house next door for security. This beginning was the first move in a life story, the first footsteps away from home. According to Boym:

The object of longing, then, is not really a place called home but this sense of intimacy with the world...reflective nostalgics see everywhere the imperfect mirror images of home, and try to cohabit with doubles and ghosts. (251)

The dwellings in my narrative don't offer long term shelter but they do house doubles and ghosts and I have reluctantly realised they are manifestations of longing.

The dreams and longing of displaced persons for a secure home, and the sometimes terrible ways in which longing is manifested, are the subject of the chapter 'It's So Sad to Watch a Sweet Thing Die'. The chapter suggests what can happen in an idealised landscape when the needs of the inhabitants are unrecognised. The narrative structure is uncomplicated, split into three sections: it begins by describing an exhibition at Tate St.Ives, is followed by an interview with two teenagers living in South West Cornwall and finally, gives an account of a murder in the small town of St.Austell. The exhibition, '*If Everybody Had an Ocean. Brian Wilson: An Art Exhibition*', is based upon the life of the Beach Boy Brian Wilson. In the exhibition catalogue, the curator, Alex Farquharson, makes a superficial connection between Cornwall and California. St.Ives and LA are both idealised landscapes, have an ocean and attract migration on the grounds that they offer a more relaxed, sybaritic lifestyle. This chapter sets out to reveal the underbelly of the idyll and the narratives either side of the interviews have similar trajectories: they chart the disintegration of a dream.

The exhibition maps the demise of the Love-in generation from the sunny 60s, via the Vietnam war and civil rights protests, through psychedelia, to its drug addled, sometimes murderous, aftermath. But while California retains its glamour and even its demons appear on the cover of *Time Magazine*, the story for impoverished rural Cornwall is quite different. In his introduction to *Country Visions* (2003) Paul Cloke states:

Knowing the rural through idyllic representations...only hides social problems such as poverty and homelessness, but also establishes a political and cultural expectation of orthodoxy which actively seeks to purify rural space from transgressive presences and practices. (3)

In the interview I relate, Jon describes his experience of living in the Cornish village his parents moved to when he was a small child. Although he claims to have learned from his exclusion from school because of his violence and from his home because he ‘smashed things up’, he freely admits that he continues to misbehave and should anyone go up to ‘sort out the Gypsies’ he will willingly participate. Jon, an outsider who is part of an underclass, has identified an equally deprived ‘transgressive presence’ from whom he wants to defend his version of home. By joining with his fellows to ‘sort out the Gypsies’, he tries to establish belonging which he will go to almost any ends to achieve.

In 2006 Hugh Mathews and Faith Tucker carried out a series of interviews with rural teenagers concluding from their findings:

Their psychic experience is...likely to be a shared sense of ennui, boredom, languor ...a cacophony of negative emotions and feelings. (165)

Sentiments such as these highlight the ‘profound emptiness’ of rural places for many teenagers...For them, the concrete dimensions of rurality define an emotional landscape of ‘othering’, ‘otherness’ and ‘marginality’...Typically what emerge in their narratives are feelings of frustration, alienation and anger that play up the negative psychic and emotional aspects of the rural experience. (167)

My interviews with Jon and David express their acute boredom and frustration and, in Jon’s case, his willingness to act out his anger, but for now, Jon remains quite optimistic and sees a future where life will improve, where he will get a job and settle down. For others, from more troubled backgrounds still, that option is remote.

The final section of this chapter, is based on a summary of *The Murder of Steven Hoskin: A Serious Case Review* (2007), carried out by the Cornwall Adult Protection Committee. Because of a learning disability, Steven Hoskin was an outsider in the Cornish village he grew up in. But while he was young, the village tolerated and, to an extent, protected him until he was made homeless when his mother entered sheltered accommodation. Following this, Steven was moved away from the village and had a number of surrogate carers his landlady, mental health team, social services, his GP and even the police who were frequently

involved with him, but none of them provided him with what he really needed and had been excluded from all his life. When he met Darren Stewart, who would later be convicted of his murder, he was thrilled to become part of his gang. The case review reports that after this meeting:

Steven Hoskin lost all control of his life within his home. He had no say, choice or control over who stayed or visited...no influence over what happened within the premises. Darren Stewart had...moved in on him...he recognised the opportunity for accommodation and removed from Steven Hoskin the little ability he had to make his own choices and decisions'. (24)

The review reports that Stewart had a chaotic history, of 'uncountable' foster homes and led a nomadic existence. Before he met Steven, Stewart had a series of relationships with teenage girls who had his babies, but each relationship foundered because of his erratic and often violent behaviour. The influence he exerted over a series of much younger individuals and Steven, who was vulnerable because of his disability, is evidence not only of their need to set up an alternative family structure with Stewart as head of household, but of his need for a stable identity too. The narrative becomes pedantic, listing the numerous calls made from the property by Steven and Stewart which suggest they were inviting outside intervention in a situation that soon became untenable. It is important to list these calls because this intervention never came.

There was no evidence that Steven was a paedophile but this was the charge laid against him by Stewart and the other gang members before they sentenced him; it is interesting that this crime occurs mostly within families and subverts the concept of childhood and familial relationships. Stewart's fifteen year old girlfriend, who had recently miscarried his baby, was implicated in Steven's torture and abuse; later, after she was instrumental in his death, she returned to clean the flat and put on the washing in a parody of domestic life. The summary concluded that one reason for Steven's murder was that Stewart wanted to take over the tenancy of his bedsit.

Steven was punished for an imaginary transgression in a simulacrum of home, by his false family. Though he was instrumental in helping them create their fantasy home, by providing the accommodation, ultimately his difference made him a target for exclusion. His sadistic



punishment is a measure of the level of dislocation and perverted longing of some members of the Eat Pork generation. The summary also noted that Cornwall County Council's expenditure on supporting vulnerable adults in the community was the lowest of any county. The three separate elements of this chapter: the exhibition that claims a connection with Cornwall's idealised landscape and specifically with St.Ives' surfing culture and charts the deadly demise of the Californian dream, the opinions of alienated teenagers and the narrative of a murder carried out almost within sight of the celebrated Eden project subvert Cornwall's romantic construction and reveal the fault lines of contemporary Cornish society.

The chapter that follows, Arcadia, seems a happy escape from dark realities, but the cruise ship becomes a metaphor for Cornwall, even as the narrative appears to leave the county behind. In 1997 in an essay titled 'A Supposedly Fun Thing I Will Never Do Again' in a book of the same name, David Foster Wallace wrote:

I don't think it's an accident that 7NC Luxury cruises appeal mostly to older people ...Most of the exposed bodies to be seen...were in various stages of disintegration. And the ocean itself...turns out to be basically one enormous engine of decay...We saw some real horrors in port, local boats that looked...ravaged by what they float in ...Not so the Megalines' ships. It's not an accident they're all so white and clean, for they're clearly meant to represent the Calvinist triumph of capital and industry over the primal decay-action of the sea. The Nadir seemed to have a whole battalion of wiry little Third World guys who went around the ship...scanning for decay to overcome. (263)

This quotation raises several issues that are important to my narrative. Although I don't believe that the ship Foster Wallace sailed in was called the Nadir, our ship *was* named Arcadia. My narrative depicts a leaky floating idyll, an exercise in banality and a shockingly triumphal display of western capitalism in the face of Third World poverty. The narrative illuminates binary oppositions: Arcadia was a colonial enclave, 99% of cruisers were white and elderly, 100% of the staff who served them were not, the ship dwarfed the islands it visited and the wealth of the cruisers contrasted sharply with that of their mostly poor populations, while the ship was afloat the Western economy came crashing down, but cruisers seemed blissfully unconcerned. Foster Wallace describes the seductions of the Nadir experience, the giving up of control that takes place on board a ship where every need

is met which my narrative explores, but as the judge said, nobody gets a free cruise and a separate narrative thread brings a sharp injection of reality by the end of the chapter.

That there were transgressive presences aboard *Arcadia* is, in retrospect, to be expected. Every idyll generates its own transgressors. That these transgressors, our temporary neighbours, to whom we were oblivious, were so obvious to a security guard who identified them from the beginning, is testament to the overwhelming orthodoxy of the cruise experience. The calamitous consequence for the transgressors is indicative not only of a need to punish them but to purify society by their exclusion. The photographs circulated by Customs and Excise after their conviction, show headless bound bodies, three female, one male, three black, one white, all young. They are punitive images that in the process of denying identity also deny humanity. But as Jamaican newspaper reports asked: What did they expect, trying to smuggle cocaine on a ship full of coffin dodgers?

The doubles and ghosts I shared my two-week home with were sent to prison for twelve years. Why doubles? Because none of us were supposed to be there: we all went on a free cruise but only I got away without paying. I am not admitting to smuggling, but to a feeling that we had something in common and that our stories were somehow entangled. They were outsiders, tempted aboard a fantasy because of need or greed, and I was an outsider too, there for approximately the same reasons. For two weeks we were out of place and when we came home I wrote about them and was grateful, because the story of their transgression and exclusion illustrates an aspect of the narrative of *arcadia* that my text explores. In a section of the chapter that follows I attempt to re-habilitate Natalie, to give her back her voice; I even try on her identity. In 'Arcadia' I refer to a poem called *Turner* by David Dabydeen (2002), which is about a painting by J.M.W. Turner of a notorious incident at sea. In the poem, the captain of a ship who gives orders to throw slaves overboard, a baby who is drowned and a slave, whose head is just below the water, are all called Turner. Each Turner speaks out and, in a confusion of positioning and disidentification, addresses the artist's conscience. Dabydeen's poem expresses his resentment of Turner's colourful treatment of the event, of his appropriation of the story of the drowned slaves and its subsequent display in the Academy. In order to understand Natalie's role in my story and mine in hers, it is necessary to turn to current life writing theory for explanations. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson

discuss the way life writing theory has evolved since the 1990s and define three particular interrelated concepts that inform current theories about identity, location and address: performativity, positionality, and relationality (214).

Theories of performativity are about process, the ‘making’ or act of ‘composing’ that this essay set out to explore and, in terms of Paul John Eakin’s definition, which acknowledges that performativity of a life narrative entails ‘a shift from a documentary view of autobiography as a record of referential fact’ towards recognition that ‘life writing is a process of constructing a narratively constituted identity’ (Reading Autobiography 214), has already revealed and begun to explore. Smith and Watson describe the concept of positionality in terms of the way multiple, sometimes contradictory, subject positions emerge as effects of social relations defined by difference. They relate that theorists have employed terms such as: hybrid, border, nomadic, migratory to describe aspects of positionality defined by displacement and disidentification and declare ‘these terms gloss the “in-between”, the dynamic oscillations of subjects in motion and often uprooted’ (215). This idea of oscillation is illustrated in Turner but also in the uprooting and the unfixing of identity described by my narrative. The concept of relationality developed as a way of theorising literatures of marginality in the early 1990s and originally focused on binary differences. However, this rather rigid approach has been redefined and theories of relationality now acknowledge that autobiography, rather than a solitary exercise in which identity is defined by difference, is ‘an interactive story...often refracted through the stories of others’ (216). Refraction sounds so much like reflection but doesn’t mean the same thing at all. Whereas my image might be reflected back to me, however imperfectly, refraction is about deflection and in terms of identity, about the way that the experiences of another, though for moments it may appear to mirror one’s own and allow for certain recognitions, reflect quite different, alternative pathways. This idea begins to explain the role Natalie played in my narrative but it doesn’t explain my guilty reaction to it now. Judith Butler’s concept of relationality and opacity does that.

Smith and Watson describe the way Butler has used the concept of relationality to explore ideas about the vulnerability of the subject in self narration. Opacity, she has claimed, stems from the impossibility of the autobiographical subject fully understanding what drives it, as a

result of overlapping interactions with others and when a pact is made (with the self) to construct an autobiographical narrative that conforms to the requirements of storytelling. This restricting and re-routing of experience towards a satisfactory narrative outcome results, Butler suggests, in ‘a disorientating instability in self-knowing and introduces difference, unease and inscrutability’ (217). Butler claims it is precisely when the writer recognises opacity and acknowledges vulnerability through the limitations of self knowing and the limitations of knowing others that the ‘ethics of self accounting’ (217) begin to emerge.

This essay has already acknowledged and discussed the unknowingness, the opacity of self to self, that my narrative reveals and the fragmentation it explores. I acknowledge a very limited familiarity or connection with Natalie: we come from the same locality and for two weeks were outsiders living along the same corridor. Her newspaper photograph rendered her faceless, her position vulnerable and as a life writer I recognised a ‘good’ story. But we were not doubles and our relationship is mostly one of opacity, perhaps that is why Natalie speaks to my conscience and why I still feel a sense of relational unease.

Until my disquieting encounter with Natalie, my journey had crossed a familiar though fragile landscape and had revisited ideas I had explored before, but now it began to turn in a less familiar, though more personal direction and I was unsure where it would lead. In a section of *No Road* called ‘On the Road’ Muecke writes:

So far, the road, like all roads, has done the thinking for us. It seems empty up ahead except for the shimmering glimpse of something half-seen, half dreamed—it is the space of desire. (125)

The chapter ‘Imaginary Journeys’ originated because there were a number of narratives of varying lengths, fragments, that I could find no home for elsewhere. At first the only connecting thread seemed to be my participation. But as the section of this essay about narrative construction makes clear, when layers are superimposed, connections are revealed and even though there are multiple pathways, entrances and exits, a picture of a whole takes shape.

The chapter begins with a narrative which looks back to previously explored ideas, a nostalgic trip to an performance/exhibition called *Hollows Shop of Time: A Slice of Time Cake and Tea* which, like all such excursions, was disappointing. It is followed by an equally dismal trip to the *Cloud Nine Travel Agency* where I was asked to leave because I enquired what the artwork was about. These works appeared to be ironic interventions but, though I have no wish to trample on anyone else's nostalgic fantasies, I could detect no sense of emotion or longing. They could not have been more different from the Partou Zia exhibition I visited. Here the narrative makes another rendez-vous with death and my failings as a friend are exposed: the opportunity for shared intimacy was in the past, while I was briefly at the exhibition I was nostalgic, co-habiting with a ghost who could have been a friend, but I didn't go back.

'*Stalag Happy*' is a play about the way imaginings offer joyous escape from captivity, suggesting that if there really is no way back and no alternatives, imaginings are a method of bearing the unbearable. 'No Them Only Us' is the title of the section in which I make my imaginary visit to Natalie's house; it is interesting that this section leads into the imaginary journey to Bolton where the narrative explores a real connection between working class Lancastrians and Walt Whitman. I have attempted to re-situate Natalie in the security of a landscape for which I am nostalgic, but the title implies the uncertainty of our relationship. I discuss in the text the ambivalence of this title, at once inclusive and exclusive. These imaginary visits are juxtaposed with a real visit to Blackpool. In her analysis of nostalgia, Bohm explores how an exile might re-enact a ritual of fleeing home, of repeated leave taking, that whenever he feels homesick, he remembers how sick of home he had once been (288). 'No Them Only Us' reveals the community that I am nostalgic for, where intimacy comes about as a result of creative engagement but also shows the barren realities of 'home' from which I fled. This is followed by a short narrative about the misreading of signs and loss which requires no explanation, except to say that it is a disorientating journey into the unknown.

I have previously discussed *The Dark Monarch* exhibition in this essay in terms of the art of recuperation; *Skitterings* is also about escapist art that turns away from confronting the present. '*Stalag Happy*' showed the way that imaginings can make captivity bearable, but

this art is quite different and I have established that art that avoids engaging with realities is of no particular interest to me. But there is a meaningful encounter in 'Skitterings', when an artwork reveals a way of combining life story with visual art which would later provide inspiration, a way of working that I had been searching for.

'Turkey Feathers' is about a film, *Mespat*, made by Alan Micheson, a native American in which an image of the present is projected onto a wall of turkey feathers, a memorial to his tribal past. It is included in the narrative because it seems to epitomise the whole process of life writing. Am I not attempting in this essay to describe a narrative that does what Micheson's film does so much more eloquently? The turkey feathers represent the uneven textures of history, the journey from birth to death and they represent the way humans try to work out the mysteries of their existence in ritual. The film projected on the feathers, of the bright lights of Queens, contrasts with the shadowy journey of Micheson's canoe as it floats slowly down a polluted river in the dark. *Mespat* is beautiful, a film you want to see again and again but, though it arises from longing, it does not romanticise. It is an experiment with reality, a reminder that makes us acutely aware of our responsibility.

In 'Anger at an Art Exhibition', I visit an exhibition of paintings by Richard Cook, Partou Zia's partner, that were made in the two years after she died. Whereas, in the paintings Partou made when she knew she was dying she was always present, in these paintings she is unreachable, just beyond the edge of the picture. But these are not bleak works: they are full of light; the skies are huge as if to accommodate and depict yearning. Rather than weak and pathetic, as a letter to the local newspaper, *The Cornishman*, described them, these intensely emotional paintings are far seeing, inviting the viewer to come closer and look into the emptiness. Also included are a number of sketches which Richard Cook describes in terms of fragments of lost time, allowing him to repossess the moment, in response to unseen demands, when the time is right to turn these landscapes into paintings. I begin to wonder if these narratives in Imaginary Journeys might be sketches representing fragments of lost time but like the fragments Sebald collected on his walks these gatherings have been reworked and re-imagined. Now I think there is a narrative that connects them all, for they all reach out to something only half seen, half dreamed of.

Whereas 'Imaginary Journeys' seemed to be leading somewhere, the chapter that follows, 'Drift', marks the nadir of the journey. If identity (however opaque self-knowing might be) is connected via memory to the stories we tell about our self to our self, this chapter marks the point at which I became lost. An orouboros is a mythical creature that eats its own tale: it is in perpetual motion and is a symbol of reflexivity. But it is no way to construct a life narrative (though the contradictory part of me wants to ask if it might not be the only way). Semi-reluctantly, I was going on another 'free' cruise and decided in an ironic way to use this pre-planned voyage to explore ideas of psychogeography. The failure of the project was inbuilt but I decided to use the narrative of this failure as a way of opening up other possibilities. The journey began with a lecture on the avant garde which was followed by the first of several disappearances. In a section called 'Far From the Textual Suburbs' Muecke writes of the aesthetics of disappearance. While sitting in the outback he gets out his papers and reads from Baudrillard's *America* in which Baudrillard suggests that it is necessary to travel to acquire the guidelines which teach you the way to get lost. Muecke remarks:

So we were writers and painters working again on a kind of book...which would reveal a part of what constructs it as a genre: the power to induce departure. To leave the bitumen, to leave the roads and finally to get lost and maybe to find a way again. In this diminishing perspective of the road, disappearance and reappearance would become normative, like night and day, the shutter opening and closing on a cinematic world. (133)

I have always felt lost when reading Baudrillard and now I know why: he intended me to be so. If you don't venture out you will never have the experience of being lost: this chapter ventures into other spaces for which I had no map or compass.

Lost in the ironies of the avant garde I reached out to a Cornish connection and tried to use Ralph Rumney as a guide, but there could be no less reliable companion and the narrative kept stalling. I re-wrote and re-wrote but could find no way of making sense. Drift was part of my vocabulary, the Situationists were a glamorous bunch, I liked the idea of deconstructing spectacle, and I could see the Lettristes are still around in more than traces, but I could not find a way for the narrative to progress. It was only when a friend, who had a different perspective, said 'You're lost in your own narrative about being lost' that I realised what I should do. The way out was absolute simplicity: Gallileo's sketches of the moon,

from the furthest perspective, through an adapted child's toy, he had perfect vision. The complications fell away and I had learned that, sometimes it is necessary to get lost in the confusion, so that you can re-appear further down the road.

If I am honest, and the point of this essay has been to reflect on my own process, then the final chapter of my narrative was the simplest to write, but for me, the most difficult to read. It tells a story of the summer of 2010 which was always going to be one of upheaval because of the closure of my husband's art gallery. At the beginning, there is a list of some items that my husband decided to keep; it is only a fragment of the things he has set aside because he thinks they tell his story. A line from a W.S.Graham poem found in this miscellany, 'On the Other Side of Words' is the title I chose for this chapter because so much of the story it tells is between the lines or just the other side of narrative description. Death has been stalking this narrative all along but I thought that reflecting on the death of my mother was as close as it would get. I suppose that what the chapter brings chiefly into focus is the yearning to belong that is the chief characteristic of the displaced person.

I visited an exhibition at Tate St.Ives and watched a team of artists working on '*No Big Deal Thing*' which the artist claims is about bringing the personal into public space and I attended an academic conference about the same thing, called 'Intimate Publics' after the term coined by Lauren Berlant. Berlant gives this definition:

What makes a public sphere intimate is an expectation that consumers of its particular stuff already share a world view and emotional knowledge. A certain circularity structures an intimate public, therefore: its consumer participants are perceived to be marked by a commonly lived history'. (vii)

At the conference though, I was an outsider, a life writer, not a life writing scholar, and not admitted to the intimacy I longed for. The conference was just another inhospitable shelter, but I learned some things. I witnessed the vulnerability of life writing critics when they write about their own lives, or the lives of those closest to them. In her 'Diary of a Memoirist' (2004), Nancy K. Miller describes how, after she had read from this diary at a seminar, someone asked 'why he should care about these people?'(159) and she did not know how to answer. Miller says that for some at the seminar, the expectation was that life writing should



focus on giving accounts of ‘vulnerable subjects’, a term she ascribes to Tom Couser, used to describe people suffering grave illness or disability. But I had witnessed Couser’s vulnerability at the conference; writing about it, for an article I had been invited to submit to a scholarly journal raised what Miller calls ‘ethical dilemmas’. Earlier in the memoir, on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2002, Miller had asked:

Whose story is it? However uncomfortable, the truth of human relations resides in the fact of relationship...Add memory and we can begin to see how delicate our notions about describing any relationship can be...If...every account of the self includes relations with others, how can an autobiographer tell a story without betraying the other, without violating the other’s privacy, without doing harm, but nonetheless telling the story from one’s own perspective? (153)

In her entry for 13<sup>th</sup> November 2002 Miller writes ‘Sometimes I have the uncomfortable feeling that the truest ethical position is closely related to silence, to self silencing’ (157). But by 4<sup>th</sup> January 2003 she has decided that ‘telling my story truthfully does not necessarily constitute a betrayal of the people who shared in it, even if in the telling I illuminate some of the darker moments from my point of view...The issue, finally... is whether I have a story worth telling and for whom’(158). Miller is working through aspects of relationality, acknowledging opacity and recognising her own vulnerability, which Butler figured as central to the ethics of life writing. Finally she asks, ‘When we expose the narratives of our lives to others through the forms of life writing, do we not all become vulnerable subjects?’(159).

Despite my outsider status, I returned from the conference energised and armed with a new vocabulary and an analytic slant. But the whole edifice came tumbling down the next day. How could I write about vulnerable subjects in the light of Angela’s death? How could I not? In *Vulnerable Subjects* (2004) Tom Couser, describes self reflexivity as ‘conscientious and scrupulous consideration of who might be hurt by life writing and how’ (201). I have never set out to hurt anyone by including them in ‘my story’ but when my story is also theirs how am I to police the boundaries? If Angela had not killed herself I would not have written about her, so like Natalie she becomes a character, integral to the narrative and, since this is the final chapter, her end provides a natural conclusion, what Miller, at the IABA conference called ‘the arc of resolution’. Is this what Butler meant when she wrote about the disquieting

pact we make when we apply narrative conventions to life story? When Couser wept at the conference was he acting out? Playing a role in his own narrative, his tussle with life writing ethics, even on a subconscious level? I don't think so, but I could not leave these questions unaired. That is why Angela's suicide does not come at the end of my last chapter but at the beginning and the chapter goes on to tell the story of Art Mama and my own behaviour at my father's apartment. Art Mama could be anyone's mother; she could be me. I found the images her son made of her distasteful, whereas my friend Anna took a more distanced view and found them compassionate. We were both right. The story the photographs tell is a shared story of two lives lived in one small space; the photos are intimate because of the entwinedness of their subjects; you could not slip a knife between them. It is us, the viewers outside their experience who have to decide where we stand. I think now that I included the descriptions of my father's preparations for his trip to the day centre out of despair, as an illustration of my reluctance to say goodbye.

I began this essay with a story about a visit to a mine and I described it as a journey into the heart of things that would serve as a metaphor for the experience of the life writer writing. My final chapter is also a metaphor for that writer writing: I went to a funeral and for moments found intimacy; I went to my home and found it empty; I realised my vulnerability in a street with tourists passing by; I uncovered the stories my husband had been concealing for years; and, finally, I engaged with ethical questions about what life writers should write but did not provide answers. This essay has required me to give an account both from inside the experience of making and from a detached academic perspective and much has been revealed to me. This is my answer to Nancy K. Miller: we also recognise ourselves as vulnerable subjects when required to reflect upon and give critical accounts of the ways we write life narratives.

The question of whether my creative dissertation fulfilled its original aims is complex since it is a record of a series of journeys/explorations and there would have been no point in setting out if its end had been known at its beginning. Earlier in this essay, I referred to Michel de Certeau's idea that every story is a travel story, written by footsteps, that 'make the journey before or during the time the feet perform it' (115). My journey began with a set of negative concepts: I did not want to write romantically about Cornwall and did not want to make a

certain kind of art. I looked for methods of writing an alternative version of Cornwall but the sign posts I followed led in myriad directions and I learned there was no one way of creating a portrait, that if life writing is about bearing witness, only a multiplicity of perspectives could approximate a truth. The chosen method, of collaging narrative fragments, reflects this and the omissions, disruptions and sometimes surprising juxtapositions stimulate the creative reading experience that interests me and that I value both as writer and reader. Ultimately and unexpectedly, this journey lead to a realisation of my own vulnerability and that, for me, the idea of academic detachment is a falsehood, but I do not consider the project to have failed. What I realised in this process is that I am involved in an ongoing project, that to be creative requires an openness and willingness to continually re-assess and evolve. I have learned that stasis is the enemy of creative and/ or critical thinking and the valuable lesson that being open to suggestion and possibility is the only way to journey.

**MAPPING/NAVIGATING/KNOWING.**

In 1813 when the Reverend William Buckland was trying to make sense of the earth's history he discovered that he could identify his surroundings merely from smelling the soil. Lost on a dark night, he dismounted from his black mare, put his nose to a handful of earth then declared 'Uxbridge'.

My son brings a map home from school and tells me all year sevens have been given a map of where they're from. His is Land's End, Penzance and St.Ives, Ordnance Survey Map 102 from Hell's Mouth, where Chloe leapt to her death, to The Wolf Rock, grid reference SW 268119. The scale of this Explorer Map, Essential for Outdoor Activities and Revised for Significant change in 2003 and for Selected Change in 2005, is 4cm to 1km. When unfolded it covers our kitchen table, the distance from unfolded laundry to empty easel. I think I know what is meant by significant and selected change.

In Blackburn, where, years ago, I went to school, a Geography teacher criss-crosses the classroom, hands out maps and tells year sevens, 'here's a map of where you're from'. Hassan takes his map home and proudly lays it on his kitchen table. His granny peers at the unfamiliar place names: Tockholes, Feniscowles, Entwistle. With a small finger she traces the river Blackwater and thinks of the river that flows in another place, the place where she once was from. She remembers how it rose annually and broke its banks and when the water receded, the landscape, changed almost beyond recognition, was more fertile. Some terrible years whole villages disappeared and children, crops and farm animals were swept away, but there were other years when the river itself disappeared, leaving behind only dusty channels in the red earth. On the map on her kitchen table the river Blackwater also disappears. It disappears under Blackburn's town centre, under closed down factories and warehouses, to re-emerge where culverts once discharged the foaming effluent of a hundred different manufacturing processes and now there are only riverside walks, loft conversions, and superstores. The river, once clean, then foul, is now becoming clean again and downstream, where the Blackwater meets the Ribble, salmon are returning to bask in the shallows.

After his seafaring years my father in law, KeeFu, met a willing woman, jumped ship and settled in Liverpool where he raised a family of seven on the seedy edge of Chinatown before moving to Fazackerley then Runcorn New Town. The new town, built on a desolate stretch

of post-industrial wasteland, is surrounded by a network of motorways and slip roads that connect it to the M6 but also contain and isolate the Merseysiders who wanted to find better lives and flocked to leave Liverpool in the seventies. They were housed in wind blasted gulags of innovative design, blocks of flats built to look like beached sailing ships, with painted portholes and slippery decks. Bus lanes and walkways intersect closes and avenues but all paths lead to Shopping City, five levels of cut price retail outlets, betting shops and Bingo, patrolled by private security, serviced by piss swilled underground car parks.

When the children were quite grown up, Keefu went back to China to see the family before he got too old to travel. His sons joked that he would find his bicycle still chained to the railings at Shanghai docks, but after a long flight and many hours on a crowded train he arrived to find the village of his birth had disappeared without trace. He recognized the geographical location, but of the village there was no sign. He had to return to the city to solve the mystery. The crops had been unreliable and the village economy failing, so it had been decided by the central administrative committee that the village would be re-located. Herded into trucks, their houses razed, possessions sifted by surly Red Guard, the villagers had been put down 200 miles away. Yes, they smilingly confirmed, when Keefu at last arrived, the ground was better here. Two crops a year. Work for everyone. So much work that only the very old and infirm stayed home during the dusty days to pass the time with him, to pick over the memories. When Keefu came back to Runcorn he brought a photograph of his family and on the wall behind them, hanging from a nail, is my wedding photograph. There I am outside St.Bartholomew's Church, Blackburn in my long white dress, clutching the arm of number one son, my longhaired art school bridegroom, smiling from the newspaper covered walls of a house in a village in China that has no name.

When Keefu got back from the airport he was pleased to see his family but cried because his fancy goldfish were dead. They died in transit: hidden in plastic bags inside his hand luggage, they hadn't really stood a chance. He had wanted to bring them back as living souvenirs and had gambled on their inter-continental survival.

A couple of years later, when he decided he was too young to die, he invested in another fish and chip shop. Driving up the M6, he was looking out for the Bs but somehow missed the

turning for Blackburn. Fifteen miles further he saw a B and turned on to the M65. When he arrived in Blackpool, he was disorientated, couldn't recognize his surroundings, so he parked his Hillman Minx and took a taxi to inspect his new premises. But, though he argued with the driver, when the taxi drove away he was still in unfamiliar surroundings and his chip shop was nowhere to be seen. Who would have thought two towns beginning with B would have a Station road? And how was he to find his way back to the Hillman and home?

Our house is easy to find on the map. We trace the River Hayle from the estuary Bar to the Causeway, pass the sewage works and the driving range, then the road loops towards the river and this is where we live, after the cemetery, before the chapel. But even though there are instructions, I can't make out our unique reference position. You have to quote Eastings then Northings but I can't do that because I don't know how to properly read a map. Greek architects marked the North South axis by observing the shortest shadow cast by the sun's zenith, but the instructions here state that, at the center of our map, true North is 2.44 East of grid North and magnetic North is estimated at 1.09 West of grid North for July 2007. Annual change is approximately 09 East. I wonder where that leaves us today and at what speed are we heading east?

An ageing punk poet and her young bridegroom invite us to their wedding reception at the Admiral Benbow in Chapel Street, Penzance. The pub is decorated in nautical bric-a-brac and the bride stands in front of a rusty section of the superstructure of the Torrey Canyon to make her speech. The Torrey Canyon sank on March 18<sup>th</sup> 1967. Waking at 6.30am to find his ship east of Scilly instead of west and despite having charts with insufficient detail for close navigation, the captain decided to sail through the narrow deep water channel between Scilly and Lands End. The tide was running left to right and the Seven Stones reef was submerged, though marked by a lightship, when the Torrey Canyon turned into the gap between islands and reef. Steering clear of fishing boats, the captain re-plotted his position and discovered that his ship, which was then travelling at 17 knots, was only 2.8 miles from the reef. The helmsman hurriedly changed course to north but when their position was re-plotted, the ship was still heading for the reef. An emergency course change to 340 degrees north-west was made, but minutes later the Torrey Canyon hit Pollards Rock which ripped open six tanks of crude oil. The full cargo discharged and polluted the shores of Cornwall

and South West England and the Normandy coast of France, poisoning the seas and laying waste to the biology of the region. Enquiries found poor manoeuvrability and the slow response of the ship had contributed to the cause but a navigational mistake, made by a junior officer when using the bearing and distance method to plot position, coupled with the delayed reaction of the captain, were the main causes of the disaster.

At the reception a photograph album slowly circulates the room. When it arrives at our table we look at pictures of the wedding and the groom tells us it took place on his family farm up near the Rhodesian border. He's already had quite a lot to drink and I think he has made a mistake because it's a long time since I've heard anyone call Zimbabwe Rhodesia. This is the first time we've met, so I don't know him, but I can't believe he's chosen to use the old colonial name. Then the bride is speaking. She's wearing her punk wedding outfit and is so glad we could all come to this celebration. She points to some people still trying to find seats and says that some folk have come from as far away as Mannaccan, so it's understandable they arrived so late and we all laugh because Mannaccan isn't very far away. But, no really, she has something important she wants to say. It's that many people come to Cornwall to live or visit, but they don't get Cornwall. They just don't get it. But Eugene does and that's why she married him. Because he gets it. I wonder whether she thinks that I get it because, though I haven't traveled as far as Eugene, I wasn't born here either. Then she says the buffet is now open, so we join the queue. There are samosas and a delicious anchovy and olive dip, as well as miniature Cornish pasties with vegetarian fillings. We're tucking in when the bride and groom come over and he is handed a tall glass of Sambucca and gin by his new Cornish cousins, who seem to have taken him to their hearts. They tell him to drink up, he is family now and the punk poet says that as soon as she can, she will leave the white goods department of John Lewis in Sloane Square and they will make their home here. They will return to God's own country, where they belong, when they can afford to.

You can make a map of anything, of fudge factories and theme parks, and once I thought of embroidering a map of Cornwall that showed house re-possession, later I began to wonder what a suicide map would look like. Cornwall is poor, an undermined county, her geology riddled with workings that once provided wealth. At Levant, a mine where re-enactments are now staged, a National Trust guide pointed to a map of the underground workings and

said to us ‘I like to remind visitors of the fragile nature of the land we’re standing on’. I’ve remembered the phrase ever since. Years ago, when we were on holiday here, I visited this mine and saw miners coming back to the surface covered in red ore. Sidney Penaluna, a miner my father met in the North Inn at Pendeen, guided us through the ramshackle sheds where the crushed ore was washed and sifted for tin. I remember air full of choking red dust. Sidney knew the workings like the veins on the back of his hand but it was thought too dangerous for us to go down there. I had a good idea of what it would be like. When my granddad was thirteen, his first job was to help sink the shaft of a coal mine high on the east Lancashire moors. When I was twelve and profit had started to shift out of coal, he was sixty two and had the job of removing the pumps so that the mine would flood. He took us down for a look around before it was too late. The mine is still there, though derelict, its tunnels flooded, its galleries collapsed. Marked only on old maps, it hasn’t been preserved for tourists and there is no way of visiting it except in memory. But memories provide uncertain narratives and like maps, can never tell the whole story. I recall an iron door set into the wall of a tunnel. A hatch slid back and I stood on tiptoe to see through it. There was black water, just behind the door. But is this possible? I was wearing a miners’ helmet with a torch but would there have been enough light to see? Would the iron door really have held back the weight of water? Or have I conjured a narrative, out of the dark? Maps, like memory, are selective, they show contours and routes, even visitor attractions, the lie of the land, but contours are shallow metaphors. Perhaps what counts here, in this piece of writing, is the underground metaphor. Before my grandfather was promoted to under-manager, he was a dynamiter, responsible for drilling and packing explosives that would reveal the seam of coal. You could say he worked a line of narrative from coal face to surface. Writers, like me, drift across the landscape map in hand, reading and misreading the signs, bearing in mind grid references to seek out shifting locations. They mine lower levels for deeper narratives of space and time and orientation then bring to the surface what has been hidden for years to be sorted and sifted for worth. Maps, like memory, are selective.



## LONG: Walking Anti-Clockwise.

I used to be an artist but there came a time when painting wasn't enough, when I wanted to look beneath and beyond the token on the wall. I felt trapped by my subject matter, Margaret Drabble summed it up when she wrote in the Guardian about the 'polite, typically female genre of the still life' which the French call 'nature morte'. Though I operated in a liminal space on the edge of abstraction, I realized that I'd been marking time for years and had slipped comfortably from youth to middle age without noticing. Pussy willow, Bill Marshall pots, pears and soft furnishings; people liked my paintings on their walls. But that wasn't enough anymore. I wanted to get out of the kitchen and make marks that meant something, before it was too late.

I started to look around for other ways of making art and became interested in the landscape artist Richard Long. Long describes what he does as a 'description of the real space and experience of landscape' and you can't put a red spot on reality and experience. I liked his work because it was enigmatic, it challenged my perceptions and opened new ways of thinking and responding to landscape. This all began when I saw a work of Long's titled Hundred Mile Walk. It confounded critics because Long had marked points on a map of Ireland that were not one hundred miles apart. I had recently been reading essays by Seamus Heaney and thought I understood the title. It was obvious the title didn't refer to an actual measure of distance but to an understanding of the sectarian divide, the distance between fixed points in the landscape of Irish society. Heaney had written of the very different homes of his grandparents who lived either side of this divide. Protestants and Catholics, they lived within a few miles, their two communities linked by a country lane and low bridge but as Long had recognized, the distance was far greater than any map could define. I was excited by the possibilities. Long confounded expectation, he crossed boundaries, wasn't polite but political. Bugger life drawing, the peaches and plums, Long is the real thing, he walks the line.

I'd discovered an organization called Greenmaps that links mapping projects around the world, a man in India was embroidering maps onto old parachutes, Donkijote.com were

making a map of Asturia using an analogue donkey and digital tools whatever that might mean. Then I heard about a woman called Dom who lived locally and worked for Greenmaps and rang her to arrange a meeting. But when Dom was in St.Ives I was in St.Erth and when I went to see her at the Belgravia gallery, she was working at the Tate. She lives on The Lizard peninsula and her drive home passes the road to my house, but we were never in the same place at the same time. Then, on April Fools day, she e mailed, was I going to the Common Ground event tomorrow? Richard Long was going to walk in an anti clockwise direction from Chapelporth on the north Cornish coast and a writer, Peter Kirby, would walk in a clockwise direction from Porthchapel on the south coast. Each would walk 26 miles before meeting at Tate St.Ives at 6.30 to sign books and answer questions.

When I got to the Tate café it was very crowded and I hardly recognized anyone. I found Dom and her friend out on the terrace and though there was a lot I wanted to ask, we looked out to sea and chatted about the price of houses. I told Dom that, if I'd known what time to expect him, I could have watched Long walk past the end of my road today as he crossed the Hayle estuary. We were just beginning to talk about maps when we were called inside because Long and Kirby were ready and the discussion was about to begin. An academic, an expert in textiles, was conducting the discussion and I was still trying to find a good place to stand when I missed her first question. But I heard Richard Long's reply: 'I'm not a political artist. I am not concerned with boundaries. If I cannot cross a river in full spate I make a detour and just mark the detour on the map of the walk'.

I couldn't believe what I heard. I knew this should not, could not be. I looked at the faces looking at Long and expected some of them to appear puzzled, but they were all smiling, urging him on. Then Long said 'If I was the last person on earth I would not make art because there would be no-one to look at it' and I thought all this time he has been walking in an anti clockwise direction while I was heading clockwise, journeying sunwise and there was no way we were going to meet at the Tate tonight.

Chapelporth is a beach used by surfers. The National Trust, who own the surrounding land, don't mind overnight camping, but there are warnings on the internet against drinking from

the stream, which contains high quantities of arsenic. The stream flows from a mine adit further up the valley, skirts a busy café, then splashes across the beach where, on my first visit, small children were paddling and filling plastic buckets. A sign warns of the dangers of falling rock, but sunbathers were scattered around the foot of the cliff taking advantage of the unusually warm Spring weather, seemingly oblivious to the fault lines in the fragile overhang.

I come back on a quieter day and arrive at high tide, when pale turquoise waves are lapping the edge of the car park. The National Trust man is having a full English breakfast with the woman from the café on a bench facing the sea. We chat as he finds change for my parking fee. I tell them about Long's walk and he says he wishes he'd known about it, that he studied in London with Anthony Caro until he got sick of welding and shifted to Winchester. Long is his hero. He smiles, tells me they are both artists and asks what my interest is. I say I want to find out more about the way artists relate to the landscape, how the romancing of Cornwall has affected their work and the woman, who is a mature student at Falmouth College of Art, waves her fork in the air and says 'Well you can't get more romantic than this'.

I'm about to begin the climb up the valley when I notice a sign on the café wall, it describes how the valley floor was once given over to the processing of tin and Chapel Coombe was once full of deafening industrial activity. Where I have parked, the Cornish stamps, driven by a 24 foot diameter breast fed wheel (the type of mining technology Cornish tinnerns took with them when they migrated and which is said to have powered America's industrial revolution), pulverized stony ore from five mines into heavy sand. You can see the remains of the wheel supports on the granite walls of the National Trust lavatory. The sign says heathers now thrive on land contaminated by mine waste, that there are ravens and peregrines and that greater horseshoe bats use the abandoned mine shafts for winter hibernation. The path rises up the Coombe through swathes of wild garlic, then switches back and climbs more steeply, tracing the contour of the cliff. Pausing to catch my breath, I read another sign: Mark Parkinson, Director of the Planning Inspectorate hereby issues notice of a proposal to modify the definitive map order pursuant to paragraph 8 (2) of schedule 15...but the rest of the notice has blown away and someone has sellotaped another one underneath, stating that this site has been treated with a contaminant for the containment of the invasive Japanese Knotweed.

About maps, Peter Kirby says that Long's stride invigilates ordinance survey; according to him, nature looks forward to Long.



**Figure 1: Wheal Charlotte**

The climb becomes more difficult, slippery because the ground underfoot is made up of slithers of rocks of irregular sizes. I stop, pick up and spit on some small pieces; the colour is stunning, blood red, orange, rusty iron oxides, white veined, black veined. I look around and there are wildflowers everywhere, purple violets, pink thrift and many more I can't name growing amongst the crevices in the granite. Everything is so vivid because the sky is bouncing with light. Across the bay, the ruined chimneys of Wheal Coates and Wheal

Freedom are silhouetted against the brightest blue while far below, the turquoise tide is beginning to recede, revealing a tiny golden triangle of gleaming sand. Visitors are beginning to arrive in the car park and just overhead five crows are noisily mobbing a gull. Then I broach Mulgram Hill and turn south into a silent, alien landscape, a scorched earth, smashed smithereens of rust red rock, crimson slag and dark grey shale. Paths intersect heaps of detritus and a 200 foot cliff face of slag slides down to the sea. There is little growing here, what gorse there is, is low and black, as if singed. It's as though hot ashes and acid are underfoot and you almost expect your feet to burn when you cross the cinders. At the top of a hillock, surrounded by a tangle of barbed wire fencing, all that remains of Wheal Charlotte's engine house is a single tower with a perfect granite arch. The craftsmen built it so carefully it could have been a cathedral, it's certainly a monument.

A softly spoken woman asks if Long's walk can be interpreted as a celebration of the beauty of the Cornish landscape. 'Yes' he replies, 'it could'. Someone else asks what he thinks of the geology, whether he has collected any samples today, but Long says he did not think about the nature of the land he was walking on. Another asks what happens to the rocks he collects to make his art. Are they finally returned to the place he takes them from? For the first time, Long laughs. Of course not, he says, when his art works are not being exhibited they are stored away.

Could I touch the stones? Would you expect to touch a Jackson Pollock? Long replies.

I look down at the path, searching for that special stone, then guiltily slip a fragment into my pocket and hope it is not cadmium.

I skirt the wasteland, passing the Towanroath shaft where the iron cap, which is unbelievably close to the edge of the cliff, is beginning to rust away. I think the cliffs must be eroding quite swiftly here and wonder what will happen when the mine workings fall into the sea. The path is quite broad and well maintained, though in places it invites you dangerously close to the edge. Now I have left Wheal Charlotte behind, the landscape changes and something

sweet perfumes the air. There are grassy hollows in the bracken where lovers could curl up together and skylarks are singing in the yellow speckled gorse. I step aside to let a runner pass, the first person I've seen up here above the flight of birds. Down below, seagulls are cruising the cliff and the tide is revealing secret bays unvisited except by seals. As the path begins to drop down towards Porthtowan four elderly hikers pass by and two men are exercising five black dogs. Out in the bay surfers bob on the waves.

At Porthtowan, outside the Blue Bar, the sand dunes are fenced off for re-sowing and at the south side of the bay the coastal path rises past dilapidated thirties bungalows which are under renovation. A little inland is a row of charming cottages, Forthvean road, which ends suddenly in a mesh and triple barbed wire fence that straddles the road giving the motorist no option but to turn back. A fading sign states that this is a prohibited place within the meaning of the Official Secrets Act and unauthorized persons entering the area will be arrested. A further sign informs that all persons entering or leaving this establishment are liable to be searched by authorized personnel and that refusal to comply may result in further action being taken. It would be fairly easy to climb around the side of the fence and I go into the ploughed field that runs alongside it, thinking it would be interesting to explore the site, have that feeling of being watched on an open road that I had last year at Wheal Jane. Then I find another sign that says the premises are patrolled by RAF police dogs and think better of it. I turn my car around and take the first road left towards the sea. I want to find the cliff path again, to find out how close Long's walk took him to Nancekuke. Because, though no ordinance survey map will say so, this is the site of Nancekuke, the chemical weapons base that supplied Sarin to Porton Down in the 60s and where, it was alleged in parliament as recently as 2001, workers were poisoned by leaks of the deadly nerve gas.

The base began operations as a chemical agent production and research facility in 1951. It was felt safer to site these activities in a remote rural setting, an area where there were less people to ask what was going on. Between 1954 and 1956 the plant manufactured about 20 tons of Sarin and continued as a defensive research base until 1976 when de-commissioning began. Remaining stocks of chemical agents were transferred to Porton Down between 1976 and 1980 while equipment and substances associated with the work were disposed of onsite and their locations marked.



Figure 2: Nancekuke

Richard Long says he once made a walk between England, Poland and Germany but he has never made an underground walk.

In 1976 my work colleague, Chris Hudson, was only 16 and a member of Portreath diving club. One night, when she was diving in deep water about a mile from shore, she heard music playing. Sandie Shaw or Petula Clark she can't be sure now. The other members of the diving group also heard it, including the leader, Robert Osborne, who claimed to have heard music several times in the same spot. Like many local men, Chrissie's father had worked at the base and told stories of the tunnels that ran out for miles under the sea and about the huge echoing empty rooms down there and the lifts used to access the different levels. He warned her to keep away from Nancekuke, such a dangerous place, to never set

foot on the damaged land. But Chrissie was curious and wanted to find out more, to discover if rumours about nuclear submarines and underwater caves were true. So she joined a small group led by a geologist from Camborne School of Mines and they began to spend long nights out on the heath hidden from view. During those nights she found out more about the geologist's work. How he was overseeing a project at Troon where bore holes were drilled deep into the granite and packed with explosives. Conveniently, the dull thud of underground explosions was mistaken in Camborne for Concorde's sonic boom. Simultaneously, the same work was going on at Aberdeen: testing the suitability of granite for storing radioactive waste. Shortly afterwards, local and national press were informed of what was going on and Chris still smiles when she remembers the trouble that caused.

One night at about 3 am, when Chris and her friends outside Nancekuke were thinking of going home to bed, a twelve-wheeled lorry rolled up to the gates and one of the boys jumped up to photograph the load. Immediately, the group was surrounded by military policemen and the camera confiscated. Chris still maintains she saw a missile being delivered that night, but there was never any evidence to prove warheads were stored there. Apart from a TV programme that reported Portreath had been high on a list of Russia's cold war targets.

More recently, concern has been raised about the alleged dumping of chemical waste in the sea off Portreath. The RAF claimed in 2001 that there are no chemical weapons stored or dumped at Nancekuke, but that, 'to make the site safer for the future and remove any potential threat' a multi million pound clean up operation was planned. Surfers Against Sewerage, a local environmental group, welcomed the news, demanding the action should be 'thorough and extensive' and include 'every orifice on the site'. They questioned whether environmental assessments carried out incorporated all the mine shafts, because they were in possession of pictures showing 'four disused pipes in caves under the site from which toxic chemicals might be leaching into the sea'. The MOD replied with a consultant's report, showing that the vegetation growing on top of the dumpsites was home to a variety of birds, rabbits and other wildlife. Of course that doesn't prove the land isn't toxic or that nothing sinister is buried under it. Though recently, I heard from a man who had been down there who said that, while he found the warren of halls and shafts full of dangers and cut short his visit, the most surprising thing he discovered was a room full of rusting motorcycles.



Peter Kirby says Richard Long teaches us to trust a walk.

The road I take is pitted and the car lurches over bumps and mud filled craters. Later, I wonder if someone has created these ridges in order to slow cars down, give their drivers time to re-assess, because the road ends abruptly at the cliff edge. Someone has erected a makeshift fence, metal panels fixed to two flimsy looking posts, but the intention is good. I climb through the fence to peer over and see that a builder has been dumping his waste here, broken patio slabs, plaster and corrugated tin. Much further below, belly up on the granite, are the rusting remains of a car. It's impossible to tell the make or model or how long it's been there. Even the colour has leached away. I can't work out if the sea ever rises to cover it and I wonder if the body was ever found, if it washed away on the tide or if rescuers clambered down to retrieve it. And I think of X my marriage guidance counselor. In 1986 my husband needed some space and left me to bring up our two sons then aged 5 and 2. At first I was lost, hopeless, not knowing who to turn to, who could help me sort out the thoughts in my head. I went to the natural health centre in Penzance and met the counselor. She was wise and thoughtful and younger than me. I remember how vibrant she was, her dark shiny hair and sparkling eyes. I only went to see her a few times because I had the support of good friends. Two years later, when my life had taken a turn for the better and I was sleeping again, I read in the local newspaper that she had leaped from the cliffs at Porthtowan. Her family wrote an obituary that described her as forever dancing through the air. It took my breath away.

Peter Kirby claims that grass gets springier the closer you get to the sea to help suicides jump. Keep breathing.

Richard Long says that it is when he is walking that ideas come for new walks. And when I turn around and follow the road away from the edge of the cliff I have the strangest feeling that somehow I have changed my mind. It comes from nowhere and is very curious because my intentions are only to follow Long's path and later on, to collect my son from school. The only reason I am up here alone in this exposed place called Tobban Horse is to check out the landscape Long has passed through.

I carry on south, skirting the concrete perimeter fence of Nancekuke until I reach a curious set of buildings. Beside the remains of several small enclosures, a crumbling concrete tunnel reaches up towards a chimney that masquerades as a beacon, flat topped and six sided. Further down, the tunnel is collapsing and I can see it is lined with cream glazed tiles. I resist the urge to climb inside and crawl along the tunnel because I am claustrophobic and it would never do, but I want to know more. I want to know the purpose of these ruined buildings that are connected by underground passageways. This is MOD land, so are they part of the military establishment or older mine workings? They don't look like any mine buildings I have come across before and there is no sign of a shaft, nor is the chimney, if that is what it is, connected to an engine house. I wonder what Long made of it. Did he pause and raise his binoculars here? He said he had seen a peregrine. Or did he sit on the side of this concrete bunker to take a sip of water? He has never made an underground walk but what is the point of walking above ground if he does not take account of his surroundings? Is that what he means when he says he does not think about the nature of the land he is walking on?

The nature of the land at Reskajeage Downs, south of Portreath, has been of interest to many over the years. No-one knows the origins of a legend that says a giant called Wrath wrecked ships along this coast and stored and ate sailors in a sea cave known as Wrath's Cupboard. The National Trust owns the land now and on the internet the entries are mainly about the beauty and remoteness of this part of the coastal footpath. But there are other entries, less easy to access, which refer to the Reskajeage Farm Test Site citing Nirex reports about experimental programmes for long-term management of radioactive waste. According to Nirex, the London Dumping Convention states that it is legal to dispose of this waste in geological formations under the ocean floor only if the formations are accessed by tunnel from the landmass. Where better to bring your poison and store it than Wrath's Cupboard? And it is possible local men will be glad of the work.

There are two Deadman's Coves south of Reskajeage, and if Long had looked down into the most southerly he would have seen the remains of the last ship to wreck on this shore. Every man except one was rescued and he met his fate out of sheer gratitude. Within feet of the cliff he raised his arms in thankfulness, but the gesture sent him tumbling from the hoist and his rescuers could only look on as he plummeted towards the waves.

Long says his walks are art when he says they are.

There is a painting called Sun Dance hanging in my husband's gallery. It is by Ray Atkins, a painter whose technique I have admired in the past. But when I saw his work at the Broken Ground event at the Wheal Jane mine in April 2000 I was less convinced. I thought Atkins had romanticized the derelict landscape, camouflaged its features in clots of vermillion and cobalt, ignored the poisoned tailings dams in favour of gorse and cherry. I thought the paintings contained no sense of scale or history. Now, after a family tragedy, Atkins has a new partner whose youthful vigour he celebrates in paint. Sun Dance depicts a twirling nude, tumbling headlong into a choppy sea of ultramarine and cobalt, like a bride descending a staircase. Another obituary takes my breath away.

At Hell's Mouth, a low fence keeps onlookers away from the edge. On a good day there will be little to see except the churning waves and possibly seal families romping on the rocks below. But all too often, emergency services will be at work, the inshore lifeboat standing by. At Beachy Head, Britain's premier suicide spot, there is a telephone box in case the Samaritans can help you. Here, at Cornwall's preferred jumping off point, there is only a seedy café, where the owner complains that leapers have been known to leave without paying or taking their dogs with them. It was at Hell's Mouth that the Leach master potter's new American wife accelerated her Ford into the void and where Chloe Atkins jumped to her death one Saturday morning, after making arrangements to meet her mother. It's true that since Chloe came home from art school she seemed lost and in despair and had suffered from a drug psychosis, but lately she had been getting better, had apparently turned a corner. No-one knows what made the Ray Atkins' nineteen year old daughter go to Hell's Mouth that day, fail to keep her appointment.

After Hell's Mouth the footpath passes along the Iron Cliffs where mariners nearing land find their ship's compasses can no longer be trusted, madly spinning clockwise then anti clockwise because of the nature of the mineral deposits. As a result, before Virginia Woolf's lighthouse was built on Godrevy Island, ships became lost in fog and many foundered on the Stones reef. One way to safety was to follow the crimson vein of mine waste, which emerged

into the bay from the Red river and traced the coastline into Hayle estuary providing safe passage between reef and shore.

Richard Long says his landscape sculptures ‘inhabit the rich territory between two ideological positions, namely that of making ‘monuments’ or conversely, of ‘leaving only footprints’.

Down from the cliffs, the footpath passes the site where an iron-age village was excavated then buried again in the sand and the spot where Peter the knapper found a Mesolithic boat-building tool. Then the path cuts through a National Trust car park before skirting gravel pits and heading to the Towans. Dynamite Towans, now a nature reserve, attracts dog walkers and joggers and on warm summer evenings Country Rangers take families on glow-worm hunting expeditions. I’ve been. In 1888 the National Explosives works were established here, at a safe distance from Hayle, a wise decision given the number of accidents that occurred over the years. Originally supplying the mining industry, the business grew to employ 1,500 during the First World War when it provided dynamite to the military and though it ceased to manufacture explosives in 1920, they were stored in bunkers here until the 1960s.

On Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> April the Tate gallery held a discussion of its current exhibition, ‘Art Now Cornwall’. The exhibition, chosen by the outgoing director, has proved controversial and the meeting was not held on Tate premises but at the nearby St.Ives Society of Artists. A panel of four career curators and three artists talked about their reactions to the show and answered questions from the floor. Despite the strong feelings that had been expressed about the exhibition in the local press, the event turned out to be a lukewarm affair. One of the artists on the panel was Andy Hughes, who has recently published a book of photographs made on beaches around Cornwall, Scotland and the USA and is an active member of Surfers Against Sewerage. His photographs are described in the exhibition catalogue as considering ‘the epic and everyday in the detritus washed up on the region’s shorelines’. When Hughes introduced himself he said he had been wondering if his recent move from St.Ives to Hayle had been such a good idea. And the audience, which was mostly made up of young artists and a few gallery owners, laughed loudly in response. Those cash strapped young artists don’t find

Hayle as desirable a place as St.Ives. Hayle has lagged behind in its gentrifications. While house prices rocketed in St.Ives, making a dilapidated five roomed cottage worth almost half a million pounds, the value of Hayle's two-up two-down terraces only began to rise significantly in the last few years. Though its industrial decline began in the mid 1880s, Hayle's productive past is all too evident and her council estates too visible and extensive for the town to ever become fashionable. When Long came down from the Towans he passed the site of the Cornish Copper Company's smelter at Ventonleague crossing the Black Bridge over Copperhouse creek via Black Road. It is not a pretty place. The smelting process generated large amounts of waste and copper slag was cast into heavy dark Scoria blocks used for building cheap houses on both sides of the filthy creek. A canal was created and a dock where a Co-op supermarket now stands. Before moving to Camborne, my friend, the vicar's wife, used to watch the rats playing there when she was out walking her dog on light evenings.

One grey morning last February when the air was thick with drizzle Andy Hughes took his two dogs across Black Bridge intending to exercise them on the Towans. Parked on the slip was a silver Ford Sierra, the old jelly mould model. He remembers it had stickers on the back window though not what they said and how his stomach lurched as if he was on a fairground ride when he saw the pipe connected to the exhaust. Time seemed to stall as his photographer's eye took in the details. He'll never forget the pipe. Not a simple garden hose, but several small pipes, like plumbers use, all carefully fixed together. As if someone had taken time and trouble. He tried to open the door where the pipe was jammed into the window but the door would not open. So he let the dogs go and ran round to the driver's side. He could see a young man with black curly hair slumped amid piles of papers and photographs. When Andy wrenched open the door and dragged him out into the air the man was still alive, but another ten minutes would have made the difference. Andy shook him awake but he began struggling to get away, shouting 'Leave me. Leave me' then he jumped back into the car and started the engine and the Sierra lurched away, weaving across the old railway track. So Andy took out his mobile and dialed 999, told the police that a man was committing suicide, that he was close to the old power station near the Black Bridge in Hayle. And the operator, who was in Plymouth, asked which city is that? Andy told her Hayle is a small town in West Cornwall but she kept asking which city it was near. So Andy lost it, said You don't know your own fucking county and she said she would terminate the call if he was

abusive. Andy drove to the local police station and told them that a suicidal man was weaving his car all over the road. They started a helicopter search and found the car in Lelant. Six weeks later Andy heard that they'd taken the man, who was French and had split up with his girlfriend in Newquay, to hospital in Redruth, kept him for a day or two then given him some cash to get home. Only he'd spent the money on a cheap car, come back to the Towans and this time no-one found him until it was too late.

Andy says he'll never forget the man's face, never forget what happened. He thinks it upset him so much because his father had died just a month before. I wonder about the papers and photos on the passenger seat. I can't help asking Andy if he'd wished he had his camera and he smiles and doesn't say no. Now he's taking pictures of the Towans for a new book and he's found quite a few memorials out there. They keep appearing. He shows me a photograph of a rose and some carnations stuck in the sand and they're so perfect I think they must be plastic but he tells me they're real. He says he comes across a lot of toys that people leave where a small girl died last year, suffocated when the walls of the hole she'd dug with her brother on the beach caved in and trapped her.

If Richard Long looked up as he crossed the Black Bridge he would have seen the Flame of Hope. Over the years, unseen millionaires have bought Hayle for farthings and submitted plans for its regeneration, but nothing much has happened to change things. Five years ago the local Canon had the Flame of Hope sited high up on the buttress of St. Elwyns church, as a symbol of faith in the renewal of the town. A six foot fibre glass chalice made by a man who creates armour for feature films, it contains a wind machine that makes a piece of fabric flick about in red electric light like a dancing flame. But recently the motor has often been switched off and now the Canon has retired there are plans to dismantle the chalice in order to save electricity.

Peter Kirby says that people once belonged to land and now land belongs to people. He blames the double entry bookkeeping of the Benedictine monk Fra Luca Bartolomeo for the rise of capitalism and the owning of everything.

Turning away from the church, Long's walk took him past Philp's popular pasty shop 'Take Ten Home for the Freezer. Proper Job!' then along the empty quay, where Max Barrett's sculpture stands. A shit streaked wooden woman, naked, with a fish on her shoulder, she gazes out to sea, blindly watching for boats that will never return. A little further on there is another sculpture, a memorial to Rick Rescorla, a Hayle man who rescued over 2,700 Morgan Stanley employees from the World Trade Centre, before he went back for more and lost his life when the second tower collapsed.

Long says that he will stop walking when he wants to, that Carl Andre said mountaineers climb mountains because they are there, but artists make art because it isn't. Is that a good enough reason I wonder?

Two summers ago Kneehigh Theatre put on a play about a town that died of greed on Hayle's derelict South Quay. The Guardian called *A Very Old Man With Enormous Wings* 'the outdoor theatre event of the year' and fans from all over the South West flocked to see it. Unfortunately the tickets were out of the price range of many Hayle residents, so they had to be satisfied by watching an angel suspended from a yellow crane hoisted nightly to fly above the town.

It's not true to say nothing has changed. Just last month an ice cream parlour opened on the terrace and now there is an advertising agency and attractive bar under the viaduct where the Holman engineering company offices stood. Long will have passed the place.

Peter Kirby says every journey by foot is a pilgrimage even if its reason is never known.

Long passed the turning for my house when he crossed the causeway. Then on to Lelant where, at the roundabout, Merlin used to entice visitors to his Magic Land, a shabby amusement park that closed following revelations that a handyman had lured children to his caravan. Now all the magic has gone. Erased. Replaced by Saltings Reach: Beautifully

Crafted Houses by Southern Heritage, Voted Best Cornwall Development by The Daily Mail in 2005. Puffin Way, Kittiwake Close, clad in pale stone, looking almost as if they've been there since Victoria was on the throne and St.Ives was a slum; semi detached and detached, starting at 350,000.

See the wall, suggests Peter Kirby, not as an obstacle, but as an element and all the pieces will fall right into place.

You get the feeling you are being watched when you walk down Pintail Avenue and I wonder if Southern Heritage made it plain to prospective buyers that you have to go through the new estate to reach the football pitch? 'This is The Saltings Sponsored by Jolly's Pop. No Dogs'. It's not exactly Old Trafford, but I bet there are some disturbances on Saturday and Sunday mornings. Cursing and shouting. The pitch is only yards from the estuary and years ago my goalkeeping son regularly had to retrieve the ball from the mud. I met Mick, once his football manager, going into the Tate. He's not an art enthusiast but he said he was there for Pete. I hadn't seen him since the day when, at half time in the middle of the pitch, he'd dragged my son's padded shirt over his head. 'You're playing like shit' he'd screamed into the twelve year old's face before I hurried him off to the car. I didn't know then that Mick's marriage was falling apart and his bakery being sold. To add to his problems, he had to find another goalkeeper. Now we were going to see Richard Long together.

Peter says Richard sings with his feet. But Long says there is no rhythm in his walking.

Beyond The Saltings, the coastal footpath is tarmaced and punctuated by red receptacles for dog faeces. A single palm tree grows amongst the nettles on the estuary side, while opposite, fuschias overhang garden walls and someone is having a bonfire behind a neatly trimmed hedge. Today Evergreen Lodge has vacancies for bed and breakfast. A single compartment train rattles by, "The Great Scenic Railways of Devon and Cornwall" in large letters on its side and a picture of Truro cathedral. It does not stop at The Old Station House, where there are stained glass kingfishers on the ticket office door and cream teas are now being served.



At the end of a row of bungalows, on a rise, there are enormous houses hidden among wooded gardens. Their lawns are terraced down to level ground beside the estuary where there are badminton courts, tree houses and expensive climbing frames. This is where the rich folk of St.Ives come to live to avoid tourists, watch migratory birds on the estuary and organise campaigns against affordable housing.

A dog on a long leash gazes down at me from the wall of our bankrupt landlord's house, but it's not Chick's rottweiler, there are new owners now and his blind grandchildren will never play catch in the garden again. A little further on, some workmen are felling tall pines and there are branches and cones scattered across the path. Then suddenly the trees are all gone and I'm out on the dunes. I cut through the golf course to get to the quay and a golfer at the sixth hole waves and calls 'Take your time love we've got all day'. I wonder if he was there when Long passed this way. 'Danger Golf balls!' the sign says.

In an artist's statement in 2000 Long said, that over the years, his work has explored some of the variables of transience, permanence, visibility or recognition.

Down on Dynamite quay, opposite the remains of Hayle's power station, metal plates salvaged from ships hold back the crumbling cliff. The portholes give it away and now some of them are open and birds are nesting in there. But behind the eroding metal, asbestos is stored. Stripped from scrapped ships following World War Two, it was secreted away just above high water. A few years ago they tried to remove it and some has been taken away, but how much remains no-one knows. It isn't as if they don't want to clean up the mess. In fact, there were plans to dredge Hayle harbour and create a marina for pleasure craft. But after government scientists pointed out the environmental consequences of disturbing the toxic waste dumped into the harbour over ages, the plans were quietly shelved. Some things are thriving there though. In the dark tunnels leading to Carnsew Pool colonies of Horse mussels are multiplying and nobody knows what to do with them. They simply shouldn't be there. Incomers, who took a ride across the Atlantic on the bottom of boats, they found a resting place and settled down to procreate. Now they're becoming a nuisance and you can't eat them. They will have to be destroyed.

Further along the quay, just beyond where a small boy stands fishing for crabs, someone has dumped a pile of old lampposts. I'm not sure if they are part of the attempt to shore up the wall, but it isn't working because there is a sign warning that the track is subject to subsidence and they are lying at crazy angles like some art installation. There are bloodstains in the sand on the path, a short red trail that soon peters out, then it's down onto the beach for just a few yards. It's possible Long didn't take this route, that he doubled back to the road, it would have depended on the tide, but today I can cover the ground easily and I stop to look at the view. Out at sea a small boat is waiting to cross the bar. On this side, the estuary is empty except for a few dog walkers and some swans loitering in the shallows, while over on the Hayle side a large number of windsurfers are flocking.

I climb the steps next to Ferryboat House where John Miller used to live. His paintings are much imitated and prints of his simple light filled views of the estuary, intense cobalt and pale yellowy white, have been popular. He never seems to have been at home when it rained or when storm clouds gathered. His real skill was dividing up space, providing just enough white to break up the blue, to intensify the visual experience. My ex husband wasn't alone when he rushed out to buy a Miller painting the day after the artist died, for doomed long term investment purposes.

Long says, walking, as art, provided the means for him to explore relationships between time, distance, geography and measurement.

The path beside Miller's house is narrow and climbs steeply, but soon emerges on to the dunes. Across the railway tracks are the greens of West Cornwall Golf Club where Ben Nicholson and Adrian Stokes used to play during the 40s. In 1939 Stokes had invited Nicholson, Barbara Hepworth and their young triplets to decamp from Hampstead to Carbis Bay, to avoid the war. They were soon busily at work in the studios they set up, but Nicholson always had time to break off for ping-pong, billiards or golf and frequently tried to steer conversations away from painting to sport. Or connect the two. In a personal memoir of the time, David Lewis recalled Nicholson describing his golf ball 'arcing as though it were a pencil line against the blue summer sky, and how it crossed the green-crested ivory of the

dunes to the undulating green of the course...only to bounce into a line of opaquest black, which turned out to be a funeral procession for the just-deceased golf pro' (20). Lelant church is very close to the greens.

Nicholson and Stokes invented a tabletop golf game to while away the black out nights. First, a plan was drawn with teeing off place, hole, bunkers and lines of trees. A player, who had memorised the course, was then blindfolded and tried to draw a line from tee to hole, stopping each time he encountered an obstacle. Each time he stopped he had to begin a new line. The player with least lines won. Nicholson generally won with a hole in one. It's hardly surprising given his assured drawing technique.

Peter Kirby says, on the surface, Long's life's work is making circles and lines through walking. He calls it poetic geometry.

Lewis talks about a visit he made to Nicholson's studio at Chy-an-Kerris, where, between games of ping pong, Nicholson showed him new work. Some of these paintings Lewis describes as 'pure abstract, circles and rectangles; others were still lifes [...] and some included elements of landscape'. He then refers to the 'radiant accents' in particular paintings 'so firmly held in the geometry of the work and so precisely right [...] exactly the colour of orange lichen or mauve foxglove or green seaweed.'(19). It's this process of selection that I would like to understand better: which references to keep, which memories to discard. How to make geometry resonate.

Richard Long describes his art as a 'formal and holistic description of the real space and experience of landscape'.

On Dartmoor, in 1984, Long walked for seven days within an imaginary circle 51/2 miles wide. On the map of the walk he recorded no physical features and few place names, preferring instead, for points of reference, the word 'Tent' and seven times, 'Midday'.

He describes the map as a distillation of experience. I understand that what is left out is as important as what is included and I begin to wonder if the Cornish coastal footpath isn't really amenable to Long's way of selective walking. That it didn't allow him to explore any particular idea of space because it's a prescribed way. On that day, Long was not blindfolded, but he was mark not master and, with an appointment to keep, there could be no doubling back.

The footpath crosses the dunes, which were, until recently, a popular place for gay men to meet and have sex, despite passing trainloads of summer visitors. I wonder if my friend Owen ever went there for sex. I remember the perfect white house in Albert terrace where he lived with Rob and the fine collection of St.Ives art they'd made over their years together, Nicholson drawings, Hepworth prints, Leach pots, a Hilton, a Heron. I remember the dinner parties where I learned about food, about cassoulet and bourride, and the fine wines Owen would pour and the great music Rob played. They had exquisite taste and they took good care of things. Owen was Hepworth's housekeeper and Rob used to flit around the Palais de Dance dusting her sculptures. It was Rob and Owen who spent days cleaning her fire damaged bedroom after she fell asleep smoking. But there was nothing to be done three weeks later when it happened again and she died. Rob and Owen returned to London and I began to hear strange stories, how friends gathered in their basement flat one Christmas morning to drink champagne and open gifts, but when Rob opened his present from Owen he cried 'You've bought me a black television for our white bedroom', rushed out into the street and didn't come back till dinner was over. It seemed an over-reaction at the time. A few years later when I was to re-marry and invited them to the celebrations, they didn't reply and I was so busy I didn't notice. But on my way back from honeymooning in Paris I went to the London Lighthouse to see Owen. I hardly knew him, he was so far from life so close to death, curled on the bed, his disintegrating skin too sensitive for sheets. The disease he'd kept hidden for years had erupted, and was out of control, corrupting and ravaging his body. In three weeks he was dead.

After the dunes, above Carrick Gladden, the path becomes dark, enclosed and overhung by trees and the sea disappears from view. At Hawkes Point, the writer and photographer Anne Kelly's house perches on the cliffside. I peer through the bushes to see if the builders are still

at work but there are none to be seen. Kelly's beautiful house, which has been the subject of many magazine features, is in danger of tumbling into the sea and work to shore it up has taken months. It seems that, over the years, underground water pouring down from the hill destabilized the foundations and to save the house, it has had to be re-directed. It must be a very precarious place to live. I think I would lie awake in the night listening to the house if I lived there. Willing it to stay safe.

Long will have known he was on the home stretch when he passed the Point. Perhaps he put on some speed. The centrifugal pull of home Peter calls it.

The coastline changes at Carbis Bay. At Lelant the large houses are mostly hidden by trees and shrubbery, but here bungalows, holiday flats and guesthouses clutter the cliff. The first hotel has vacancies, there are no cars in the car park and today the beach café is closed. A train pulls into the station, all the tourists on the seaward side waiting for the view as they round the bend.

The view of St.Ives from Porthminster Point is the one that lives in the memory. It's seductive, the hardest to turn your back on. I know, because when I was young and came here on holiday each August, it was the image of the town I remembered most clearly. The trouble is, if you stay more than two weeks you have to look up. You have to re-focus and see the town as it really is. Not just the cluster of buildings round the quay. Not just Down-along but Up-along too. You have to pay attention to the real geography, the real experience. Because most of those who live in St.Ives don't occupy those narrow expensive streets, Salubrious Place, Teetotal Street, Virgin Street. They're high up on the hill in the housing estates that were built on the radioactive spoils of the Consols mine. Living on Trelawney Avenue where the poverty rate is 56.5% or Penbeagle where 18% are unemployed and 8% have long term illnesses.

Peter Kirby says psychotherapists should listen to us at the top of a hill if they are ever to sell us happiness. He says conquering a peak, whatever the height, can assuage the grief of a widow.

At the Tate, the questions are almost over when Vincent, shiny faced and smiling broadly in the front row, puts up his hand. Has Long ever made an ugly walk he asks? I know exactly what he's getting at, he's certain Long will have appreciated the beauty of his surroundings today, knows that the Cornish and those who choose to live among them, are the chosen people, living the perfect life.

Time, says Peter Kirby, does little more than coerce us into thinking that a walk is linear. Ask Richard Long. Time is, indeed, a dodo, he says. Impermanence, claims Kirby, appeals to Long.

Vincent's dad Roy Walker, worked on the assembly line at Fords in Dagenham. Then he came to St.Ives in 1966 and became an artist, making pictures of car dumps and tin sheet installations that reflected the movement of clouds in the sky. One day he hit his thumb with a hammer when working in his studio. The wound would not heal for months and before anyone realized, cancer had traveled up his arm. It was thought the only way to stall it was to amputate. But that plan was abandoned because it was too late.

After seven miles there's been an accident, 'Thumb gash opens' says Peter Kirby and after eight 'The walk is a wake'.

When conventional medicine could provide no further hope, local artists held an auction of their work and the proceeds of the sale paid for Roy and his family to travel to Scotland to seek alternative cures. Breathing, chanting. Marking time. Precious metals as cure alls. It didn't work. The artist wanted to die in St.Ives and in the private ambulance that brought him back he died more than once. M6 M5 A30. Still they brought him home.

Peter Kirby says that as the body tires, we try death's dress on. Start a walk 98% man end it 98% land. Long, he says, is wedded to the landscape.

Richard Long smiles, tells Vincent that he has made some ugly walks; that sometimes he has even walked through cities.

## TO THE OCCUPIER

In 1998, on the day the last tin mine in Cornwall closed, graffiti appeared on the wall outside:

*Cornish boys are fishermen and Cornish boys are miners too but when the fish and the tin are gone what are Cornish boys to do?*



**Figure 3: What are Cornish boys to do?**

Today I heard that Godolphin was open again for two weeks only and I wanted to walk the corridors and visit those rooms again, to see what had happened since I was last there.

When I parked in the visitors' car park I was surprised to see so many other cars but no sign of their owners. I took the path along the edge of the field where Joanne's horses used to canter to the fence, crossed the bridge over the stream and entered the wood. Nothing moved in the shade, no-one was about. The cool air was heavy with the scent of bluebells.



Three years ago, when art seemed meaningless, I stopped painting and trained to be a tour guide at Godolphin. John Schofield, whose family owned the house, used to begin his tour by saying that the fortunes of Godolphin, like those of the Duchy, had for centuries mirrored the fortunes of tin. Then one day last year I came home one day and found a leaflet addressed to The Occupier on my door mat. The National Trust had acquired Godolphin and the future of ‘one of Cornwall’s most beautiful and romantic old houses’ was in my hands. The Trust urgently needed my support to ‘ensure that this precious and atmospheric house survives to delight and inspire generations to come’. I was asked to give what I can afford to safeguard the future of Godolphin after years of neglect. It wasn’t unexpected.



Figure 4: To the Occupier.

That hot summer three years ago there were rarely enough visitors to Godolphin for the Schofields to pay my wages, so mostly I worked for nothing. But when we arrived last May Bank Holiday we found the bottom field full of cars and families with push chairs struggling along the muddy path through the bluebell woods. The previous week's Cornishman had announced 'Magic in the Air!' beneath a headline: 'Fairies Found on Godolphin Estate'. For three days a fairy museum would exhibit imaginary objects unearthed by a fairy archaeologist near Zennor in 1983. '*A Fairy Find*' by Andrew Lanyon, had inspired this 'unique event' and the author was going to be there to sign books and show 13 short fairy films. Alongside the article was a photograph of one of the museum exhibits, a multi storey block of fairy flats that looked a little like a cheese grater with some batteries attached at the top. Andrew Lanyon says it's all about having the freedom to believe in whatever you like.

The reason we were there was for a second unique event. A sketch by Peter Lanyon, Andrew's father, John Schofield's uncle, was going to be revealed in the King's Room at 11.30 and rolled up again just two hours later. '*Porthmeor*' had been commissioned in 1962 by a collector, Stanley Seeger, for the music room of his house in New Jersey. The 32 foot long sketch for the mural had been kept in storage, unseen since the artist died in a gliding accident in 1964.

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Figure 5: Detail of the sketch of Porthmeor -

When we reached the house we met John who was greeting visitors outside the old oak door to the courtyard. Bleached, weatherworn, it still bears faint tracings of the scallop shells and dolphins carved by craftsmen who, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, took a lengthy trip up country to learn about the new designs. John was cheerful, pleased by how many had turned out, but he was worried the mural might fall apart, so only a specially chosen group were going to witness the unrolling. When I saw the crowd gathered in the courtyard I wondered how we could all fit into the house. Only groups of eight had been allowed to walk on the fragile floorboards in the rooms upstairs when I worked there. But today there must have been about a hundred people milling around, waiting for something to happen. My husband had closed his gallery to be there, a rare event and, as usual, he saw a lot of people he knew. He introduced me to an art school chum and they chatted about acquaintances of fifty years ago. Ian, Chris, Roger, beatniks, student protestors who believed they could change things, they sat down in Trafalgar Square, marched to Aldermaston, then sometime in the mid-sixties they found their way from Kingston to St.Ives and settled to paint and raise families. After a few minutes Bob's friend drifted away and he met a fellow poet. He's working at University College Falmouth now and I laughed when he said his department held the franchise on creative writing. I was going to ask about franchises and creativity but the speeches began.

Standing on the grass in front of the wall that is all that remains of Godolphin's great hall, John said how happy he was to see so many of us and seemed sunnily unconcerned about the floorboards. He introduced his cousin Martin Lanyon who told us even he hadn't seen his father's sketch yet and how excited he was that it was being unrolled at that very moment. We all looked up at the window of the King's room but there was little to see, just a few unidentifiable heads. Martin said his mother had kept the 'large gem' up her sleeve after his father's death, that left to bring up six children, she'd grown very long arms. It wasn't much of a joke, but the crowd was good humoured and we all laughed.

Peter Lanyon claimed that, like many artists, he didn't particularly enjoy writing. In a 1951 postcard to Peter Gimpel, while struggling 'to write a broadcast to bring in a little bread and butter,' he'd said words were not his medium, perhaps he'd 'do better as a cinema usherette'. In a letter written in 1953 to Roland Bowden he said 'I cannot write a great deal of sense', continuing 'I think of painting as an event, not a site for a set of events defined and separated

by spatial absences but one event, every side of which is presented and revealed all together at once and immediately. The impact blows from the painting to you, it clutches and sucks and stretches'. It seems to me he says a great deal and makes perfect sense. It's the kind of knowing that comes from personal involvement. Skin to skin.

Martin read from the family archive that his father intended *Porthmeor*, a seascape, to be 'something that has the appearance of an event in time' providing both 'myth and a sense of continuity'. He listened to Debussy's '*La Mer*' while working on the mural and it was to be installed in a room used for musical performances so he decided to 'phrase the work in a musical sense using rhythms and counter rhythms more often met in music than painting'. When the mural was complete, the artist declared *Porthmeor* 'a fine job' that had 'stretched' him. He was pleased by 'the illusion of movement forward and back...a sense of echo both of the past and of events across the sea'. I wondered what events the artist was thinking of, because 1963 means Kennedy to me. But how to make those marks? Perhaps he was only thinking of shifting currents, of tidal events like ebb and flow. Slow erosion not sudden death. It's difficult to know. Two years earlier in notes about a painting titled '*North Cliff*' he'd written of his attempt 'to describe a mile of history in a gesture' (*The Cuttings*). Did he mean geology? Was he marking time? I was impatient to see the sketch, so I was pleased when Martin said he had just one more thing to say before he raced us to the door. The mural had returned to England. Perhaps, one day, we would have the opportunity to compare the sketch with the finished article. This came as a surprise because I'm not sure how you peel a mural from a wall and ship it. Where is *Porthmeor* now? Which auction house has secreted it away? For how long? Years? How much will it fetch? Who will buy it? Naively, I had imagined a mural to be a permanent installation, a connection with the past that outlived ownership. A dead artist's gesture found in the ruins, in the masonry. Perhaps only a dusty fragment, the lips of a queen or the belly of a jar. But enduring. Looking back on that day, I think it's the contradictions that intrigue me. And a sense of echo. A flimsy sketch brought to light in a crumbling house. A fine job locked away in a dealer's icy vault

Martin dashed across the courtyard and we joined the crush trying to get into the house. Inside, there was a queue on the stairs so we waited in the entrance hall where I used to show tourists the pistol loops for repelling visitors. There's an exhibition of historical documents, a

map of coastal defences made for Henry VIII that shows Godolphin looking like a toy fort. Years ago, when I first came here, this was Mary Schofield's drawing room and we sat in front of the fire planning a summer pageant, while she instructed two old men to climb onto the roof and keep out the torrential rain. That August we took a bemused French exchange student to see '*Six Hundred Years of Godolphin History*' and sat in steady drizzle listening to a woman wearing my mother's wedding dress recite 17<sup>th</sup> century love poetry. Now Mary Schofield was bedridden upstairs.

John Schofield says each generation of Godolphins built for the next. When Alexander Godolghan first built a small castle on the site in 1300 his family were already rich from the proceeds of tin. Even before Domesday the manor had been valued for its minerals and wily Godolghan had acquired land from Trescowe to Breage. His castle faced west and straddled the highway, forcing travellers on the main route between Penzance and Penryn to make a detour round the deep ditch that marked its boundary. Though little more than a fortified tower, it signified the ambition of the Godolghans and symbolised the importance of mining to the local economy. Later when family fortunes rose the building was demolished and a much larger house was built around two courtyards. By 1520 a new approach from the north had been created. The focus of the family, who now called themselves Godolphin, was no longer the far west but had shifted upcountry towards the centres of commerce and power.

In the short flag-stoned corridor leading to the dining room there is an engraving which shows how close to power the Godolphins became. Lord Treasurer to Queen Anne, the rotund, bewigged First Earl of Godolphin is surrounded by currency and rests his feet on piles of gold coin. Though artists historically portray the rich, I can't think of any other picture in which money becomes so dominant a part of the composition. It's supposed to celebrate the man and his achievements, but it seems to me the artist might have been saying something different.

About landscape painting, Lanyon said: 'Great painting remains as such independent of its time and can be understood variously, but the painter himself is always within his time, part of the social and ethical problems of his age' (*The Cuttings*).

I remember reading somewhere that, during the Cold War, if there had been a nuclear attack on Britain, Penzance would have been a prime target because of a vital communications centre at the telephone exchange. The idea seemed very far-fetched and I didn't know whether to believe it. Now an art gallery has opened on the site of the old exchange and the conversion cost £4,000,000. As part of *Social Systems*, the inaugural exhibition, the artist Surasi Kusolwong staged his '*One Pound Market (Come on Cornwall)*' and sold items from a Bangkok market. An enthusiastic crowd gathered and there was plenty of bidding, especially for the Miss Kitty items. We bought two tee shirts and a tin fire engine for £3 half aware that we were taking part in an art installation. Later I read that Kusolwong, who wore a blonde Barbie wig at the auction, aimed to 'blend eastern and western cultural traditions in ways that gently question our pre-conceptions' but I wasn't sure that this had happened. Perhaps the questioning was too gentle. Inside the gallery a South American collective were selling books of short stories by a group of local writers, the jackets painted by Penzance school children. Normally, in Sao Paulo, the collective makes books of stories by authors such as Gabriel Garcia Marquez and street children paint the jackets and sell them to raise money for food and shelter. Close by was another installation, a space with colourful seating made of milk crates and on the walls were wooden frames displaying familiar groceries with foreign packaging: Cornflakes from Saudi Arabia and baked beans from Pakistan.

John Wootton's 1731 painting '*The Godolphin Arabian*' used to hang in the dining room at Godolphin house. One of three Arab stallions from which modern thoroughbreds are descended, the horse belonged to the second Earl. Since I was last there the Schofields had been forced to sell the painting. But when it came to auction a dispute over provenance meant that though valued at between £250,000 and £350,000, the painting sold for far less. When I realised how things were at Godolphin I used to think, if it came to it, there was always the painting, in the same way that when we are threatened by bailiffs, my husband says he will sell the spoon back dining chairs. I have to remind him that they're riddled with woodworm and virtually worthless. It's sad the handsome painting is no longer at Godolphin and sadder still that the return was so disappointing. The place is diminished by its absence. Against a background of sunlit ruins, the stallion had the crescent moon and star of Islam on its bridle, but seemed at home on the dark linen-fold panelling in a room scented by roses and wood smoke. It's the contemporary still life replacing it that is out of place. I used to wonder who put the roses there and how it was they were always in full bloom and why the scent of

smoke had lingered there so long. I suppose I was only ever at the house in summer when the roses were at their best, but the smoke? Some of the things in the dining room were just curiosities. A tudor chest that had nine locks, a 16<sup>th</sup> century funerary helm with a dolphin leaping from the crown and, hanging on the west wall, a painted fireback that Henry VIII gave William Godolphin in 1546. William had led a party of men from Godolphin's Great Work mine to France where they undermined the walls of Boulogne and brought an end to the siege of the city. The fireback seems little recompense for their work, especially as William Godolphin lost his nose during the battle.

Great Works was one of the long established and highly profitable mines on the Godolphin estate. The valley was the site of the earliest deep rock copper and tin mining in the county and Bronze Age staves called celts have been found in the mine. It wasn't until late in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that Great Works finally ceased production. By then redundant miners had been forced to leave Cornwall in droves to seek work in the new world.

*The Abolition of Work* was the second exhibition at the Exchange gallery. The artists, Cornford and Cross, took their title from an anarchist pamphlet by Bob Black who asserts 'work is the source of nearly all misery in the world' and advocates 'the complete transformation of society towards a way of life based on play'. The catalogue for the exhibition thanked Barclays Bank for paying the artists' fee in one pence coins. With a team of helpers, Cornford and Cross had covered the floor of the gallery in 600,000 copper pennies. Though, according to Cross, since 1992 when the penny became worth less than its weight in copper, pennies have been made from copper plated steel. Change, say the artists, undermines confidence. They chose the penny because it's the lowest denomination, base level and that's a reference to the minimum wage and also to sea level, which is fixed at Newlyn, once famous for its copper industry. Under the gallery lights the patina on the pennies made repeat patterns across the floor. Though unintended the discolouration reflects history, the life of the coins and gives them character. There is another human aspect: because the coins weren't stuck down sometimes they shift and if they break rank, fault lines appear. Awkward individuals, dissenters stepping out of line. Another poet, David, who helped lay the coins, told me that when he stood in the middle of the unfinished work it was like a landscape surrounded by sea, a pixellated grid with a ragged edge that looked like land;

like Cornwall when Cornwall was made of money, of copper and tin. Cornford and Cross said the installation was meant as a gentle challenge to the art world and the institutions. All these gentle challenges. Money is, after all, a meaningless form of exchange. The Abolition of Work lasts six weeks.

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Figure 6: The Abolition of Work in progress at the Exchange Gallery, Penzance

When we climbed the stairs at Godolphin I noticed that metal studs had been crudely sunk into the plaster ceiling and thought this must be a temporary measure because all the other work the Schofields had carried out on the house had been of a high standard and mostly invisible. At the top of the stairs there is a window return where workmen discovered 17<sup>th</sup> century graffiti. You can still see it. Drawings, dates, names, it's just like the tagging you see on the streets and it survived because it was covered over for four centuries. It's tempting to touch, to trace the lines and make a connection, but we just look because no-one wants it to



wear away. This range of the house is in the worst state and disturbingly daylight seeps between skirting and floorboards. But in 1630 these staterooms, which bridged the east and west wings, were part of a daring Italian design. Educated in Padua, Francis Godolphin III transformed the house into a grand summer residence where he could entertain friends from court. A double loggia with eight Tuscan columns was created beneath the north range to provide shelter for all weather entertainment such as quoits. It was an innovative design, unseen anywhere else in the west country and similar to plans made by Inigo Jones for the palace of Westminster. To the east of the house large pleasure gardens with water features and raised walkways were created. At the top of the garden is a tree lined avenue where frantic deer were herded down from the hill, to be picked off by shooting parties, and there are deep tanks that were fed with water from the mines and stocked with every kind of fish for gentlemen anglers. Now the tanks are overgrown with tall weeds and garden archaeologists have been seeking out the contours of fountains and flowerbeds.

We were part of a queue moving slowly along the north range corridor. A number of the doors were padlocked and only a few people went into the state dining rooms, which are divided by flimsy partitions and empty except for a small exhibition of architect's plans. The room where John slept when he was a boy houses recent drawings that show the Schofields' ambitious plans for restoration should they be able to raise the funds. Others are the designs of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Italian architect Scamozzi and reveal the inspiration behind Francis Godolphin's ambitious project. Always expected to take years, the building work was still incomplete when the Civil War began and though the family mostly tried to avoid commitment despite their court connections, eventually Francis was forced to support the Royalist cause. It was a young family member, Sidney Godolphin, a highly regarded and well-connected poet who has a dedication in Hobbes *Leviathan*, who declared his loyalties early. Sidney was one of the last Royalist supporters to quit parliament in 1641 and cried as he left 'When the cards are shuffled no man knows what the game will be'. He died from a musket wound in a Chagford doorway during a minor skirmish in 1643 and afterwards the Godolphins were even more determined to avoid the war. But in 1645, when Prince Charles arrived at the house on his way to France, accompanied by a retinue of 200, the Godolphins were expected to offer lavish hospitality. Family fortunes suffered further when the Prince moved to Starcross Castle on Scilly, where the burgeoning party continued to be entertained at Godolphin's expense. Six weeks later Francis travelled to France with the Prince and

remained there penniless and unable to afford his fare home. In the years following the Restoration, when the family's fortunes eventually improved, the house was split into apartments and though the family occupied the first floor of the east wing where John's mother was now living, the grandest part of the house was given over to visitors according to their status. The Godolphins were mostly away at court and brought parties to the house only in the summer. For the rest of the year it stood empty, though in later years, for a small sum, the housekeeper was willing to show visitors over the property. If the National Trust is successful in its fund raising the renovated rooms of the north and east ranges will be converted into 'high quality' accommodation for tourists, to be let for all but six weeks of the year when the public may occasionally be allowed access.

In 1791 the Duke of Leeds inherited Godolphin through marriage. Great efforts were made to prepare for his visit and a new marble fireplace and window of Venetian glass were added to the east bedchamber. But perhaps the far west seemed dull to the new Duchess. It was a long way from home and the journey would have been trying. It's possible the weather was poor. The visit was cut short and soon instructions were sent for most of the house to be demolished. Once a mansion of one hundred rooms, two ranges of state apartments and a Tudor great hall, the house shrank to provide accommodation for a shepherd and the north range was partitioned to make bedrooms for his children. But the Godolphin mines were still productive and revenue from Cornish tin still found its way to the Duke's estates in the eastern counties.

Andrew Lanyon lives in the middle of nowhere so he gave me a foolscap page of directions when I went to visit him. At Nancegollan I had to turn right at the Eat Pork sign. I was looking for a farm shop when a young Goth came striding down the lane and when I enquired about the sign he laughed before pointing it out. A creative amongst the Nancegollan posse had transformed the signpost for Releath and Porkellis into a direction to eat pork. I followed the sign and drove uphill for a mile, then turned left onto an unmade road between some granite gateposts that had the look of standing stones. A mile or so further I passed a mine chimney and a low cottage, then drove up a narrow track. The way was rocky and uneven and there were deep troughs either side of a grassy hummock. I kept going because I knew Andrew must drive down there once or twice a day. Then my car stopped and though

the engine turned over it would go no further. I tried pushing but it was firmly stuck. Then I saw the problem. The back wheels weren't touching the ground. I have seen *Top Gear* so I knew what to do. I collected flat stones and slipped them under the rear wheels and re-started the engine. Though there was plenty of noise and smoke began pouring from under the bonnet, the car did not move. I decided to ask for Andrew's help and continued up the track, only to find that, 100 yards further, it ended in a field. I realized this was not the way to his or anyone else's house but the view almost compensated for my problems. I was high on a brilliant afternoon. Mauve shadows were flitting across Trencrom and Trink while further west St.Ives basked in chilly sunshine. On the opposite coast light glinted from the copper cupola of Lloyds bank, the highest point in Penzance. The sea glittered on two horizons and in the valley below Godolphin was blanketed in shades of green.

Though I had no idea how I would direct them, I decided to phone the AA and knocked on the door of the cottage in the lane. After a while, a tall man answered and asked how on earth I got so far up the track. I told him I thought Andrew Lanyon lived up there and he found this very amusing. He told me a tractor would be needed to tow me out and gave directions to the farm. Half way there I saw a battered red car chugging up the hill. Andrew had come to my rescue and he'd brought a scaffolding plank he'd bought only yesterday.

Andrew rammed his plank under the front of my Corsa and swung on it. As soon as the rear wheels hit the ground I shoved the car into reverse and lurched back down the track, scraping last summer's blackberries along the paintwork. When I reached the bottom and looked back I couldn't understand why I had imagined I could get up there. I'd done it because I thought Andrew had told me to. I believed him and that's how the rest of the afternoon played out.

Andrew didn't trust my driving anymore so we left the car where it was and I rode down in his. I jumped out and opened the big gate that separates his land from the farm, then we were off down the hill through an avenue of trees. At the bottom is Andrew's low cottage, but it doesn't have light or heating so he only uses it in summer. His caravan is much cosier now the nights have drawn in. I sat in a warm fug surrounded by piles of books and papers while Andrew made earl grey tea and offered me cake, nuts and fruit.

I asked Andrew about fairy archaeology but he wanted to tell me other things first. He's written 13 books about the battle between ears and eyes and he recommends they should be shut down. Closed until such time as they are in synch with the heartbeat. They've been rowing for years and were horribly estranged, seemed incompatible until, in his fourteenth book, *The Palette and Retort*, the eyes and ears are making love. This took a little time to sink in. Then Andrew said, after a brief silence, that all fine art should cease until craft became important again and I nodded in agreement. It's like this he said, in St.Ives the fisher wives had a skill, a real skill, making and mending nets. Then the fish went away. And what happened then? Putting their craft to good use they went to work in the textile factory, Crysede. Then along comes Patrick Heron who makes their patterns into paintings and calls it abstraction. So high art evolved from homely textiles. It's usually the other way round I said without thinking and our eyes met over our teacups. He never disagreed when I said something silly.

On the posters for the fairy museum there are two quotes: 'Believable' said Sam Lanyon and 'Unbelievable' said Rosa Levin. But it's clear to me that Andrew's children were both saying the same thing. Sam and Rosa were educated at home, except they weren't educated. They learned, says Andrew, because education is only mimicry and learning is something else. I told him I wish I'd been brave enough to do that for my children.

Andrew asked if I'd heard the news that South Crofty was re-opening. I'd heard rumours but wasn't convinced it was a good thing. What father wanted his son to work down a mine? It's true the Lanyons made their wealth from tin and Andrew's father talked about the shame he felt when he saw the derelict mines. Though of another class, Peter Lanyon identified with the miner, even described his own working process in terms of labouring, extracting and bringing to grass. But while he mourned the death of the industry and the communities that supported it, he didn't ignore its cruelties. One of his first mine paintings, '*Botallack*', was inspired by the disaster at Wheal Cock where miners tunnelled for a mile under the Atlantic and could hear the drumming of boulders on the sea bed until the galleries flooded in 1895. Lanyon was also haunted by the Levant disaster of 1919 and claimed he felt the blow

personally, almost as if it had happened to him. He wrote ‘those bits of miners, so much meat hanging from the man engine, collected up into shovel-fulls and processed to St. Just for the lying in state’. When he painted *St. Just* it was in the form of a crucifixion, a bitter painting in which the central section, the mineshaft, becomes a cross and barbed wire, a crown of thorns. Though recent critics have discovered tenderness in the brush strokes, have identified some subtle gestures of renewal. I’m not so sure that Peter Lanyon would have celebrated the re-opening of South Crofty.

Andrew thinks differently. He says he sees the bigger picture. The reason mining failed in Cornwall had nothing to do with human hardship or geology. It was because the system set good toiling Cornishmen against each other. If the mine re-opens things will have to be different. Men working in small groups trust each other and that’s how they would work. I should know this about numbers: only some work. Three and six are good, otherwise there are problems, people drift away and eventually groups break up. He’s seen it happen. I asked what sort of group Andrew meant and he waved his hand, Oh, he said, the film club. It’s all about hinterlands. Cornish brains are different, like other Celts they have a hinterland. Because of that, they are aware of their relationship to the coastline, to its erosions, at all times. Because, unlike the rest of us, they are always surrounded by sea.

Andrew took me into one of the polytunnels where he has his studio and it was stuffed with work. He believes that artists should be working on one hundred poems, paintings and sculptures at all times because that way creativity flows. On every surface were the raw materials of his work. Every day he’s busy constructing fairy paraphernalia, rockets and suchlike. The fairies represent the most protean entities conceivable, more volatile than anything that exists, beyond science, beyond particle physics. They are closer to nature, which depends on flexibility, the key to all systems. He showed me some of his constructions. First the rockets lift off vertically, propelled by the flames of gothic architecture, a piece of architrave from which crafted flames rise up. After lift-off, the rocket, a small hand brush with a copper nose cone, levels out to continue its flight through infinity. He handed me a small painting he was working on which shows that fridge came before man. He’s had trouble cooling the colours right down. These are props for thought, sometimes props for films and sometimes films arise from props. Then Andrew held up a

pair of graceful sugar tongs. Ballet dancers! One day he's going to make a film about them dancing. Making or unmaking, it's important all creative decisions are made in thirty seconds. I perched on an old sofa among a decade of *Blue Peter* annuals and Andrew went to fetch me a present. Later I found he'd given me one of his limited edition books, '*Counterart*' a manifesto which suggests that to achieve the objective of favouring the written and spoken word it will be necessary for all visual arts except television to close down.

When we were walking up to the gate I thanked Andrew for a lovely afternoon. I meant it. I really like him and I envied his vision and clarity, his certainty about things. I was grinning as I walked away from him up the lane. The air was so pure, the colour was so strong. The sky was tinged with violet because the day was wearing on. So it was a real problem when, though my car started first time, the electrics were completely dead. I was half way to the eat pork sign before I realized the speedo wasn't working, then moments later, I found I had no indicators or lights. I wasn't sure what to do, whether it was safe to carry on, but I couldn't go back, so I decided to drive to my regular garage six miles away. Fortunately there wasn't much traffic, but I was relieved when I arrived at Atlantic Motors where a mechanic opened the car's bonnet and looked inside. He asked me to switch on the engine again and everything was normal, working perfectly. When I told him what had happened I don't think he believed a word I said.

Later that evening I opened Andrew's book and found he had also given me two small photographs, one of a section of Porthleven and another of his father in his studio with the partially finished mural behind him. Momentarily distracted, Lanyon faces the camera holding a loaded paintbrush. Even in this five-by-three-inch snapshot the mural demands attention and it's obvious that the moment the camera shutter closed Lanyon would be turning back to it, fist flying, brush scything across canvas. It's such a gift and I feel guilty because since I left him I've been questioning why I was convinced by Andrew; why everything he said made sense when I was with him. Now I've returned to sea level it's plain he's living in a dream world, an eat pork place of ironic manifestos. I knew that, just like Godolphin, it was a spent inheritance.

Andrew was right about South Crofty though and soon *The Packet* reported that full scale mining could return with two years. By June 2008, £9,000,000 would be invested and by the end of 2009 a further £50,000,000 would bring the mine to full production, providing 200 skilled jobs. But these plans were challenged by the regional development Agency and the Camborne, Pool and Redruth Regeneration Company who had already published their plans to transform the 78 acres including South Crofty into an exciting new development featuring sports facilities, a spa, hotel and conference centre. The agency were threatening compulsory purchase of the land but claimed their activities would not ‘compromise access to tin reserves’ since planning policy dictates mineral reserves ‘cannot be sterilized by development’. Believable, it’s unbelievable, and hard to see how the underground extraction of tin fits with the ‘leisure led’ proposals for the surface.

The room at the western end of Godolphin’s north range is the bed chamber of the last family member to live at the house. Research at Sheffield University showed the pine floor boards to be the earliest in Britain and in a vulnerable state so we limited the number of visitors when I worked here. The room has a simple plaster frieze featuring a persimmon and dating from the early seventeenth century. That’s very early for a persimmon. The most obvious omission is a bed, but that’s being sorted out. On the floor in the dressing room is some surprisingly yellow figured velvet from a bed found in an apple store at the Duke of Marlborough’s estate and sent to Godolphin. It’s thought to have belonged to Lord Rochester, the libertine and poet and the Schofields are having it renovated.

The room next door, the withdrawing room, was crowded so I avoided standing in the middle of the floor. Sometime in the 19<sup>th</sup> century a large hole was made so that grain could be poured into the storeroom below. The room was originally used for private discussions between important guests, conversations that couldn’t be held in the larger reception room next door. During the prince’s visit he would have received important information in this small chamber. Now the room contains only a 16<sup>th</sup> century merchant’s bed and there’s a simple, curiously imperfect plasterwork frieze. There are nine wild flowers depicted, but in 1610 the Cornish craftsman hadn’t been lucky enough to see a tulip, so used his imagination. The result is a curiosity, a tulip but not quite a tulip.

We were loitering outside the Galerie de Cascade, passing time in Huelgoat, a dreary town in Brittany, but the owner was at lunch. A sign explained the exhibition was the work of one man, an untrained artist, so it was a surprise to see a number of very different styles in the window. It was even more surprising to see a figure painting that appeared to be the work of Louise Maclary, a successful artist who lives on the Lizard peninsula and a small oil with the unmistakable patterning of Noel Betowski who has a studio in Penzance. Then Bob cried 'Look there's one of mine!' And so there was, an abstract, all triangles and curves. It's a measure of how bored we were that day that we got quite excited. At the time we were oblivious to an open window above us and began to laugh loudly when we spotted a painting of a familiar Penzance telephone box. But then the rain started again, so we ran to a bar for shelter. It was a Saturday afternoon in July and we were the only customers. A sullen barman watched us as we watched the Tour de France on a big screen. But Bob couldn't wait to go back to the gallery and meet the artist, so he left me to finish my drink. He was soon back. It couldn't have been more than twenty minutes since we had left the Rue de Cendres, but now there was a new sign in the window of the gallery. Due to unexpected circumstances the gallery would be closed for the foreseeable future and the ground floor shop and large studio at the rear were for sale. We felt deflated and somehow, to blame.

Two nights later Bob had returned to Cornwall and I was reading W.G. Sebald's *Rings of Saturn* by torchlight. There were low rumbles like distant thunder, but mainly the sound of water, a fast moving river and rain beating on the tent. On a walking tour of East Anglia, Sebald arrived at the halt for Somerleyton Hall. I read how the railway would once have brought everything a grand house like Somerleyton required 'to sustain a position never altogether secure', but where house guests disembarked and servants came to collect cases of Bordeaux, there was just a single overgrown platform. For Sebald it seemed that in a second an epoch had passed. And when he emerged into the park from the trees, a miniature train driven by Lord Somerleyton and carrying a party of day trippers chuffed by.

Around midnight I heard a caravan door open and knew the Dutchman was checking the level of the river again. He'd told me his children would be sleeping in their clothes and his



car was packed in case they needed to get away quickly. Then I heard his door close and there was only the sound of the river and rain. I felt surrounded by water and sleep was impossible, so I read on and was surprised to learn that, after a long and complicated history, when the Anguishes had died out in 1843 Somerleyton had passed to Lord Sydney Godolphin Osborne. It was one of those unexpected connections. He didn't want to take up his inheritance, so Godolphin Osborne had sold the estate to Sir Morton Peto who demolished the old house and built a princely pleasure palace in the Anglo Italian style. In a later chapter Sebald arrived at the ruins of Dunwich. One of the most important ports in Europe, Dunwich had fifty churches, convents and monasteries, extensive shipyards and commercial buildings but though fortified against attack from land and sea, the city was devastated by a storm tide in 1285. The damaged areas were rebuilt, but in 1328 hurricane force winds whipped up a sea storm that Sebald writes 'clawed away one row of houses after another'. After that, generation after generation was made homeless by the encroaching tide and gradually the fine city of Dunwich was abandoned. It was around 2am when I realised that torches were flashing outside my tent. People had come to tell me the river had broken its banks. It was flooding the road and we had to evacuate at once.

When I returned from my holiday I learned that Godolphin had been in administration for over a year.

Peter Lanyon declared 'I belong so I am' (*The Cuttings*) and called his Cornish landscapes 'inscapes' to describe his feeling of being in and of the land he painted. A Cornishman, unlike many of the St.Ives modernists, he sometimes painted landscapes with four horizons, placing himself at the centre of the composition. Andrew Lanyon thinks his father's paintings began close to home, with the stories he and Mary told each other as children, 'Mary beginning with clear skies and fairies, Peter bringing on the storm clouds'. If not the stories then perhaps it was the 'shifting viewpoints, of something being one thing and then another, or of a thing being two or more things, that so caught his imagination'. In the sixties Lanyon wrote (then crossed out) that he was attempting to 'combine both sides of my character: the inventive technical and constructive side with the sensuous, intuitive and poetic'. If he saw a future for British painting it was in 'the ambiguous character of much of the new painting...constructed from multiple experiences in time...it is...the action of

painting in itself that generates space...I believe that if this painting activity is constantly checked with the world outside then the marks will become charged with meaning'(*The Cuttings*). Until we arrived in the King's room I'd never seen one of Lanyon's sketches, even though I'd admired his paintings for years.

Lanyon described the finished mural as having the 'appearance of a fast moving sea with cross shore drift and counter drift' and as soon as I walked into the room and I could sense the tensions at work in it. At thirty two feet long it was difficult to take in, there were too many people in the room and it was impossible to stand back and see it in isolation. So I chose a place and stood still, trying to stop out chatter, make space and concentrate on the mark making, the plunging sweeps and curves. And the longer I stood there the more I could sense currents dragging this way and that. As if I could be swept away. Suddenly distracted by flashes, pinpricks of light, I realised people were taking photographs. And I hadn't brought a camera.

You couldn't stay in the King's room for long because people were still queuing and before we knew it, we were turning away from the mural and leaving the room. It was impossible to believe that such a powerful painting had been hidden for nearly half a century or that it would disappear again in minutes. We decided not to join the queue for the fairy museum because I wanted to remember the mural and nothing else that day. It's like Andrew said, you can choose what you believe in, what you carry with you.

On August 16<sup>th</sup> the *Cornishman* headline was 'Handover to Trust Heralds New Era at Glorious Godolphin' and there was a picture of Mary Schofield in her wheelchair handing over the keys to her house. Mark Harold, the Trust's director for Cornwall said the purchase was 'fantastic...you really get a sense of history when you come to Godolphin' and claimed that if the Trust hadn't bought the house public access would have been lost. Then he announced that after renovation the north and east ranges would be converted into tourist accommodation.

I visited John. It was the first time I'd been to Godolphin when it was closed. No-one was about, the silence was only broken by birds. Even the horses were gone from the field. John had forgotten I was coming, so I waited in the cottage, sipping tea with Joanne, his Canadian wife. Last time I'd seen her at a food fair at the house she'd been desperate, performing an American Indian dance, whooping to sell corn on the cob. Now she took a box of Bonne Maman madeleines from the fridge. My first madeleine. Until then I didn't even know what a madeleine looked like. I was going to tell Joanne, make her laugh about Proust, but then John arrived and she had to go and sit in the house with his mother who was too ill to be left alone. So the moment passed and when I ate the Madeleine it was unremarkable.

John started to talk about the house, about what was going to happen. I asked how the volunteers, who'd worked at Godolphin for years, felt about the Trust taking over, about their intention to let the house to tourists. I really wanted to ask how he felt but I didn't have the heart. He'd given years of his life to keeping the place going, to postponing the inevitable. But he said, it's been about tourists for years, so I nodded and asked what he would do and he didn't know. There was a six month lease and after that they would have to move on. But where? Then we got talking about the things he likes most and he laid a map over the tea things and showed me how the mediaeval field system had sliced up the land, portioned it out, mineral rich, mineral poor. You could still see the pattern to this day. I couldn't stay long. He's working on a history of the house and he's researching Lord Rochester's bed and he doesn't have much time. When I left, carrying two job applications he'd asked me to post, I turned back to look at the house and it seemed barely there. Godolphin was merging with its green surroundings, sliding into history and for the first time I understood what is meant when a house is described as slumbering, or as if a spell had been cast upon it. I thought it possible I might never go there again. Then, as I made my way back through the wood I began to wish I'd seen Andrew's museum. The idea of an alternative history was suddenly appealing.

Andrew's exhibition of paintings, assemblages, films and books opened at the Goldfish gallery in Penzance. The room downstairs was hung with fabric creating flimsy passageways. It meant you were brought close to the exhibits, couldn't see the work in context. As I rounded the first cloth corner I came upon Andrew who asked if I'd picked up a

price list. He said his titles were important and sent me back to get one. Number one was titled *Onomatopoeia*, the second *Lip Like Shore*, the fourth, *Onomatopoeia with Lip-Shaped Shore*. In *Onomatopoeia* a red haired woman is on the shore, in *Lip Like Shore* she is naked, washing her hair, in *Onomatopoeia with Lip-Shaped Shore* she has dressed but her hair is dripping red tears. Number three *Times Breath* was a wooden clock filled with dandelion clocks. I supposed it was about the way things disperse, time slips away.

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**Figure 7: "If Words Came First", invitation to Andrew Lanyon's exhibition at the Goldfish Gallery, Penzance.**

I was looking for fairies when I noticed the painting which showed fridge was before man had become *Sea Creature (with eggs)*. Had Andrew found it impossible to cool the colours? *Lifts Unrestricted by Believing the Top Floor is Paradise, the basement Purgatory* was on the stairs. A sign stated that 'Mr. Fortescue has established beyond doubt that all fairy rockets evolve from lifts...fairies are totally obsessed with them. The fact that fairies have no need whatsoever for lifts means designers have been free of any moral restrictions imposed by function'. I thought this liberating denial of the need to function came close to the idea behind the abolition of work and well illustrated the moral restriction of working or believing. Next was a fairy assemblage, *The Fairy Space Fleet before a Fairy Robot Spotted*

*Earth*. The fleet comprises a tortoiseshell hair decoration, a piece of architrave and a fragment of diamante and there is something peculiarly satisfying about it. But by then I'd reached the landing and could see into the film room.

That afternoon I'd delivered a seminar on Freud's theory of the uncanny. It was obvious none of the students had bothered to read *The Sandman* so I talked about the automaton the narrator falls in love with and described her mechanical movements and limited speech asking them to compare her to Clara his human fiancée. So it was uncanny when I saw Andrew's silent film of a woman making strange spasmodic movements. When the camera panned away from its subject I could see there were strings attached to her joints and people on either side of her holding long canes who were her puppet masters. Then I realised that the dark haired person pressing against me in the crowded passage was the actress, so I asked if she had really been controlled and she opened her eyes wide and said it had been the strangest thing, she could do nothing they didn't make her do. What was Andrew saying about the way we are controlled by others or we allow others to control us? Is the film about unconditional trust? About who or what we choose to believe in? I'm not sure, but I know that when I left the gallery I was grinning just as I was that afternoon when I walked up the lane away from Andrew. It was Friday night and clubbers were beginning to gather in Chapel Street and I had to stop myself from urging them to go to the Goldfish and look at Andrew's work. By the time I got home I wasn't sure why.

On November 14<sup>th</sup> *The Packet* reported that plans to convert land at Pool into a World heritage site had received a multi million pound Living Landmarks grant from the lottery fund. Cornwall's heartland project would create a 'truly inspirational cultural landscape including formal gardens, a performance space, stunning new art, water features and sculpture that would complement the grade two listed Robinson's Shaft Mine Complex'. There was no mention of South Crofty or of tin extraction.

On Boxing day when Joanne was holding a last party for the Lanyons at Godolphin the Schofields received notice to quit the premises by March. Meanwhile, as part of a project funded by the Pool Regeneration Company primary school children worked with a poet to

express their hopes for the area. The poet was my husband. His brief specified no mention should be made of past industry. As I drive to work I see the children's words displayed on an empty lot opposite South Crofty and next to a B&Q superstore. 'POOL IS THE FUTURE and POOL GIVES BIRTH TO NEW BEGINNINGS' the sign declared, until someone deleted the L. What are the Cornish boys to do?

In Saturday's Guardian, in an article called 'Ghosts of Childhood Past', Simon Hattenstone interviews the sculptor Rachel Whitread and she talks about the house that made her famous. A concrete cast of the inside of a building, it re-instated and fixed, those flickering details that draw your eye when you dash by a demolition site. A tiled fireplace clinging to the first floor of a gable end, curtains drifting in skewed frames and peeling layers of wall paper that bring to light what our mother's mothers chose and our father's fathers hung. Pale threads reaching out, connecting in the moments before a wrecking ball swings. The house was impenetrable, unknowable, but strangely familiar and Whitread says it's puzzling that far more people think they saw it than ever could have. Hattenstone agrees, because he can't remember if he saw it, but feels as if he did. It's a 'kind of Proustian sculpture' he suggests, 'once it was demolished it existed more strongly in our real or imagined memories'.

Memory, Proust, madeleine: the sad little cake I ate at Godolphin. I'd never read the book. Proust said 'The smell and taste of things remain poised a long time, like souls, bearing resiliently, on tiny and almost impalpable drops of their essence, the immense edifice of memory'. I regret I didn't savour that cake. But perhaps its essence had faded, dispersed during Bonne Maman's manufacturing process. Or maybe it had just been kept in the Godolphin fridge for far too long.

Rachel Whitread has been collecting houses for years. Knocked up in sheds by dads in the weeks before Christmas, smuggled through the back door after trips to Toys R Us or Littlewoods catalogue buys, they span the decades. Lovingly cared for or abandoned in attics, mock tudor, sixties box, some with balconies and double garages, they are the stuff of suburban dreams. Whitread's got them all and she has a project. She's creating an installation from her houses for the *Psycho Buildings* exhibition at the Hayward Gallery and

by a stroke of luck it takes place when I'm in London for a conference about nostalgia and the shapes of history.

A friend of a friend collects me from Paddington station. A spry psychoanalyst in her sixties, she hurls a small black Ka round London streets as if she's on *Top Gear*. When we arrive at her flat it's obvious she doesn't live there. It has the vacant feel of a place to let, or a half constructed set for a play. The house is Georgian, the flat highly desirable, but it feels as if time has stood still. The fridge is empty except for two croissants from the Co-op, an unopened jar of marmalade and half a jar of vegemite. The kitchen has no rubbish bin. There are tasteful paintings and prints from the seventies hung in the corridors and in a sparse living room, three pots from middle period Habitat. But the garden at the back of the house is an oasis, large, lush and overgrown. As she switches on the hosepipe my Australian host tells me that the people in the flat above want the garden replaced by concrete. Jets of water arc through the eucalyptus trees and I'm amazed to realize that in the heart of the city, in Kings Cross, all I can hear is water gushing and splattering on leaves. Either my hearing is impaired or all that city talk and constant rumbling of traffic is kept at bay by this greenery.

I sleep in a basement room with a glass door that opens onto a small paved area at the front of the house. Lying in bed, I can see the iron railings at the top of the wall and though my friend tries to convince me that the drop would be too far for any sensible intruder, I feel uneasy. At home I sleep with the front door unlocked, but in the city it seems silly to invite trouble, so I read several chapters about Andalusia before I can drift off to sleep. In the morning, as we leave for the conference, I peer down into the basement area and am reassured. But when I ask why the psychoanalyst chooses not to live in the flat, my friend replies that she feels safer in a bedsit elsewhere. I want to ask more, but we have to rush to the tube station if we are going to get to the conference on time. It's at Mile End and I realise I've never been so far east before.

The keynote address is by Professor Patrick Wright and he's the reason I'm at the conference. When I was researching my undergraduate dissertation on Mary Butts, a minor modernist writer, I discovered an enlightening chapter on her in Wright's *On Living in an Old Country*

I'd become interested in Butts after reading that she'd died in West Cornwall hospital in Penzance in 1937. I'd discovered that, though mostly unremembered, in her time she'd been compared to D.H. Lawrence, published alongside Joyce and admired by Scott Fitzgerald. But after initial enthusiasm, I read Butts with growing dismay. Natalie Blondel had recently published a biography bursting with detail about her Dorset upbringing in a villa containing many works by William Blake, about her louche years in Paris and addiction to opium. *Imaginary Letters*, written during that chaotic time and illustrated by Cocteau is a small gem. Later, after she came to live in a bungalow at Sennen Cove, Butts' writing became explicitly anti Semitic and infected by class hatred. A late novel, *The Death of Felicity Taverner*, in which a Jewish Bolshevik sets out to desecrate the sacred land of Dorset by building a petrol station, holiday accommodation and a pornographic film cinema was ludicrous and sad. I searched for criticism of Butts that supported my argument that it was hardly surprising she became a neglected writer. Apart from *Ritual, Myth and Mysticism in the Work of Mary Butts* by Roslyn Foy, there was no contemporary analysis available. Like Blondel, Foy mostly chose to ignore distasteful aspects of Butts' writing and promoted her as an early conservationist. I found this turning away from the obvious inexcusable and was glad that Wright did not evade the issue.

Reading *On Living in an Old Country* had a lasting influence on my attitude to heritage and conservation and nothing in Wright's conference address contradicted those opinions. He talked about the how the past can be 'harnessed to questionable purpose in the present' and by 'purveying the past as décor, the gaze is diverted from the modern and progress and the otherness of the past'. Naturally, as I was sitting in a lecture theatre in the East End of London, I was thinking of Godolphin and how the National Trust told me the future of this beautiful, romantic old house is in my hands. I was wondering about memory. How things remain poised for a long time.

Lunch was soon over, so I went to visit the Maureen Paley gallery at Bethnal Green. Paley represents Kaye Donachie, an artist whose paintings explore ideas of utopia and dystopia, and I'd e mailed the gallery hoping to see more of her work but received no reply. Having no clear idea where the gallery was when I came out of the station, I stopped an old woman to ask for directions. She peered up at me as if I was another species and when she spoke I was



reminded of those Ealing Studios films I'd watched as a child. She said she'd lived in Bethnal Green all her life, but had never heard of Herald Street. She directed me to the Halal butchers across the pavement, saying they would know, because they knew everything. The doorway was dark and smelled of blood, so I decided to try and find my own way. After about twenty yards I turned right into Herald Street. It was a short dusty street but I expected to see some bit of neon announcing the gallery or a brass nameplate. There was nothing. On one side cranes were at work building student accommodation and on the other the industrial buildings looked closed and derelict. This area once hummed with activity but when I stepped into a yard and looked into an open door, but there was nothing except piles of rotting timber. I hurried back to the station, sidestepping jostling groups of youths and felt a long way from home.

At the conference I listened to a paper on the End of the Poem and another on the Idea of Lost Paradise in the poems of Christina Rossetti and wondered why I was there. Then someone remarked, almost in passing, that narrative memory is mendacious, inherently nostalgic and I realised I was in the right place after all. I'm not really concerned about the end of the poem but memory and mendacity is something else. I used to think memory was like one of those American crazy quilts I've seen on eBay. Decades of patterned cloths, from baby clothes, party frocks, pinafores and uniforms, irregular and apparently randomly selected, they are not neatly organized in corn rows like Mennonite quilts. But there's art in the stitching. On the first crazy quilt I saw, there was an appliqued recollection of taking a pony to school next to a crooked confederate flag. Beneath it a jagged piece of chintz was embroidered with the words 'From Mama to My Dear Max'. And because my dear Max has a fondness for Faulkner, I wanted to buy it. I imagined giving it to him on his wedding day. But the quilt was rare and of high valuable and its reserve wasn't met.

Now I'm glad I didn't buy it. No amount of misremembering would make it mine. No re-assembling of our story. We have an artist friend in St.Ives, Robert Wilcox, who says he's escaping his past, but still he stores it carefully. He deals in fragments and has done for most of his life: gathering, painstakingly sifting, piecing together to make facts and avoiding romantic notions. He seeks the underlying structure, the basic geometry that identifies us all. One day, in his sky blue studio above Porthmeor beach, he opened a drawer and took out a

picture, a profile of a man, which I mistook it for a picture of an elf. Skin tattooed with greenery, fronds, wisps, slender shoots and leaves, the man was almost a poem. But he was a man, a careless man who'd lain unbound for months. The undergrowth had coiled around him, etched his skin, almost claimed him, until a young lad with a dog left the footpath and came upon his corpse. Robert's job was to reconstruct, to map his features and name the nameless, find a connection and inform what family remains. It was a job well done, so he had held on to the evidence. He had other things to show me, other stories to tell. How, on his first job, he'd stepped in a puddle of black blood that had flooded his shoes. Imagine that, only months out of art school. Now he spends his days trying to forget, trying to leave behind the burning man whose hands were melting and ignore the whispers of Fred West. Working alone in his studio he assembles small squares of vivid green and blue, makes tessellated images of the seductive Cornish landscape. But his pictures include traps for the unwary. On closer examination they reveal secrets, fragmented figures and hiding places full of dark possibility.

I met Oddie on the South Bank and this time there were hugs and kisses and I didn't watch her hurry by in her red work suit while I kept eating my salad. That day last year I was sure she would come back and I would see her again, but somehow we kept missing each other on the broad pavement that runs along the side of the Thames. Today we were both in the same place at the same time and it was good to see my old friend again. We had a drink at the Festival Hall and she told me her news. She's been hugged by Desmond Tutu and one of the Rolling Stones came to the cathedral. He was very nice. She feels like I do about Boris Johnson. Now there are only some things we avoid talking about. Lately she's been pre-occupied with being good and at the top of St.Pauls with the Dean they named and claimed steeples. She has a photographic memory for churches. On Monday she's taking Max out to dinner and she will tell him how happy she is. But when we got to the Hayward I almost regretted we were together. Sometimes it's better to see things alone. Then suddenly we were in the *Psycho Buildings* show in the psycho building. I remember seeing a Gwen John exhibition here, how the building dwarfed the art, how her discrete gestures were bullied by concrete. No chance of that this time.

Do Ho Suh made his *Fallen Star* from beech, ceramic, enamel paint, glass, honeycomb board, lacquer, latex, plywood, pinewood, resin spruce, styrene and PVC sheets. Stuff you could make a shelter from if you needed to. But this is a 1/5 scale model of two houses colliding, his first home in America and his childhood home in Korea. The catalogue describes the American house a ‘typical 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century New England building... a sort of theatre of memory, an almost hallucinogenic inventory of fixtures fittings and furnishings’<sup>1</sup>. It explodes with possessions, with sideboards, coffee tables and knife holders, vacuum cleaners and shotguns, a clock stopped at 8 o clock. Dinner on the table. Do Ho Suh says he exposed those things to emphasize the way the interior of an American house is cut off, separated from nature by all that stuff. But I can’t see it. I can only think that now this house has been opened up, exposed to the elements, it’s only a matter of time before nature begins its work of reclamation. The artist remembers his childhood home in Korea was porous, without many walls and the windows and doors made of semi transparent rice paper. There was space to breathe. You can’t see inside the Korean model house, it keeps its secrets. The exhibition guide claims the work chronicles ‘solidly’ the artist’s displacement, his disorientating move from Korea to America. The Korean house has crashed from the sky. There’s no possibility of going back.

DoHo Suh’s *Staircase V* was in the upper gallery. Made from the kind of pink net little girls in angel’s wings wear for parties, the short flight of stairs hovers above the floor and rises to a low pink net ceiling. Every detail of the staircase in the artist’s rented New York apartment has been recreated from net: banister, treads, electric cables, sockets and switches. It’s a candy floss construction that leads nowhere, a ghostly thing that shifts in the slightest movement of air, yet I felt the urge to try to climb it, to plant my foot on that flimsy bottom step. When I was an art student I had a recurring dream that I was climbing the staircase to my flat and something unspeakable was waiting on the landing. It’s obvious there’s nothing waiting here, this staircase is utterly transparent, you can see through it and round it, but it’s calamitous and it fills me with dread.

When we walked into Mike Nelson's *To The Memory of H.P. Lovecraft* I thought there had been some mistake, some misdirection. The room was wrecked, strewn with rubble, the walls, gouged as if by a great hammer, were caving in. Then I realised there was intention here. The room was a trap and it was as if some desperate creature had been clawing to get out. I glanced at Oddie; this was not a good place for us to be. We've talked over the years, she's told me about that night on the Marchioness, but I'll never really know what she had to do to escape. She was having fun, dancing with friends below deck when the lights went out and the water suddenly poured in. Somehow, there were cables tangled around her ankle, pinning her to the spot and she struggled to release them under the water. When she rose up and found she could breathe again the water was quite warm, almost comforting. She was tempted to let go, just see what happened. Perhaps make an end of it right there. But there was her widowed mother. Oddie knew the boat, knew she had to dive deep to find the corridor and swim up a narrow staircase if she was to get out. Her friends, less fortunate, would not have known what to do. Days later, John, who had been dancing close as close, was found tangled in the footings of London Bridge. The body of Antonio, the birthday boy, was discovered miles downstream, as if he'd been making for open sea, trying to swim home. They were young, had such bright futures, so much to live for. The authorities cut off their hands. They said it made identification easier but no-one could make sense of that. For a while, whenever a tragedy occurred my friend would appear on TV talking about survival, but after a while the media lost interest and moved on. We'd seen enough, spent long enough here when Oddie turned to me and said 'This is a torture room let's get out'. But it wasn't so simple. We had to climb through a hatch and down some narrow wooden stairs to escape.

Rachel Whitread's dolls' houses are in a darkened room on the ground floor. The houses are arranged on three separate islands so that you can walk between them and they rise up in levels just like a Cornish village built on a hill. It's quite a collection, there's every type and period of house. At first it's lovely, like fairy land, like a little girl's dream time. But when you've been there a moment or two, when the first impression starts to fade, an unexpected feeling drifts in. It's unsettling to be among these empty houses in the dark. Something has happened here and you're not sure what. The lights are on and every door is open, but no-one's home. Isn't there a nightmare where you run from house to empty house, taking short cuts across well tended lawns from nothing to nowhere? You don't know what you'll find.

What's this up on the hill, a long low Hollywood house? Sharon Tate's place on Cieolo Drive after the girls and boys had gone home? Something happened here. These houses are ransacked, stripped of content. Thrown back on our own narrative for better or worse we fill their empty spaces with dreams, with meaningless phantoms.

When I was on my way home from the nostalgia conference I realised what all this art has in common, what it's saying. There's no way back.

I stand in the King's room looking across the courtyard. This is the only room open today and there are three National Trust volunteers guarding it. They've divided the room diagonally, just as they did when the mural was here. They're displaying prints of the Godolphin Arabian, though nothing to say whether it's the authentic painting. I pick up a photocopied leaflet from the table and an elderly woman crosses the room surprisingly quickly and stands over me as I read it, as if she thinks I might steal it. It's called *Visitors to Cornwall* by Ida Procter and there's a list of names on the cover: Virginia Woolf, D.H.Lawrence, Katherine Mansfield. There's no date. My friend asks where the portrait of Charles the second is and the woman says she has no idea, perhaps it has been sold. We know that, in those last desperate months, the Schofields sold the painting of the horse but has the Trust sold the painting of the king? She's affronted. The Schofields might have sold the horse but the Trust don't sell anything. She's really quite cross with us for asking. So we ask why we can't visit the rest of the house and she says it's too dangerous. Last year, because so many visitors came, the corridor along the north range became dangerous. My friend points out that it was dangerous before, that's why we only allowed eight people along there at a time. But the woman knows nothing about that. And anyway, just after Christmas, a large hole opened behind the front door and you wouldn't want to fall in there.

When we've left the house and we're driving away, I think that the Trust doesn't seem to be taking great care of the house. That nothing is really being done to stop it falling down. I wonder about the hole that has opened. It's likely there are mine workings under the house, that Godolphin is undermined. It seems that tourists will never be accommodated here again and the empty house will sink into memory.

## IT'S SO SAD TO WATCH A SWEET THING DIE.

If Everybody had an Ocean..

When the Tate Gallery opened in St.Ives the architects were asked to provide storage space for surf boards near the entrance. Because the gallery overlooked Porthmeor beach, the curators, who were new in town, thought surfers would be attracted up from the beach to the gallery if only they had somewhere to store their boards. I don't know if this has happened, but in reality, art displayed in the big circular gallery which faces the Atlantic competes for attention with the view of ocean and sky. Perhaps in recognition of this, when he planned to bring *If Everybody Had an Ocean*, an exhibition title taken from the first five words of 'Surfin' USA' by The Beach Boys to St.Ives, the curator, Alex Farquarson, said he wanted to bring the beach into the gallery...to imagine Cornwall as southern California.

On a hot afternoon in June when I turned away from the beach and climbed the steps to the Tate, The Beach Boys' 'God Only knows What I'd be Without You' was echoing around the rotunda, which, though intended as a meeting and performance space, is gloomy and cursed by icy draughts, even at the height of summer. The only time I remember it used successfully was when a potter built a raku kiln and fired pots there at night and even then his audience, faces glowing in the fierce heat from the kiln and the flying sparks, were well wrapped against the cold. I moved quickly through the first gallery, *Surf City*. *I Get Around*. *LA Artists in Their Cars*, is a 1969 calendar by Joe Goode, 12 pages of tanned young men in their gleaming Cadillacs. *Beach Boys 100%: The Whole World is Just a Great Big California*, an example of Mel Bochner's magazine page art. Propped against the wall was *Visitor*, a surf board sized rectangle of shiny yellow fibreglass by John McCracken which had never been nearer the sea. I didn't think I needed to spend much time in Surf City. But as I was about to slip into the next gallery a man I took to be the new director started to talk about the show and I listened out of politeness. He said *Surf City* was all about surfaces. Chrome, cheer leaders and cheesy grins. *California Homegrounds*, Russell Crotty's surf diaries, issues 1-10 and Ed Ruscha's artists books, *Thirty-four Parking Lots in Los Angeles*, *Twenty-six Gasoline Stations and Nine Swimming Pools and a Broken Glass*. All are vacant, empty as far as I could see. Except for the broken glass.

Then I slowed down, because I thought that if this man, who it seemed was an unpaid volunteer and not the new director, thought the exhibition worth talking about, I could spare it some time. I could spare 15 minutes. And the next room, *The Warmth of the Sun*, stopped me dead and took me right back. When Brian Wilson was recording *Pet Sounds* he dreamed he had a halo over his head and I suppose that in the sixties a lot of us felt that way. As if we were basking in some holy glow. In 1965 Sister Corita Kent of the Immaculate Heart Community in Los Angeles obviously felt so. An educator and an activist, her art originated as protest posters about civil rights, Vietnam, the burning issues of the day. 'I CARE, I CARE ABOUT IT ALL. It takes too much energy not to care' her orange, green, vermilion words become abstract shapes then become words again. 'COME ALIVE', she insists, 'Green Up!' Down the middle of the gallery a row of Sony televisions were showing Jennifer West's camera-less films, *Hot Spicy*, *Tingle Film* and *Double Fast Luck Film*, made by marinating film stock in goodness knows what. Farquharson says suggestive substances and he should know. The films are hypnotic, open to suggestion, but the sister re-claimed my attention. I kept returning to the same works:

'WHO CAME OUT OF THE WATER' and the 'WHY of WHY we are HERE is an intrigue for adolescents'

'THE HOW IS WHAT MUST COMMAND THE LIVING which IS why I have lately become an insurgent again'.

Kent's work charted that time of my life when the world seemed full of possibility and we thought the how just needed to be worked out wisely (by us). So where was the sister when everything started falling apart? When the scene began to implode. Jeremy Glogan's *Smile Shop Door* and *Smile Shop Smiles* are open, inviting you in to experience the good vibrations, but the trouble is, however innocent you think you are, their dark doorways you complicit. They are based on the covers for Brian Wilson's album, originally titled *Dumb Angel*, which was stalled for decades after he fell apart and only completed and named *Smile* after he'd been put back together again. Wilson saw the fall coming. He'd had a bad reaction to LSD and when an interviewer asked in the mid-sixties if he was psychedelic, he replied that he was psychedelicate, like he knew he was about to fragment and take his whole phoney world with him.

The next room is called *It's So Sad to Watch a Sweet Thing Die*. In a twenty six minute video called *Halcion Sleep* a man sleeps on the back seat of a car as it travels through a city on a rainy night. He doesn't wake and the only action is in the changing pattern of street lights seen through the rear window. The man is bathed in blue light as if he's lying at the bottom of the sea, but he's most likely dreaming, deep in a narcotic sleep. A short half life hypnotic, Halcion, is a schedule four drug under the Convention on Psychotropic Substances and a sedative used to treat insomnia, which can cause the user to have clouded thoughts and fail to comprehend the passage of time. It's difficult to tear yourself away from the film because you just want to keep looking, to see where, or if, the man's journey ends, if he wakes. But the film is on a loop so the man sleeps on and on. And here's a thing, the drug was named after the Halcion bird, a mythical creature that calmed the sea for two weeks every year so that it could nest among the waves. It stalled the shifting currents and the passage of time so it could produce the next generation of dream birds. What an idea for a film.

Al Ruppberg shows quite ordinary photographs of people walking down the street, lying on the beach, going up and down stairs carrying a suitcase. But all the people are asking the same question: 'Where's Al?' Some reply, 'He's missing a good time'. 'Maybe he's still sleeping'. 'Maybe he was too broke to come'. 'Did he go to New York?' 'No-one knows'. 'Maybe he's in one of his anti-social moods, but he's missing out'. 'He's kind of a careless driver. I hope he didn't smash up somewhere'. We never find out more, never meet Al, because he doesn't show. Perhaps Al's all those people who don't show. The ones who miss out on a good time. Who things happen to and no-one hears from again.

In *Organism* by Fred Tomaselli a man is falling, falling headlong, You can't call it a painting because it's assembled from pharmaceuticals, from pills and capsules, medicinal herbs, hallucinogenic plants, marijuana leaves and images from books and magazines, tiny flowers, birds, arms and legs, all embedded in deep resin like bugs you find in amber. At first glance you're charmed by Tomaselli's work, seduced and sedated, then before you know it there's some unexplained event, some temporary altering of your state of mind. You just can't help yourself. Tomaselli grew up in Southern California and describes his work as an inquiry into utopia/dystopia, it's framed by artifice but motivated by the desire for the real. He's already re-worked the expulsion from the Garden of Eden.



The title of Kaye Donachie's paintings *Cease to Resist*, *Come an' Say You Love Me* and *Never Learn Not to Love* are taken from Beach Boys lyrics. But they relate to the Manson family. Donachie has painted a series of group portraits which she claims explore power structures in subcultural groups and because of their titles, it's safe to assume these dreamy paintings of hippy folk in blues and greys are of Manson's followers. In late Spring 1968, Dennis Wilson, drummer and youngest of the Beach Boys was driving home when he picked up two female hitch hikers. A few days later he picked them up again and took them back to his place on Pacific Palisades for some fun. Later that day, he left them at the house when he went out and when he returned after some hours, Wilson was greeted by a strange man in his drive. Wilson was afraid but Charles Manson, who when he wanted to could charm most people, reassured Wilson, in fact he kissed his feet. Inside the house were twelve strangers, mostly girls and their numbers doubled in the next few months when they took up residence. For a while things were OK. Wilson became firm friends with Manson who he believed a gifted philosopher and talented musician. Then the girls smashed up an expensive car and there were big bills to pay for the treatment of sexually transmitted diseases and in the end the partying became too much and Wilson asked the family to leave but not before he had introduced Manson to Terry Melcher and Rudi Altobelli who were also in the music business. Melcher followed Manson out to the Spahn ranch to record his music but gave up when Manson's ego trip began to run out of control. Manson visited Melcher at the house he rented from Altobelli on Cielo Drive many times and returned there in 1969 after Melcher had left town. Altobelli met him at the door and said Terry had gone away for good and Manson met Sharon Tate the new tenant of the house. He sent members of the Family to kill everyone there but no-one really knows if the intended victim was Melcher or Tate. Manson had written the song 'Cease to Exist' when he was Wilson's protégé but Wilson changed the line to Cease to Resist and re-titled the song 'Never Learn Not to Love'. After that, Manson delivered a bullet to the house on Pacific Palisades, a sign that Wilson was on his list. Wilson never testified against Manson, though he claimed to know why he'd set up the murders, because he was too scared.

## We Get Around.

There's a sign for North Country on the Redruth roundabout. I used to imagine homebound tourists turning off the A30 there for the M6.

Interview with Jon: 'There are about 90 houses on the estate and that's all there is really. They've taken the bus stop away. I lived in Essex till I was six. When I first came here I couldn't understand what anyone said. Our neighbor was telling us Princess Diana had died and I couldn't tell what he was saying. It's a shithole. Six years ago a van came to the green and they asked us what we wanted. Now they've put in a basket ball pitch. But they've taken down the club. I think it's because the last bloke was growing cannabis. The two other owners ran off with the money a few years ago. When I was growing up the park was full of rubbish. There were needles down there and that's no good when little kids are running around. After a while I just stayed in but my next door neighbours wouldn't let me play the drums. They've banned me now so I do DJing in my bedroom. I have a mate who does it professionally. Sometimes he does it in Plymouth.

I'm banned from the Twilight now. We ended up fighting there last Sunday. It was all to do with my mate Dean's girlfriend. I'd say I'm banned from the two poshest pubs in Redruth. I had a Mohican and I got banned from Trickie Dickies. This bloke kept going on at me and I tried to get away from him but we ended up fighting. Trouble just finds me. I like having a quiet drink but I finish up fighting. I used to go down the park drinking when I was 11 or 12. The first time I got drunk we'd bought three litres of extra strong White Lightning each and I woke up in hospital. I'd gone skating and hit my head on a post. A big metal post. I've settled down loads now I'm old enough to get served. Dean's a good mate, I've known him for seven years. We like to go somewhere different each time but we aren't normally allowed back.

We used to spend...well I used to sell stuff...I didn't have any money for food...I used to sell smoke cos I got thrown out of the house because we had loads of problems. I got kicked out of school for fighting gypsies, you have to call them travelers now. I used to go round my

mate's house and spend £50 on pills. I used to buy cars. You can buy a dodgy car for £20 but I never went for a stolen one. I always had to have the documents in case the police stopped me. I'd say I had my head screwed on for someone who didn't.

Every time I went to see my mum and dad I'd end up at the police station because I'd smash things up. My dad was more glad to see me than my mum. I'm too like her so we argue. Now I look back, some of the things they said were right.

The reason I got into the worst trouble at school was because I swore and because I always owned up if I'd done it. So they blamed me for everything. It didn't help that I argued so much. I took ten years of trouble from travellers. But if someone said they were going up to get them now I'd go. The girls I got on with but the boys would just shoulder barge you. Scott my mate got done by three of them so we sorted it and then twenty of them turned up in vans and the police had to escort us out of school. They say they are going to stab you but they don't do it. That's the difference: in Essex they would do it. Scott knew someone who left his keys in his car and they rang this traveler who had a certificate in stealing cars and he just opened the door.

I'm coming back to do the body work course. Or I might do Health and Beauty. I'm doing multi options, English and maths because I didn't go to school.

I've changed loads. I want to get on. I used to supervise the out of school club, I liked that. The kids like me. I've grown up because I hang around with people older than me now. I'd still be a little asshole if I didn't. The reason I started smoking is because of insomnia. I couldn't sleep and I had anger management problems. They wanted to put me in Trengweath. I'd end up at the police station and three times the mental health man came because I was fighting and suicidal. I'd done speed and it makes you go mental. Really the only thing I'd never do is anything with a needle.

Interview with David: It's so boring here that if I laid down in the road no-one would run me over.

## It's So Sad to Watch a Sweet Thing Die.

After they tried Steven Hoskin and found him guilty they made him sit under the words Martin had painted on the wall: SCUMBAG, PAEDOPHILE, NONCE and SHOULD BE HUNG. It's uncertain how long Steven crouched there while Darren and Sarah decided on his sentence. We know that the music was very loud and he repeatedly told them he was scared. But there's nobody to tell his side of the story now. Someone should have seen this coming.

It's hard to imagine a more idyllic place to grow up in than Maudlin, a tiny hamlet on the edge of the National Trust's Lanhydrock estate. Turn off the A30, off Cornwall's tourist map and after a few miles you'll be through Maudlin in a blink and in Sweetshouse before you know it. A huddle of old houses with tidy gardens and logs stored against the winter, Maudlin's a place where families have lived for decades, where everyone knows everyone and everybody's business. Steven's aunt and uncle lived just across the road in Myrtle Cottage and helped out if things got too much for Edith his mother who, as everyone knew, had problems of her own. But it wasn't just his aunt and uncle who watched out for Steven, every door in Maudlin was open to him and every door in Sweetshouse too. The villagers remember him wandering the woods with a dog scampering at his feet. Whole days the two of them were gone, who knows what they got up to? But there was no harm, nothing bad came of it. Just a sweet natured country boy doing what country boys do. There were streams to dam and dens to build and Steven, who was strong in body though not in mind, could lift the heaviest stone and drag the branches of a tree to earth. The only thing he didn't do was climb because Steven was afraid of heights. His phobia wasn't funny, someone said later. He felt real terror.

Difference that doesn't seem a problem when boys are still young and spend their days roaming becomes more obvious as they grow; when teachers make demands and boys who can't are singled out. Steven never learned to read or write and soon the other village boys were outstripping him, beginning to leave him behind. He started to spend a lot of time alone and very soon adults began to call him difficult. When he was 12 the local school said they couldn't cope and Steven was sent away to a special school and was only allowed to come

home to his mother and grandpa at weekends. Uprooted from everything he knew, all his friendships and familiarities, forced to leave his dog, he must have been scared. Was he being punished for being different? When he was 16 and couldn't find a job, though many Cornish boys are in that position, they sent him away again, to a unit for assessment, treatment and youth training, where the other trainees victimised him and he became desperately unhappy. All these interventions were supposed to help, but as time passed nothing really changed except that Steven became even more isolated now that his village friends were grown up and beginning to find partners and build lives of their own. Back in Maudlin with time on his hands, when he couldn't get work digging potatoes or heaving coal (they told him how strong he was so he'd work extra hard) he returned to the woods, to making dens and dams, the dog barking and yapping. When light began to fade he went home to his room and put on his hi-fi and turned up the sixties music that he loved very loud. For a time he was quite happy but then grandpa died and people began to complain about the noise.

Steven was no saint. He had a temper. With grandpa gone, when his old lady got difficult he let her know who was boss. He was a man now and his mother was getting old and frail in body and mind, she couldn't tell him what to do anymore. How did she know what it felt like to be him? The rows started and when he began to smash things up the police were called. They had to come from Bodmin or St.Austell which is quite a way, so mostly things had calmed down by the time they arrived. Even so, things got to such a point that people said something had to be done. In September 2003, following a violent row with Edith, Steven was found guilty of common assault and put on probation. The decision was taken then to move Edith into sheltered accommodation and Steven became homeless since he did not inherit his mother's tenancy. In February 2004 Steven again left Maudlin, though this time Sue, his Jack Russell cross went with him. The landlady of the Newquay B&B where social services housed him, remembers Steven as a lovely, sweet man who regularly walked five miles each way to visit Sue in the kennels where she was kept and would go without food so that she would not. Few places are worse than an out of season seaside town. The shutters on the surf shops and restaurants come down, there is no work, the rain swept streets are deserted and the only warm place to go is a pub. It's hardly surprising that Steven took to drink and the woman he befriended was an alcoholic. He was always too trusting (Steven you're so strong, shift those tatties for me while I put on the kettle mate) and before long his

new friend was taking advantage, waiting for Giro day and cadging the lot. His landlady did her best to protect him, why, he was a child in a man's body, but there's only so much anyone can do. In the end Steven was glad to get away. This time he went to St.Austell.

In April 2005, when Steven phoned his friend Tony back in Maudlin, he was full of his brilliant new life. He and Sue had moved into a one room bedsit at 8 Blowing House Court, his first and last home of his own and he had an exciting secret to share: He was in a gang!

If Steven's life had been troubled, in comparison to Darren Stewart's it had been relatively secure, because until now there had always been someone looking out for him, however isolated he'd felt. An abused, runaway child who had been placed in an unknown number of care homes, Darren Stewart had grown into a violent, self harming young man. As an adult, he led a nomadic existence, had served a prison sentence for arson, been convicted of assault and made frequent, though unconvincing suicide attempts. Between 1998 and 2006 when he was thirty, Stewart had fathered five children with three different teenage partners. After one of the babies was seriously harmed all of them were put under emergency protection orders, though there was insufficient evidence to bring charges against Stewart. Social services later reported that when vulnerable young women entered into a relationship with Stewart they became isolated from friends and family and at first appeared flattered by his possessive behavior, which soon escalated into total control. Social services also reported that Stewart 'had an uncanny gift for identifying those who were vulnerable and lonely and became violent when they sought to disengage with him [...] he compelled the obedience of those weaker than himself with violence and threats'.

Between January 2005 and April 2006, Stewart had contacted, or been contacted by health services on over one hundred occasions and had called an emergency ambulance twenty six times. Local police had logged forty nine contacts during the same period. By July 2005 it was known that Steven had a 'lodger' and that youths were hanging around but it wasn't until 8<sup>th</sup> October 2005 that Stewart gave his address as 8 Blowing House Court. No one really knows how Steven met Stewart but since Stewart regularly sold amphetamines and other drugs from the corner of the close it is hardly surprising they made contact. Once the contact

was made and Stewart recognized Steven's vulnerability it was no time at all before Stewart and the gang of young teenagers in his thrall took up residence in Steven's bedsit. The relationship seems to have followed Stewart's usual pattern, he identified Steven's loneliness, offered him the thing he wanted most, friendship, then took advantage and eventually became violent. By November 2005 police were warning housing officers not to visit Steven's bedsit alone because Stewart was there. Between November 2005 and June 2006 Steven consulted health services sixteen times, on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2005 he attended a fracture clinic; on 11<sup>th</sup> December, as a result of an emergency call, he was taken by ambulance, to A&E; on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2006, following another call, he was taken to A&E with a head injury and again on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2006. On 24<sup>th</sup> April 2006 he attended a minor injuries clinic complaining of an alleged assault and suffering from chest pains but the assault was not reported to the police. From August 2005, when Steven further isolated himself by cancelling his Community Care assistant service, until June 2006 he called the police to his home eleven times.

Sarah Bullock was fifteen when she met Stewart in the summer of 2005 and stopped going to college. By November, her stepfather was phoning the police and the Ocean Housing Trust to tell them that she was spending time at 8 Blowing House Court in company with Stewart, who was dealing drugs there and that when she returned home she was often under the influence of drugs or drink or both. Pretty soon she didn't bother to go home anymore. It's hard to know when Steven stopped enjoying being part of the gang; it would have been a while before he realized how much Stewart was exploiting him. Social services report that Steven had lost all control over his life once Stewart moved in, that eventually he had no choice or control over who stayed at the bedsit and no influence over what happened there. It's safe to assume that some of his many contacts with the police were calls for help and in May 2006 after months of chaos and petitions from neighbours which had resulted in his housing benefit being stopped, Steven contacted a social worker and asked to be moved nearer to his mother. He complained he was being 'taken advantage of' and three days later he contacted the police to say Stewart and Sarah were 'pestering him'.

In the early evening of 5<sup>th</sup> July 2006 Steven was identified by a local shopkeeper as one of two thieves who had taken lager from his shop on 1<sup>st</sup> July. Steven admitted his involvement and offered to pay, saying he did not want Sarah, who had recently suffered a miscarriage, to

be involved in the offence because 'Darren would not be happy...in the past Darren has pinned me to the settee and slapped me for no reason...I don't want to go to the flat straight away because of what Darren might do'. When the police arrived and asked who had accompanied him he became nervous before saying Sarah and explained she was living in his bedsit with Darren. Steven who smelled of alcohol and became agitated when going home was mentioned said 'Don't tell them I gave you their names otherwise they won't be very happy about this'. The police sent him home planning to interview him when he was sober but that never happened because on 6<sup>th</sup> July his body was found at the base of Trenance viaduct. In addition to the injuries caused by his fall, Steven had taken a lethal dose of paracetamol tablets, had cigarette burns on his body and bruises on his neck. Also the backs of his hands bore the marks of foot-prints.

When Steven returned home after paying for the lager, seven people were at the bedsit, Stewart, Sarah, Martin Pollard, who would later be convicted of his manslaughter and false imprisonment and four teenage boys. Two of these boys were allowed to leave and later reported that they had been scared of Stewart and relieved when he had unlocked the door and let them go home. But Steven's humiliation and torture had already begun by then, Sarah had put Sue's collar around his neck and was making him crawl around the floor on all fours calling her Madam and Stewart, Sir. The music was very loud and Steven kept telling them he was scared, when he tried to use his mobile phone to get help they took it from him, held him face down on the floor and beat him with the phone's charger. The two boys who left admit kicking him on their way to the door. The trial began after Pollard painted the graffiti on the wall and Steven was forced to sit beneath it with Sarah pulling on the collar if he moved. It's hard to see what evidence there was to consider since Steven was not a paedophile but after they had found him guilty, they forced him to swallow 70 paracetomols and the journey to the viaduct began.

'Walkies' Sarah said and they were off out of the door, along Blowinghouse and across the road opposite the Jade Palace take away; past the sign in the window of Hart's Fish and Chips: We're in Geoff Capes Five Star Take Away Heaven and on up to Watersedge Close. It was the middle of summer, a fine light evening, but no-one seems to have seen them pass by, two men and a girl leading another man as if he was her pet. The Great Western service



from Penzance to Plymouth trundled by overhead but they kept on; up Orchard Grove and into Tranance Road, past Cherokee's private drive and carefully terraced garden; there's a holly tree by the gate and logs piled neatly under the pergola. At Grove Road, dogs bark. The mill race is still now, deep green, a beer bottle and a rubber glove disturb the water's oily surface. On a lamp post there's a sign that says This is a Neighbourhood Watch Area and a sign that shows a body falling and warns: Danger of Death; another says Take These Single Steps to Avoid Crime. They climbed up to the main road. Did Steven think they were joking? They crossed at The Archers B&B, where the garage doors were open and there are two rows of chairs inside as if someone is waiting for a show. I don't know how they persuaded Steven to climb the granite steps, he was so afraid of heights. When they reached the top, they gave Steven a last cigarette; after he had smoked it they made him climb over the safety rail. He would have been weeping by then, clinging on, but Sarah stamped on his hands until he let go. You can see right across the valley from up there, as far as Eden and almost as far as the Maudlin Woods.

Afterwards Stewart and Sarah went home. Sarah did some tidying, put on the washing machine and they went to bed. Play time she said.

## ARCADIANS.

P&O E912: A journey of 8350 nautical miles on a great circle track; supposedly the shortest route between two points on the earth's surface.

We were at an opening at the Tate gallery in St.Ives when Anthony Frost told me we might be going on a cruise. I didn't believe him because nothing like that happens to us. We never go anywhere. But sometimes you are proved wrong and sometimes the unimaginable happens.

In the summer of 1959 the New York artist Mark Rothko visited St.Ives. He was escaping a major commission to make murals for a private dining room at the Four Seasons restaurant in the Seagram building on Park Avenue. On the first night of his voyage to Europe Rothko met John Fischer in a tourist class bar. After ensuring Fischer had no connections with the art world, the artist told him that, appalled by the ostentation of the Four Seasons and its clientele, he planned 'to paint something that will ruin the appetite of every son of a bitch who ever eats in that room' By all accounts the Rothkos had a good time staying with the Lanyons in St.Ives. There were crowded days and heady nights, drinking parties and dancing under the stars at Brian Wynter's place on the Penwith moors, intense debates in pubs and studios. During his short stay Rothko discovered how much he had in common with the St.Ives abstractionists, with Wynter and Anthony's father Terry Frost, with Wilhelmina Barnes-Graham, Paul Feiler and Lanyon himself. Soon after he returned to New York Rothko withdrew from the commission and the murals he had designed to 'make diners feel they were trapped in a room where all the doors and windows were bricked up, so that all they were able to do is butt their heads forever against the wall' never graced the walls of the Four Seasons. On February 25<sup>th</sup> 1970, the day Rothko committed suicide, nine of the Seagram paintings arrived at the Tate gallery in London. His gift to the nation. As luck would have it, in October 2008 when we were passing through London on our way to catch the flight that would take us to the cruise ship Arcadia, they were being exhibited at Tate Modern. Rothko: The Late Series was the first time all the Seagram paintings had been shown together but we arrived as the gallery was closing.

DAY ONE. St.Lucia, Weather partly cloudy, showers. Temperature 30C.

The mini bus driver accelerates, then leans across and winding open the window with his free hand, blows a kiss to a pretty woman standing at a bus stop. A cow tethered beside her munches the wet grass and immaculate school children wait to cross the potholed road. The forest is steaming, the road is greasy with recent rain and I wonder if I'm going to die in St.Lucia. If they will cremate me here for a cheap repatriation. Then Alan begins to overtake a slow moving pickup, so I hook my arm around a spare seatbelt, knowing it will not save me. We speed through rainforest, plunging into deep vegetation, then rising up through a density of banana trees, their fruit wrapped in blue plastic to keep out bugs and birds. With his free hand Alan makes a phone call, arranging something fun for later and swerving his vehicle from one side of the road to the other. I thank Christ nothing comes in the opposite direction. We pass shabby shacks, the blue green wooden homes of the primped and beribboned school girls. A bent backed labourer carrying his machete home from the fields watches us dash by. Further on there are open fronted shelters selling slices of water melon and drinks. But we don't stop, we keep on until we reach Castries. The midday downpour has flooded the capital and traffic is at a standstill, so Alan lurches off the main drag and into an alley only inches wider than the bus. He sounds the horn every few moments, calls out and waves and I wonder if he knows everyone on the island. The shops we pass are tiny, their dark doorways uninviting, as if they have nothing to sell. There are many cafes but no-one seems to be eating. Instead, people jostle on the crowded rutted pavements, trying to get home before another drenching. Then we round a corner and there is Arcadia, a gleaming colossus, dwarfing the town. And in her shadow a naked old man is clambering over the foreshore, to wallow in the muddy shallows.

There are many formalities, papers to sign, declarations to make before boarding. Under the P&O canopy a man in braided whites smilingly enquires whether I have vomited in the last two days then Victoria and Daisy who co-ordinates the Tate's programme of talks and workshops, help carry our bags up the gangway because I don't think I can. I feel so weak. Last night, in a South Bank gastro-pub famous for its contemporary British food, for its belly pork and sourkraute, Max asked what I expected a third world country to be like and I admitted I hadn't any expectations beyond knowing I like reggae, don't mind cricket and the

advert for True rum says the Caribbean is paradise. So I didn't anticipate this. During the nine hour flight we'd watched Sex in the City and talked to a woman tucking into a chocolate dessert who'd lost four stones by having her stomach stapled. When we got off the plane the heat on my shoulders was like a blessing but I wasn't prepared for the hustlers. Taxi madam? Bags madam? Before I could stop him, a rangy man had carried our bags a few yards to the exit and Alan, who was leaning on the mini bus, said make it right with him: then we go. So in a peeling office of the Bank of St.Lucia, I changed currency, sterling to US. I watched the teller pass some of my rolled up British banknotes to a young woman who laughed and squeezed them into the back pocket of her jeans before he counted East Caribbean dollars into my hand. I thanked him, I'd no idea of their value, but what I thought was, it didn't matter. It seemed that from now everything would be unreal. Two hours later we were on deck watching St.Lucia disappear and I overheard someone say 'It would be nice if the weather was nice.'

In the Crows Nest on deck 11, the evening's cocktail mix is gin and apricot brandy, nice ingredients that leave a bitter taste. I wonder if I should eat the sliced orange, the cherry? Sonia, a volunteer guide from Tate Britain, whose talks on Arcadia include 'Life and Love' and 'Little Darlings: Children in the Tate Collection', tells us she's become institutionalised. This is her second cruise in weeks and it's been such wonderful fun. They've run smashing workshops, made funky hats and shoes from chicken wire and tissue paper. All based on paintings from the Tate Britain collection. She asks how our journey was and I tell her how I felt when I saw Arcadia dwarfing the port and the poverty we saw on the drive from the airport. Sonia laughs, trills 'Poverty!' If I want to see poverty I should have been to Dominica and Antigua. Anyway, these people are glad to see the ship. Don't forget it brings them money. I think perhaps I've got it wrong, but while I'm trying to think of something else to say, she's turned away. Later, at the Tate table in the Meridian dining room, we are served five courses by smiling, accommodating Asian waiters. During the pause between main course and pudding, Sonia's husband, an actor, bleeds onto the table cloth. The restaurant supervisor is called and wants to fetch a doctor, but David says it's fine, just a scratch. My 'Plate of Blueberry Desserts: Blueberry Mascarpone Brulee, Blueberry Muffin and Blueberry Shortcake' is tiny, tasteless and eaten in three seconds. We drink coffee and elderly folk in fringed shirts and stetsons creep by our table because this is C&W night and Sarah Lou is organising some 'foot stompin', thigh slappin', boot scootin' fun up on deck 9.

DAY TWO. Grenada. Weather partly cloudy, showers. Temperature 30C.

We can't keep the cleaners out of our cabin. Last night, after dinner, I found the pants I'd worn on the flight had disappeared and our elderly steward, John, had left a small square of chocolate in their place bearing the message 'A Star Falls from the Sky'. Each time I pass a member of the ship's Asian staff, they stop whatever they are doing, smile brightly and wish me good day. This morning, because we hadn't adjusted to the five hour difference, we woke early and watched dawn light up the sea through our salt speckled window. Billowing black flat-bottomed clouds floated low over the silver horizon and the sun was just a delicate streak of pink. Then in a blink it was light and we watched the dark wooded coastline of Grenada silently slip by. Up on deck nine, in the Belvedere restaurant, there was breakfast: pancakes, waffles, soft fruits, full English, toast, porridge, cereals, water melon, pineapple, muffins, cookies, as much as you like madam. Please come back for more. But mostly the elderly cruisers make do with a little muesli and perhaps a strawberry or two. We plan our day over the orange juice. If we weren't going ashore there's a Revolutionary Teeth Whitening seminar or a friendly shuffleboard contest or table tennis match, but we want to explore Grenada, so after breakfast we clamber down the gangway in the smothering heat. We disinfect our hands, repeatedly show ID, our passport back to all this, then slip through customs where a young woman is too bored to look at us. In moments we are in the duty free mall, a cluster of newly built shops selling costly, useless items.

Outside the mall the hassle begins. Welcome to Grenada madam, taxi? Taxi madam? From the ship madam? I'm good madam not like the others, that's my bus madam come back and take it madam? But we don't want a taxi so we try to leave the persistent young men behind. One runs alongside, clings to my arm, but we go into the market where I want to look at the spices. The women are even more insistent and they don't want to sell me anything simple. 'Are you from the ship madam? Here's a box of spices madam just right for your friends, a lovely gift for your friends madam'. But the ground spices are in polythene bags and look no more fresh than those in Tesco. I want the real thing, not something in a basket woven somewhere even poorer than Grenada by a woman even more desperate than this one. I buy a plastic bottle of vanilla and some nutmeg. Later I will wish I'd bought more and I want to, but it's impossible to pause and look at the goods or even walk slowly. 'From the ship

madam? Thank you for visiting Grenada madam. Buy some spices madam, protect your kitchen from everything madam. EVERYTHING DAMN THING MADAM'. Every person is more desperate than the one before. We dash to the rear exit, a way out into the steep streets where there's nothing much to see or buy. But there's plenty of traffic and while the poet strides ahead looking for an art gallery, I fall into a deep ditch at the side of the road, half filled with dirty cloudy water and plumbing pipes.

The woman at the tourist advice desk in the mall suggested we visit the Grenada National Museum. Once a French army barracks, then a women's prison, it's down by the old wharf where the cruise ships used to berth. It's crumbling, dark inside and the air is stale but a little cooler. The young man who issues our tickets seems very pleased to see us. Across from his desk are some posters advertising slave auctions and a couple of badly photocopied documents about plantation sales, but recently I've been to the newly opened slave museum in Liverpool and by comparison, there's not much to see here. There are sea shells in a dusty section labelled The Natural World but they are mostly the ones we get at home. Further on there's a moth-eaten rabbit in a glass case with some other stuffed and difficult to identify rodents and a collection of dessicating insects. There's a poster pinned to the wall advertising a poetry reading at 5.30 today and the poet is disappointed because we have to be back on board Arcadia by then. We pass slowly through the rooms, we don't want to appear rude to the man at the entrance, but it's hard to linger. On a low table by his desk are five electric sewing machines, one the same model as my own. In a room with some blackened sugar refining equipment, but with no information about the process or its history, there is a donkey cart and a tin bath with a handwritten label that says it once belonged to the Empress Josephine. We look at the bath from different angles, then, as we are about to leave, we are directed upstairs to the Arts Council exhibition in The Great Hall. This is a one man show by a local artist, some paintings of victorious West Indies cricket teams copied from newspaper photos, another of what seems to be a further education college in Leeds. The artist has several styles, in one of his larger paintings a nun is walking away from a scowling voodoo woman while a naked ginger haired man strides across a beach followed by a black woman who holds a coffee coloured baby in her arms. We would really like to have stayed for the poetry, but we make our apologies and leave the young man surfing the internet. In a shop around the corner we buy a tin picture frame and a tropical shirt for Bob who is feeling the heat. While our parcel is being wrapped there's a call to say a shipment from London has

arrived and I wonder if our frame really is as good a souvenir of the Caribbean as it seems (later we find it was made in Mexico which the poet says is ok). But I like the woman in the shop and I want to take something home to remind me of this visit. We ask her about the town and she tells us the catholic church is important, it helps the poor and she suggests a visit to the cathedral. It should be open, though these days they sometimes have to keep it locked because some people do bad things. Then she asks if we're from the ship and fetches some local chocolate that has no milk, no sugar and recommends a very reliable taxi driver who she could call right now and he would come straight down to take us somewhere nice. I'm disappointed and think that we have spent enough here. So we don't buy any chocolate or take the taxi, but weeks later I read in *The Observer* food magazine that this is the fourth best chocolate in the world and I will have to visit Bond Street if I want to buy it in Britain.

We cross the road and climb the yellow rickety stairs to The Yellow Poui gallery. The owner has had a sign on the door saying he'll be back by 10.30 for quite a while, so we're glad to find him open now. A tall, easy man, he tells us this was the first gallery in Grenada and now there are so many. But almost every piece of work we admire was made somewhere else. An American painted the herd of winged deer that I like and the vivid paintings of Grenada were made in Zurich. An English ceramicist, Marian Montgomery, made the raku figures when she was here and these few are the only ones left now. We've told him we're here to look and not to buy and he's ok with that, even though he knows we're from the ship. Does everyone on the island know the ship is here? Is this the one day in weeks to grab some cash? But this man doesn't try to sell us anything, though I'm tempted by some detailed ink drawings of cruise ships in the harbour. They're by a local man who's carefully drawn the layers of decks, rows of windows and portholes, every life boat and gantry. The ships loom, massive, over a patchwork of tiny cross-hatched rooftops. It's as if the twin towers have fetched up in Lego land.

I'd like to get to know this man, I will him to fetch some chairs, open a bottle of True. But it doesn't happen. So we find a different way back to the ship, avoid the spice market and the taxi drivers and pass what's left of a Presbyterian church high above the harbour. A sign prohibits trespassers and I peer through padlocked gates at a scorched clock tower. One clock, which faces the sea, stopped at ten to nine, the one facing the town, at ten past. They mark twenty minutes of ruination. Some distance away there's a wall with an arched

window, the place where babies were christened in the font, until four years ago when a hurricane swept across the island. It's amazing the ghostly window survived, though, of course, the glass is all gone. We follow a winding road downtown where we pass a man crouching in an alley, softly singing reggae with the voice of an angel. We want to get back to the ship. It's beginning to feel like a safe place, a refuge from other people's lives. It's not what I want to happen, I know this is not how it should be. But once on board I think how much easier it would have been to just stay on deck looking down at the town without bothering to be there, without trying to make a connection.

At the Neptune bar in the early evening, the staff have little to do. An audience of eight watches a steel band as the bikinied Tate girls swim lazy lengths and lounge in the jacuzzi. A young woman whose blonde hair is braided and beaded sits in her wheelchair by the pool, Nietzsche written in large letters on her yellow tee shirt. The band play 'Sloop John B' by the Beach Boys, then their own arrangement of 'Over the Rainbow'.

DAY THREE. Bridgetown, Barbados. Partly cloudy, heavy showers. 27C

Gerry is offered heroin and cocaine in Bridgetown. He says it happened in the real part of town, the shacks and shanties where people live. The main streets remind me of parts of Blackpool, narrow, crowded with dingy arcades selling gaudy clothes, with nail salons and cheap shoe shops. We didn't book an excursion: whale watching or afternoon tea in a historic plantation house, so the bus from the port drops us downtown, outside the National Bank of Barbados. We queue to change East Caribbean notes, which we can't spend here, into Barbadian dollars. At the front of the queue, an old man pushes a crumpled envelope across the counter and explains that it concerns his pension. He's tiny, wears a vest and dusty brown trousers and looks poor in a way I've never seen before. The teller unfolds the documents he's handed her, squints at her computer screen, enters some data and returns the envelope. 'It's all done?' he asks, 'All done'. He tells her how sorry he is to have taken her valuable time, 'No trouble' she smiles and he shuffles past us muttering his apologies. When we change our money I apologise for bothering her too, it's such a small amount it hardly seems worth her trouble. But she's gracious and I wonder about the way other peoples' currency seems to be worth so little, the oddly shaped coins that weigh almost nothing.



Later we're outside a bar at the harbour overlooking some expensive yachts and the tables are mostly taken by arcadians. I watch a woman refuse her change, saying, 'Keep it, it's worth nothing to me' and the waitress throws the coins down on the table and refuses to take them. I'm not sure whether this is because of what has been said or because the amount is so small, but it's embarrassing when the English woman calls 'Don't you want it?' So as the waitress shrugs and turns away, I catch her eye, try to look sympathetic. I've been in her situation and know the insult of being handed a few coins. But I've never been told to keep the change because it's worthless.

We visit a brand new craft village on the road to the port. The Bermudan Council for Arts and Crafts has an office here and a gallery which is closed. Many of the shops are empty and those that are open mostly sell mass produced trinkets, tourist souvenirs. The sort of merchandise that could be bought in Cornwall. I can't find anything I want. Then the rain begins, so we shelter under an awning with a tattooed and pierced young woman who turns out to be the antiques expert from the ship. She cruises three times a year lecturing on teddy bears, car boot sales and The Golden Age of Travel, featuring memorabilia from the Titanic. When the downpour eases we take a taxi back to town and the driver, Randolph, shows us Trafalgar Square telling us that the statue of Lord Nelson is soon to be replaced by a hero of Barbadian independence. I ask if the square will be renamed, but Randolph doesn't think so. I tell him we want to eat some real Barbadian food that isn't too expensive and he takes us to The Diner. It looks promising, quite basic but certainly local and we will surely get home-cooking, but we're too early for lunch so we take a walk. We're at Carlisle Bay and a friendly Rasta directs us across some waste ground onto the beach, where a long wooden jetty reaches out to sea and the white sand is extraordinarily clean. There are rows of deckchairs in front of The Boatyard 'The Famous Lobster House--Eat all you can Eat!' and all, except one, are empty. Close to the water's edge, three young men are struggling to help an obese arcadian out of a chair while her husband stands watching. I want to go into The Boatyard, but it's dark inside and to get to the bar I'd have to pass through the group of guys clustered round the pool tables. Later, back at the ship, I can't understand why I didn't just walk in and think how much I'd have liked to sit on the veranda drinking rum punch. Instead we went back to The Diner where the food was homemade and there were no fellow cruisers. The girl behind the counter recommended the macaroni pie but I had rice n' peas and battered flying fish because it seemed exotic, more authentically West Indian. But it was tasteless.

Workmen came in and collected their lunch in polystyrene cups and I realised that Randolph had probably brought us to the place he gets his own lunch. I'd imagined a shack on stilts over the bay with a reggae soundtrack, maybe some calypso, eating stuffed crab and lobster claws and I was disappointed. I wrote some miserable postcards: Ignore this sunset. Barbados is not like this. It's raining. I can't wait to get home. Then we left The Diner and walked down a long uneven pavement, past the orange and chrome stools outside the Bridgetown Liquidation Centre, that would have looked good in a Vogue shoot, past the derelict Grand Rialto cinema. I wished I could read the peeling posters outside. Back in town we wandered the streets looking for places of interest, heritage slave markets, mansions, but instead we found a department store, Shepherd and Whale. Actually it's pretty historic. The merchandise is folded neatly on tables and outside the enormous ladies lavatory the walls display pictures of staff members receiving awards for loyalty and performance. Sales assistant Miss Elizabeth Scott has worked for the firm for thirty years and her photograph is fading, curling at the edges. I wonder if she's still here and whether it's forty years now. Christmas decorations are being set out and the tree is up. I wonder if we should buy a decoration to remind us of our trip, but they are exactly the same as the ones sold at home. This is the store to be seen in and the first floor café is full of women in smart business suits piling their plates high at the help yourself salad bar. I eat a slab of lemon cake covered in hundreds and thousands and it's like a cake from another age, not just a bit stale, but of another era altogether, perhaps the sixties, when ladies still wore aprons and birthday tables groaned under this kind of stuff. Bob's sunhat has disintegrated in the rain so we look for a replacement at a mens' outfitters, but only find red, lime and peacock blue trilbies, which would look out of place on the Lido deck of the Arcadia. Beyond the Ralph Lauren polo shirts are rows of pastel coloured alligator slip-on shoes and racks of orange and black striped double breasted suits. Is this a shop for pimps and racketeers? Or do the partners of the business suited ladies deck themselves out like this on Saturday nights?

We start back to the ship and the taxi drivers cluster round us, but I tell them I'm choosing the grey haired man who is standing by his car and all except one, who walks alongside telling me I should choose him because until two weeks ago he lived in London, fall away. He's the second person we've met today who's recently migrated here, because, earlier, we bought our post cards from a girl from West Bromwich. At the port, cruisers are packing the duty free shops and a steel band is playing on the wharf to welcome us back. I drop what remains of our Barbadian dollars into their collecting tin, then wonder exactly how much it

was. Presenting the bar code on our cruise cards, we pass through the security cordon . At five o'clock we join Gerry for a cocktail in the Neptune bar and would settle there, but Tina on the tannoy announces a Cowboys and Banditos event will be starting here in five minutes, so we go for a lie down and while we are dreaming the ship slips out of the port.

DAY FOUR. At Sea. Noon Position 16 degrees 25`N, 054 degrees 48W` Weather, sunny spells.29C

Max told me that if I wanted to learn something about the Caribbean I should read *A House for Mr.Biswas*. So, I'm on deck at mid-day reading about the sooty blackness of the Hanuman house when the tannoy announces that Arcadia has left the Caribbean, is maintaining an East North-easterly course in the southern part of the North Atlantic Ocean and ships clocks have advanced an hour. Then, with no change of tone, the first officer continues: 'The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew, The furrow followed free; We were the first that ever burst Into that silent sea. Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down, Twas sad as sad could be; And we did speak only to break The silence of the sea! All in a hot and copper sky, The bloody sun, at noon, Right up above the mast did stand, No bigger than the moon. Day after day, day after day, We stuck, nor breath nor motion; As idle as a painted ship Upon a painted ocean'. I glance around at my fellow cruisers to gauge their reactions, but nothing has changed, they've continued to chat, doze or gaze blankly at the empty horizon and two seamen are still painting the railings with meticulous care. When the tannoy falls silent and I look down at my open paperback, I wonder if I dreamt I heard 'The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner'.

There are three thousand works of art on Arcadia. On every landing and every corridor there are paintings, sculptures and ceramics. Large canvases of small boats on brilliant seas, a patchwork of windbreaks and beach huts, a strip of bright sand, a bronze man with a fish on his head; Mousehole, St.Ives: Smeaton's pier, Porthminster beach, Longships light. We know some of the artists and recognise most of the places, but in every painting some feature jars, some familiar geography is skewed, a Cornish landmark misremembered or misplaced. I'm sure I haven't walked those streets, looked out at that lighthouse, I don't recall all this bunting and St.Ives isn't always bathed in brilliant sunshine. Nothing is as it is. The wind

never howls round these chimney pots because these are mythical seaside places, specially commissioned for arcadians. The paintings convey an upbeat mood, a jaunty air of celebration. That's what Arcadia's art is for. This art won't put the sons of bitches off their dinners.

You have to walk through the ship's art gallery, past the gaudy pink nipples of *Everlasting Beauty* by Pino and Barry Leighton Jones' big eyed waifs to get to the Globe, the cabaret bar where the Tate talks are held. Here, in the evening, you can rumba and jitterbug to the sounds of Highlife and on other afternoons there are champagne art auctions, but today Sonia will give a talk on 'Turner's Travels' and later Jessica will present 'Turner's Classical Gods and Heroes'. It's been decided that Turner makes good slide show presentations. But there is a famous painting that certainly won't be seen on this trip though it's very relevant to our position, to this southern part of the North Atlantic ocean. Turner's *Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dying and the Dead---Typhoon Coming On* is owned by the Museum of Fine Art in Boston and not by Tate Britain. Even so, I wonder if Jessica or Sonia would have chosen to include it, though Ruskin described it as 'the noblest sea that Turner has ever painted...the noblest...ever painted by man'. In *Modern Painters*, under the heading 'Of Truth, Of Water', he wrote: '...the torn and streaming rain-clouds are moving in scarlet lines to lose themselves in the hollow of the night. The whole surface of the sea...divided into two ridges of enormous swell...a low broad heaving of the whole ocean...the fire of the sunset falls...dyeing it with an awful but glorious light, the intense and lurid splendour which burns like gold, and bathes like blood. Along this fiery path and valley, the tossing waves...lift themselves in dark, indefinite, fantastic forms, each casting a faint and ghastly shadow behind it along the illuminated foam...leaving between them treacherous spaces of level and whirling water, now lighted with green and lamp-like fire, now flashing back the gold of the declining sun, now fearfully dyed from above with the indistinguishable images of the burning clouds, which fall upon them in flakes of crimson and scarlet, and give to the restless waves the added motion of their own fiery flying'. Ruskin seems to have been so dazzled by the effects of light and tide, that he ignored the struggling figures in the foreground. There was only the briefest mention of 'the mist of the night ...advancing like the shadow of death upon the guilty ship' to imply this was anything other than a dramatic seascape. Only in a footnote did he explain 'She is a slaver, throwing her slaves overboard. The near sea is encumbered with corpses'.

Turner is thought to have based the painting on reports of the Zong: in the winter of 1781, the slave ship, out of Liverpool, cast 133 slaves into the seas Arcadia is now voyaging. The Zong left Africa en route to Jamaica with 442 men, women and children packed in her hold. Shackled right leg-left leg, right hand-left hand they had less room than if they were in a coffin and disease was rife. When Captain Luke Collingwood mistook an island sighted on 27<sup>th</sup> November for Jamaica, he decided to jettison the sick and the dead so that an insurance claim could be made for loss of cargo. On November 29<sup>th</sup> fifty five were cast overboard, on November 30<sup>th</sup> forty two and on December 1<sup>st</sup> twenty six. Some were chained and struggling, ten jumped from choice. The ship's owners sued the insurers who were reluctant to pay the going rate of £30 per slave and at a subsequent trial in 1783 the Solicitor General declared 'What is this claim that human people have been thrown overboard? This is the case of chattels or goods. Blacks are goods and property...The case is the same as if wood had been thrown overboard'.

Each generation brings new interpretations of Turner's painting. The Caribbean writer and academic David Dabydeen, who, in his introduction to his epic poem *Turner*, describes Ruskin's footnote as 'like an afterthought, something tossed overboard', suggests that the intensity of the painting gives rise to the suspicion that 'the artist in private must have savoured the sadism he publicly denounced'. Dabydeen's poem re-envisions and re-casts the painting and is narrated by an African whose submerged head is visible in the foreground. The given name of this bleached and disintegrating man is Turner, also the name of the ship's captain and of a still born baby thrown from the ship. The poet reclaims the subject matter from the artist but by this naming, this blurring of identities, he makes Turner responsible for all that occurs. The narrator isn't even allowed to look back on an idyllic childhood, because his fantasy, just like his reality, is wrenched away by Turner. The poem shifts and disorients and narratives and meaning are dissolved as if by the scouring of waves. Dabydeen's *Turner* is a challenging unfixed poem for uncertain times. But Turner's unfixed and challenging method also reflected uncertain times and, it seems to me, rather than betraying the artist's latent sadism, the intensity of the painting mirrored the strength of its message.

Turner was obsessed with painting light and its effects and his unconventional methods had almost led to his death when he insisted on experiencing at first hand the effects of a violent sea storm, the better to understand it. As early as 1808 he had scrawled the words 'fire and blood' over a sketch called *Sunset Ship*. And Ruskin wrote in *Modern Painters* that until Turner 'none had dared to paint, none seem to have seen [...] the scarlet shadow'. Turner's use of crimson, the scarlet shadow in his painting, symbolises blood, destruction and hell fire. If this were just melodrama, painting for dramatic effect to find a sale, then Dabydeen might be justified in suspecting Turner of taking pleasure in his sadistic subject matter. But in 1840 there was good reason to have made such a painting. Though it had been illegal for Britons to trade in slaves since 1807 and the Slavery Abolition Act had finally been passed in 1833, slavery still flourished across the world. In 1839 the Society for the Extinction of the Slave trade and the Civilisation of Africa had been formed, with Prince Albert as president. A series of mass meetings were held at which Wilberforce and Thomas Clarkson, who had been fundamental to the campaign, made impassioned speeches for worldwide abolition. In this context Turner's bloody painting can be seen as a piece of propaganda. That the abolitionists now had a royal patron might also have spurred the artist, an astute business man, though it remained unsold when exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1840 and it was Ruskin himself who purchased the painting for 250 guineas in 1844.

DAY FIVE At sea. Noon position: 20degrees 19' N 03'W. Weather partly cloudy. Temperature 28C. Ship's clock advanced one hour at noon.

On G deck, along our golden corridor, Natalie, Bryony, Camille and Calvin have adjoining cabins. Two, I don't know their names, didn't show up, weren't at Southampton when *Arcadia* sailed. And that was curious: security passed that on. So, there are four and three others who might be friends, might be colleagues. I don't even know if they met before the voyage. If Camille and Bryony popped up to Manchester and Nat went down (she would have got a mate to sit the kids) and gathered in some city centre pub or some posh place down on Deansgate locks to talk things over. Their big adventure. Where to go? What to take? What to wear? Someone else made the connection. Some unseen, un-named mover. Ringing from a house in Alderley Edge where the millionaire footballers lives, or texting from the Home Counties. Safe as houses. Anonymous. I think I might have seen them in the glass elevator. But that's about as far as it goes, any familiarity, apart from John, who

probably folded Nat's PJs too and put that little piece of chocolate on the breast pocket, a little bit of heaven. But I think it's fair to presume, that when they were offered the 23 day Caribbean cruise, free passage to paradise, it was a great temptation. Afterwards there would be some kind of payoff, because, as the judge said, nobody travels for free. Though it must have seemed that way and it certainly seemed that way to me.

Now, after all that happened and thinking of the degrading photographs of Natalie and her friends released by Customs and Excise, I'm reminded of a poem by the African American poet Elizabeth Alexander. It's called *The Hottentot Venus* and it's about a real woman tempted into leaving her home. Like them, she blithely sailed across the Atlantic to her fate, imagining she would make her family wealthy and she would find a better life, but she ended as an exhibit in a cruel sideshow. It began with her master's proposal (though we never hear much about him) and a magistrate's permission for her to go. She dreamed of a watered silk gown of cerulean blue instead of old indigo flax; of her little brother 'devouring sugar studded non-pareils, pale taffy and damask plums'. But, like Natalie, Bryony and Camille, the Hottentot never dreamed of the cost of her voyage, of the cabbage-smelling citizens who would 'stare and query, is it muscle, bone or fat?' She never could have imagined her neighbor 'The Sapiient Pig the Only Scholar of His Race, who tells time and fortunes by scraping his hooves'. But I'm looking to the future. Just for now, on day five, all there was, was the voyage, was Arcadia. Who cared if they had to wait in line at breakfast, if they had to queue behind the aged and infirm? I don't recall seeing them in the Meridian dining room but I think one day, as I was leaving the Belvedere, perhaps after the Italian buffet, they were eating pizza at an end table, a round table large enough for all of them. The tattooed man was getting drinks and I thought how refreshing. How pleased I was to see him there. A youth. Something of wonder to rest your eyes upon and read. Because his body, or what you could see of it, was covered in runes, symbols tracing the curve of his calves, sliding across his broad shoulders, circling each ankle and wrist like sea weed tendrils on a drowning man. I have to admit that it crossed my mind (see how low I'd sunk, how seduced I'd been) that this might be a prize. That sometime, somewhere, he'd completed a puzzle or palmed off more than his stiff competitors. It is undeniable, he didn't fit. I can't imagine him at the Palladium, with Nat on his arm, laughing at Peter Piper's painful impressions of a hoodie, a skateboarding yoof that the aged audience recognized and found so funny. Perhaps they saw a grandson there or maybe it was that old Freudian thing of laughing at what you fear.

Anyway, the jokes were tired. They'd been tried on ship after ship and raised a laugh, but Peter, who seemed always on the edge of something, of the terror breaking through, probably had a bit in common with Nat and the tattooed man. The laminated grin, the whole performance. He'd come straight from a summer show in Cromer, he'd opened the fete at Southrepps. Hilarious. In 1997 he'd supported Cannon and Ball at the end of the pier in Blackpool, had even voice-overed on Black Beauty in LA, but those glory days are behind him now and after this cruise and perhaps one more, he'll be playing Baron Hardup in Northampton. At least he'll get to spend a bit of time with his little girl.

While we idle in the Caribbean, Nat's kids are being cared for in Grenville Walk. It's a row of boxy, ugly red brick houses on the edge of Littleborough. Like an afterthought, too mean to feature on a map and only a hop skip and jump from Rossendale bailiffs at Hardman Hall. I only mention them because I'm familiar with their work. Nat would have made arrangements for feeding the children and getting them to school. For getting up in the night when one of them called out, had a sore throat or a temperature and in the morning, searching the wash basket for socks that matched. Oh Natalie what you were missing, will always miss now. Those grey mornings when mist hangs low over the moors where years ago my granddad walked cows to market and Manchester, like the Caribbean, could be thousands of miles away. Whatever were you thinking of?

DAY SIX At sea. During the morning Arcadia left the tropics. Noon position: 23 degrees 56'N 041degrees 00'W. Weather sunny. Temperature 26C. During the course of the day Arcadia crossed the Mid-Atlantic ridge eastbound. Ship's clock advanced by one hour at noon.

If it weren't for these details I could imagine the ship becalmed. Sea days are all the same. Time means nothing except first or second sitting at dinner. Actually, time alters daily at a faceless officer's say so: forward back. And to make things even more unreal, Arcadia is cashless. Just a signature required, name and cabin number. I'm choosing some amber earrings 60,000 years old, when the salesman says 'Have both pairs. If you're on this ship madam you can afford it'. And it's almost true, these earrings will shatter before I get home, but for the moment spending means nothing. The bill comes at the end and the end is not yet



in sight. Nothing is in sight. I thought these seas would be crowded but they seem completely empty. There is no albatross in view.

Every morning a list of events is left outside our door: 'Snowball Jackpot Bingo in the Crows Nest, Burn Fat Fast in the Rising Sun, British Surrealists with Jessica in The Globe and in the Sea Room, Bob Devereux's watercolour workshop: Make a Splash Like Turner'. *BRITAIN TODAY* is left with the list. Today, or more likely yesterday, Tycoon Philip Green, is 'looking to invest £2 billion to save Icelandic retail group, Baugur, who own House of Fraser and Hamleys'. Iceland's prime minister is seeking 'to draw a line under the bitter spat with Gordon Brown'. Meanwhile, Gordon Brown has 'invoked the spirit of the Blitz...has promised Britain would lead the way through the global crisis'; the IMF is 'Ready to Lend'. But who cares? We're still a week out. We arcadians are more concerned that the slots open in the Monte Carlo casino promptly at 10am and later we'll be 'Finding the Secret of a Flatter Stomach' in The Rising Sun.

After lunch I take the glass elevator back to our cabin, lie on my bed and gaze at a print of a painting by David Inshaw that I was fond of nearly thirty years ago. It's deep England on a sunny late afternoon between the wars. The sky is clear blue but the shadows are lengthening. A woman is picking fruit in an orchard. A pale ladder is curiously placed, rising from the bottom margin of the painting it looks as if you could climb up it into the sky but it's not the sort of ladder to support your weight. I lie there half awake and half asleep, day dreaming the afternoon hours away and thinking of nothing but the way the ladder doesn't seem to be resting on the tree. At night I lie awake in the dark listening to the rush of water beyond the cabin wall, imagining the fathomless depths below, until the motion of the ship lulls me to sleep. All those who told me I would not know I was at sea were lying. I know full well I am at sea, feel each wave and am comforted by it. I have no idea where I am and there is nowhere I would rather be. I have nothing to do and nowhere to go. All is taken care of by the officers of the watch. I've only glimpsed them once in the Orchid restaurant. Five handsome men in braided whites whose presence makes the deferential Thai waitresses more deferential still. They pass among us like gods, we watch them from the corner of our eyes. Knowing they control everything.

The Venus Hottentot really made a bit of a show at the ball of the Duchess Dubarry, mad eyed, tassels dancing at her hips. The belles dames swooned and men in capes had to shield them from her view. There's nothing of that sort in Arcadia. No swooning. But security officer Bob Ward was alert. He has learned to identify suspicious persons and as he said later, 99% of the passengers were white and between the ages of sixty and seventy five, so he kept a weather eye. But I guess Nat's party was oblivious of his attentions. Bryony made the reservations and unlike me they'd paid full price for their passage, so they had a right to the 24 hour buffet and the sun beds. When we were careering over the mountain in St.Lucia they were on a different excursion. Down in the steaming streets of the capital or taxiing out to some lonely unit to make the pick up. Perhaps they didn't all go, perhaps some of their party went to see the monkey sanctuary or stayed behind for a cut price treatment in the spa. It was serious business, a hefty shipment, so I guess it was set up months in advance. Contacts and protocol. Maybe they eyed each other warily. And when they got back to the ship did they joke about all the stuff they'd bought to remind them of where they'd been? Did they laugh with the smiling man in whites while he checked their ID?

DAY SEVEN At sea. Noon position: 27 degrees 14'N 033degrees 29'W. Weather sunny. Temperature 25C. Arcadia is maintaining her course in the southern part of the North Atlantic Ocean. Ship's clocks advanced one hour at noon.

Today there's 'The Challenge of the Chefs, The Orchid versus Gary Rhodes' and afterwards, in the Meridian restaurant, Neptune's Lunch, a buffet 'from the bounties of the seven seas'. This morning, Jessica's Tate talk will be about 'The Language of Flowers'. Later, it's Indian night in the Belvedere and they're showing 'Brick Lane' in the Horizon room. I wonder who chooses the films? In Britain today, 'The PM Remains Upbeat' and 'Banks are Set for Monday Bail-out' and of course that's today so perhaps everything is all right now. Who knows? Also an American millionaire has blasted off in a Russian rocket to become the world's sixth space tourist. His father was an astronaut. Today is the first day I have felt that we were heading home.

DAY EIGHT At sea. Noon position: 30 degrees 09'N 025degrees 29'W. Weather sunny. Temperature 23C. During the day we steamed over the Madeira abyssal plain, where the water reaches depths of more than three miles. Ship's clocks advanced one hour at noon. .

In the Belvedere, at lunch, I often share a table with other cruisers. They are always friendly and tell me about seasickness cures and their past cruises. Today, when we are sailing over three miles of water in the abyss below, I sit with Pat and Teddy. Teddy has bright blue eyes in a round pink face and he has a very round body. He wears wide braces that accentuate his shape. He is a sweet man who looks well cared for, well loved. He tells me he was taken ill on his last cruise and had to be left behind in Venezuela. I can't imagine him coping, can't imagine him stranded in a hospital bed while the ship disappeared. Humpty Dumpty abandoned. It's a horrible idea, but he says the worst of it was the cost. £4000 to spend four days in the ship's medical centre then a further £4000 before he got home. And it hasn't put him off? Not likely! Here they are on Arcadia and in January they'll be sailing again and God willing, in April too. There are some people on this ship who spend more time cruising than at home. It's as if they've found their ideal way of life. Nothing to worry about, nothing to do and staff to look after you day and night. You don't even need to get off if you don't want to. And it's true, sometimes when they arrive at a foreign place they don't like the look of they just stay on board. Well, they've seen it all before. I wonder if their fathers were ship's captains. Or perhaps their great grandfathers were cavalry officers, shooting tigers and sticking pigs, in Mirzapur.

DAY NINE During the morning the ship approaches Funchal. Noon Position: Funchal, Madeira. Weather sunny. Temperature 24C.

When we dock in Funchal I stand on deck watching the security cordon going up. It's just a flimsy metal fence and I don't see how it makes the ship secure, stops anyone getting on board who isn't meant to. The interesting part is the bustle, the fussy preparations for arcadians to disembark safely. There's a canopy to be erected and wooden boxes with imitation bay trees to situate. There's the blue carpet with the P&O logo to unroll. We can't step straight off the gangplank onto flag stones. I'm watching and on the harbour wall people are watching me. I try to put myself in their place because it's where I usually am. The watcher not the watched. We've sailed 2618 nautical miles from Barbados to Madeira and there are no uncomfortable contrasts here, though later, in the entrance to the cathedral, a

begger will clutch my leg and ask for small change. In six hours we'll be on our way and tomorrow, when another ship fills this berth, it will be for all the world as if we never existed. I'm thinking this when a little Disney galleon goes sailing by. A miniature replica of some Portugese explorer's ship or man o' war, it's carrying tourists on trips around the bay and will still be sailing tonight when we slip our lines, clear the harbour and face the Atlantic again.

After lunch, while Sonia and David toboggan down steep winding streets in wicker sleds and Jerry climbs into the garden of an abandoned Modernist hotel to look at the sculpture, we go to the Museum of Sacred Arts. I have been interested in saints since I used to have exhibitions in the Netherlands and Nanky de Vreeze, the gallery owner, let me stay at her house. She was a collector of saints and the corridor leading to her kitchen was lined with larger than life size examples she'd brought from Italy. They were very beautiful, but maimed. Their journey had been so hot that their wax hands had melted and when they were unpacked, all that remained were ugly stumps. Now you could only imagine how graceful their gestures once were. At the museum in Funchal they have a St. Sebastian with many piercings, but unfortunately the arrows are missing. The holes in his torso are perfectly round, so that you could slip your fingers into them if the uniformed lady wasn't watching. It's best not to give in to temptation. Apart from him, the things that interest me most are two figures near the entrance. I don't think they are prize exhibits. Two female figures, their carved faces so delicately painted they could be real, they're too perfect to be human. No real girl could be so lucky. But the beauty ends there, just at the base of the neck. Because below the neck they are just rude shapes, crudely put together. No-one has bothered to give these girls a body, no breasts, no thighs. Below the neck, they turn into pieces of furniture. Though, unfamiliar furniture you don't recognise. It's not that they look uncared for, they have a deep nuns' polish, but they are limbless. They are startlingly unclothed, more vulnerable than Nanky's saints. Perhaps we've been in the museum too long because I wonder if this is some Catholic form of revenge, of shaming, doing away with the female body and it's corrupting urges. Beauty and the beast. But it's nothing like that at all. These are holy virgins from the convent. Usually they sit in the cupboard until Saints day, then they're taken out and clothed, dressed up to the nines and carried aloft through the streets. Glorified for an hour. It's thrift that caused the artist to work on their faces and leave a carpenter to do the rest. But it's odd that after our visit, after all the gilded and exalted

Madonnas, whose tiny feet are worn away by kisses, it's Sebastian and these pitiful half formed mannequins that remain fixed in my memory.

DAYS NINE, TEN and ELEVEN at sea. On day nine Arcadia passes to the West of Gibraltar Strait on a course set North, North-East for Cape Finisterre. On day ten we pass Cape Finisterre, the westernmost point of Europe. On day eleven we maintain a North-Easterly course across the Bay of Biscay.

The mood on the ship is altering. The Sunjets still play *Calypso Classics* in the piano bar but the weather is changing, there's a stiff breeze up on deck and there's a feeling that the end is almost here. We cling on. In Britain Today: 'Jobless Rise Highest for 17 Years, Banks Handed £37 billion Lifeline, Inflation Reaches New High' but we're having a 'Perfume Party' and a 'Chocoholics Buffet'. In the Palladium Theatre tonight The Headliners will perform 'True Brit, Highlights from the Best British Musicals Ever', *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, *Cats* and *Spamalot*.

I'm up on deck when the ship's company begins searching for bombs. It's only an exercise but for the duration we aren't allowed on the promenade deck and some hotel facilities are closed. I'm glad when the announcement is made that all bombs have been found and we can get on with enjoying our day. I wonder where they were hidden?

Did you rehearse in your cabin? Did Bryony get out the cerulean blue tape and make sure it stuck to your underclothes and not your skin? How did you share out the cocaine? There were 30 kilos between four. You must have laughed when you were all taped up, said you looked pregnant again. Nat, with four already, that wouldn't be so funny. Was your mood changing too? Did you three girls talk about what you were going to do? What you would do when you got home. First thing, put the kettle on. Then reach into the bag where the kids' things were. Lay them out on the kitchen table so when they got back from your Mum's, if that's where they were, the first thing they'd see would be you and the second, the presents you'd brought them. Clinging to your legs, stroking your hair, pushing it back from your face, telling you never to leave them again. And what about the others? Bryony and

Camille and Calvin. Someone must have been waiting for them. And not just the main man. The thing is, I don't feel like I know them like I almost know you. I don't know if they had kids, I can't picture where they're from, because when it all came out in the papers you were the unemployed mother of four and they were just names. Ok , I can imagine Calvin in his barber shop, customers dropping by to pick up those little parcels of dope. I don't know if that was part of his barbershop scene, but Iain Sinclair says it is in Hackney, so I'm guessing Manchester is just the same. I'm guessing your mates hung out, brought the news on the street. And the girls? I bet their sisters were waiting to hear how it went. How did you explain the trip to your Mum? A bonus from the cosmetics firm? Pull the other one Camille. But Natalie I can picture. I've been to Rochdale because it's my neck of the woods. I recognise the terraces, the little gardens in front, the fells rising behind. After all these years I can taste the North in my mouth. Now here's a thing, I can picture Grenville Walk and I bet you're doing just the same.

There are ships on the horizon now. Low lying tankers that seem stalled. And one afternoon, dolphins arc out of the water so suddenly, that by the time I've said Look look at that, they're gone. A moment or two later, because we're still watching the spot, we see them carve the air again. On the last evening out, after Arcadia has rounded Cape Ushant into the English Channel, for the first time we stand at the back of the ship watching her wake. The silvery trail we leave behind is gone in moments. The sun is low in the sky and the air cool. I try to recall the heat peppering my shoulders when we got off the plane. The shock of the first sight of the ship, the naked old man in the shallows. There were so many things wrong with this journey, but now it's almost over I could wish it to go on. Then two swifts flit among the railings, fly under the canopy and out again. They're taking a brief retrograde rest on their long flight to Africa.

Our bags are packed and left in the hall to be collected. When we go to dinner we see luggage strewn across the floor outside the lifts. It's odd because until now, everything has been so well organized, though I have the feeling that the staff, still smiling, will be glad to see us go. They're getting ready for the next trip, for our replacements.

We have to wait until we are told to disembark, we know the schedule. We sit in the library trying to complete a last unfinished jigsaw. Some cruisers are chatting, saying it's been quite a trip. One woman says she took photographs of the poverty to show her folks at home. She says she's been to India, so she's seen it before, but she wants her grandchildren to know what it's like. She won't go to the Caribbean again.

You were waiting too. You left your cabin like us, but I never saw the four of you that day. When we came down the elevator onto the quay were you still on the ship? Or had you gone ahead? Where were you when we were finding our luggage and heading through Nothing to Declare? Had they slipped beside you, quietly taking you by the arm? They wouldn't have wanted to make a fuss, to upset the arcadians, who, even so, were taking tumbles, tripping down the unfamiliar steps. Was there a moment when you thought that you'd gone clear, were really on your way home? Before everything changed.

They published the photos after you were sentenced. The ones of your faces and those other unspeakable ones. We were getting into a taxi, asking for the station and because we were from the ship, the driver wanted to take us to Cornwall for only £200.

I guess they separated you, kept you for a while before telling you to undress and stand against the wall for the shot. Bryony lifts up her T shirt for a close up of her belly; Calvin drops his pants, his arms stick out from his sides and the fingers of his left hand are splayed so it looks almost like he's dancing; Camille has a dancer's body, long and lean, she hides her hands behind her back; Natalie is standing in the corner as if she's been naughty, her skin blotched, her grey pants seem stained with piss. In the photographs you are headless. Headless bodies bound up in cerulean blue tape that winds round and about you and is nothing like watered silk. You are clothed in cocaine worth £1.700,000. You are guilty without a doubt and some will have to find other distractions for a while. In 1825 when the scientist Monsieur Cuvier was trying to prove his hypothesis about national character, he investigated between the Hottentot Venus's legs. Poking, prodding. She said she half expected him to pull silk scarves, paper poppies, rabbits from inside. Because of her public exhibition, she had tried to keep those parts private and for as long as she could, she kept

silent. Possessed her mouth, larynx, brain. Though, after her early death, Mr. Cuvier pickled her genitalia and it remained on a shelf in the Musee de l'Homme in Paris until 1974.

I'm sure you suffered indignities. They were searching for all they could find. No silk scarves. No rabbits. It says in the reports you kept silent and that, partly because of this, the judge decided to make an example of you. There is no such thing as a free trip he said and sentenced you each to twelve years. Then they put you on show. They flashed your images round the world. First your faces, then your bound bodies. A humiliating display. You were on the front page of the *Rochdale Gazette* and the *Manchester Evening News* and Caribbean newspapers asked what you were doing trying to smuggle cocaine on a cruise ship full of coffin dodgers? We were back home when we heard about all this. We were getting on with our lives. And the arcadians were back in their bungalows, making their own tea, checking the locks and dreaming of their next voyage. God willing.



## IMAGINARY JOURNEYS

One Saturday afternoon in early February I went to the Passmore Edwards Institute in Hayle. I hadn't been there since I gave up the slimming club years ago and now there was a poster for the latest thing, 'Baby Yoga', outside. I pushed open the heavy door into the vestibule and arrived at a Methodist whist drive with my grandma, or a rainy Saturday morning in Bolton when I was going to Blackburn Road Congregational Sunday School to recite for a Poetry Lovers Fellowship exam. Eight years old, I am wearing a new pink cardigan and my ponytail scraped back so tight I can't help but smile though I'm horribly nervous. But after the examiner has carefully entered my name and the ink has been blotted, I'll assume the position, right heel tucked into left instep, hands down by my sides, relax and breathe. Now begin: "Pansies in the garden beds make me think of kittens' heads". Forty-nine years later I'm word perfect.

It isn't just the sickly sweet scent of dry rot and wood polish that makes this place so familiar, it's the echo of all the good intentions: of the lending library, miners and smelters reading Tennyson, taking 'technical instruction' about minerals and geology and then a game or two of billiards before the cold walk home. When the industry died and tanners scattered across the globe, leaving behind only widows and the inept, there were committee meetings at the institute to discuss poor relief. One afternoon I left my son's student lodgings in a suburban street of semi detached houses in Manchester and heard a brass band playing 'The Red Flag'. All at once I was in a Ken Loach movie and looking round to see where my soundtrack was coming from. The band was practising down the road in the Union Chapel (Baptist), an elaborate red brick building, just like the Passmore Edwards. In the 1950s railway porters and shop girls would have attended evening classes there to better themselves or because they wanted to qualify for a £10 ticket on the Southern Cross to Australia or New Zealand. Now you can enrol for classes in Chinese brush painting and gourmet cooking or attend the 'AGM of the Friends of Fallowfield Loop', a nature walk once part of the Manchester Central Station Railway. These days it's green and healthy and Labradoodles and huskies are exercised where steam trains belched and clanged. I was thinking how that doesn't seem so long ago when the cornets faltered and stopped. I imagined pages turning before the band found its place again. I'd like to have stayed for another tune, but three kids on the corner

opposite were dealing drugs to drivers who were slowing down as if to ask the way, so I decided to move on.

I'd been invited to Passmore Edwards for the grand opening of an *Imaginary Journey* and 'for a Slice of Time Cake and Tea'. As part of a three year arts programme for Cornwall, Wildworks, an offshoot of Kneehigh Theatre, were staging Imaginary Journeys at five venues across the county. When I arrived, the Sylvanus Trevail room was already crowded. Three artists had been working with children from a local school, so there were smartly turned out Hayle mums and dads among the usual crowd of Kneehigh hangers on. Kneehigh children are easy to spot, they usually have uncombed hair and wear brightly coloured mis-matched hand me downs because of a competitive middle class recycling ethic. In Hayle, where male unemployment is one in five, mums fork out for M&S and Next, so Jerome and Kate looked like tiny scarecrows, whereas Ethan and Jade were in their logood best. They were all excited and jostling for space. The playwright Anna Maria Murphy looked anxious as she raised her teapot above the crush, poured and passed round fine old Darby and Joan cups. On each table there was a cake stand piled high with slices of lemon sponge, chocolate buns and cherry cake decorated with hundreds and thousands. More families arrived and I gave up my table to a mum with four kids and perched on the windowsill. I looked up and noticed there were ugly diagonal cracks in the plaster above the door frame and I wondered how long they have been there. A very old lady was sitting at the next table. Elaborately permed and eagle eyed, she was nibbling a piece of cake and barely acknowledging the kisses planted on her cheeks. She was obviously a person of importance and I wondered if she might be Sylvanus Trevail herself, but then thought Sylvanus was probably a man's name. A primary school teacher sliced into the blue iced time cake at three o'clock and her class handed around the plates, then Anna Maria Murphy called over the chatter and announced the opening of the exhibition, the crowd rose and the old lady was left behind.

My expectations were high as we pushed into the newly renovated Denis Hollow room where the billiard table used to be. The publicity had been expensive and made big claims. Mercedes Kemp, who was managing the project, said Wildworks wanted to 'gather memories, hopes and dreams for the future, and create beautiful installations that will connect with people and their pride of place'. Children had invited their grandparents to school and

recorded their stories to ‘inform and inspire the creation of the travel agencies’. So the main exhibit, a table rigged to look like a market stall selling handbags, was a bit of a disappointment. The handbags had been covered in brown paper and had timepieces, little clocks, attached to them. They also had labels but unfortunately, from where I was standing, the words were indecipherable. I think it must have taken the artists some time to stick the brown paper and the clocks to the handbags and to scrawl the labels. There was still a pile of scaffolding on the floor by the stall that suggested there’d been a bit of a rush to get things finished. People were crowding round the stall and I couldn’t get closer to see if there was anything more. Elsewhere in the room Anna Maria Murphy was selling memories. She asked each child (it was mostly children who queued) what memory they would like, then noisily dropped it into a paper bag using the old finger and thumb routine, screwed the top so it couldn’t slip out and handed it back. At least I think that’s what happened, though I couldn’t help thinking there’d be some disappointment when they got the bag home. On the other side of the door a screen displayed stories grandparents had told the children and some drawings. But as I started to read them I realized the photocopies were repeated over and over again, as if there hadn’t been anywhere like enough memories to fill the space. Is it that the old folk of Hayle didn’t part with enough of their hopes and dreams? Were they not inspiring or did they fail to have enough pride of place? I didn’t stay in the Hollow room for long because I decided there really wasn’t anything to keep me.

I went to Penzance to find out what the sculptor David Kemp had made of his part of the imaginary journey and my friend Joan came along. In Champions Yard, the Penzance branch of the *Cloud Nine Travel Agency* was closed until noon, so we went to the Exchange gallery for coffee. I got a shock when I pushed open the heavy steel door. Though the feeling was tiny compared to the shock I felt when I heard Partou Zia had died, because like a fool I hadn’t even known she was ill. Sometimes you don’t find out about things until they’re nearly over and sometimes it’s too late. I hadn’t known about this exhibition and could easily have missed it. Partou looked at me from every wall, every canvas. I can’t imagine how Penny Florence, who wrote the catalogue, could ask ‘whose are these figures, these faces, these hands?’ when it was obvious. She said we might assume they are Partou, but if this is the case then what about the double self portraits? What, she says, is the relation between them? I don’t know why she asked the question. Is it academic? To me it was plain. It was Partou here and Partou not here, she comes, she goes. What did one of her favourite poets,

Rilke, write? ‘...And his senses were as if divided: while his sight ran ahead like a dog, turned back, came and went again and again, and waited at the next turn, positioned there...’

The artist who painted nearly all the canvases in the exhibition called *In The Face of Wonder*, knew she was going to die. So, when one Partou offers the other Partou a rose in *And What is a Rose?* it’s a message of condolence. When Partou’s lover’s face hovers over her in *The Sleep of Hands* the flutter of disconnected hands that causes a slight disturbance in the bottom left, is all there soon may be: just a barely perceptible shift in the air. In *Untitled 2004*, the lovers sleep face to face and a cluster of eyes watches over them, while a woman sits at the bottom of their bed reading from a black bound book. There might have been some hope then. In *Night Drawing*, the artist paints a picture of herself in a sketch book, the scene lit by an anglepoise lamp and her paints and brushes are close by. But so is a window framing a wind tossed tree, which strains against its roots and just beyond it, in a rectangle of white, a figure hesitates and looks back. I don’t think I need to go on.

There was an entire wall of self portraits. A black on white record of the last months of Partou’s life, one painted just days before she died. She was a small dark haired dark eyed woman, exquisite, sensual, a reader, a seer. In these drawings she looks straight out of the picture into the eyes of the viewer. She has no trouble meeting your gaze. Her figure is contained, there is no wild mark making, just a flowing brush stroke to mark her presence. To show that some days she let down her hair.

I thought that I would come again to the exhibition, spend more time with her, but like the lousy friend I was, I didn’t go back.

The *Cloud Nine Travel Agency* claimed to offer journeys back in time ‘to revisit your favourite memories and happiest moments!’ or opportunities to ‘Leap boldly into a new future’. An excited woman, wearing a flowing gown and ill-fitting blonde wig, greeted us at the door. The room is long and narrow and there were four of us, so space was tight. Inflatable globes with white angel wings dangled from the ceiling and the room was lit by

larger, illuminated globes that lined the wall. The woman said we had to be processed. I didn't like the sound of that but she didn't explain further. She wrote down Joan's name and asked where she was from. She asked if Joan would like to travel forwards or backwards in time. An elderly woman was lying on a sofa at the other end of the room and a gowned and bewigged young woman had started to waft her with a large piece of cardboard. David Kemp began to fiddle with a music deck. I began to feel uncomfortable. I heard Joan say she would travel back in time and the place she would go to was Australia. I guessed she was going to re-visit her love affair, but then I heard her say she would clear the brush so the bush fires didn't start and I thought she would be very busy if she was going to save all those home and lives. It's a worthy thought, but it was wasted here. When the woman with the blonde wig turned to me, I refused to be processed. I was their worst nightmare. I said I was interested in what they are doing: would they please explain? David Kemp looked up and asked Joan why she had called herself by a different name and she said 'Hi Nathan' and explained she'd given her work name. The name she goes by when she makes jewellery. The girl was getting upset, she said I had to be processed and I asked what they were going to do with all the information they collected. They weren't going to do anything with it she laughed, they are just having fun. Then she got bored with me and led Joan to the sofa because the other woman's journey was over. I told David /Nathan that I was interested in the idea behind his installation and would like him to explain it, but he said he'd like me to leave. I was very close to being ejected from *Cloud Nine*. So, when Joan lay down on the sofa, closed her eyes and imagined she was in Australia and the girl started waving the cardboard, I left. It was all over in a couple of minutes and we walked silently back to my car. I felt ashamed, as if I had spoiled everyone's fun. I wanted to ask if Joan had managed to put out any fires but I wasn't sure she'd speak to me again.

A few days later I asked another friend what he thought of *Hollow's Shop of Time*. He said he thought it was something and nothing and we agreed that nothing had been made out of something. He hadn't been to *Cloud Nine* so I couldn't ask what he thought of that. I said it seemed like a wasted opportunity. David Kemp, like Wildworks, has a reputation, he makes transformations, fantastic sculptures from found objects, from bits of machinery and industrial waste, dross that other people have thrown away. Here, Kemp was doing something different, he wants to know who you are and what you hope for, he promises daily

departures to popular destinations, but he took what you gave him and turned it into an empty sideshow.

## STALAG HAPPY

Edward Elks and Danny Frost perform their two-man play, *Stalag Happy* at St.Ives Arts Club. Though it opened in the same decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Arts club is quite different from the Passmore Edwards institute or the Union chapel. Never intended for working folk, it boasts a bohemian history and hasn't changed much. It's easy to picture the old days, Birmingham bluestockings and the black sheep sons of department store owners gathering and setting up their easels. Their model might have been a fishwife, but in gossipy non-Conformist St.Ives it's likely the female artists took it in turns to disrobe. Oh, the tea dances when Peter Lanyon's father played piano! The fancy dress parties when the drawing master came as Diaghilev's faun! Poetry readings and play acting. It's part of St.Ives history and the current membership, who have mostly retired after productive lives elsewhere, keep it afloat with coffee mornings and annual subscriptions.

The theatre seats sixty at a pinch and tonight the tickets have sold out. Everyone wants to see what the lads have made of the artist Terry Frost's experiences in a German POW camp. The scenery consists of just two wooden doors so you have to use your imagination. Danny Frost plays his granddad, who was a factory worker from Leamington Spa when he enlisted. Edward plays Adrian Heath, an ex public school boy who'd been to art school and knew some tricks. They didn't actually share a hut because Adrian was a galloper, an escapee who took every opportunity to try to get away and Terry didn't do that anymore. Once, he joined a plot to escape from a camp in Greece but the plan was uncovered and those already in the tunnel were taken out and shot. After that he was content, if that's the word, to spend his time painting. Hessian sacks for canvas, brushes made from slivers of tin and hairs stolen from a German horse's tail, found pigment mixed with sardine oil. It was a very limited palette. But they were the first paintings Terry Frost made and now his works are worth thousands and his reputation reaches round the world.

But this play isn't only about painting. It's about the things we do to stay alive, the dreams that see us through. There's an imaginary train journey to Margate and a fantasy dance with big breasted girls. Danny has to be the girl because Adrian says his hands are soft like a woman's. On Christmas night they lie in bed (the doors) wearing balaclavas because of the terrible cold and talk about the imaginary dinner they've just had: turkey and all the trimmings. It's rye bread and water. There wasn't a pound of flesh on their bones but they played ping pong with an invisible bat and invisible ball. And in the end, after Crazy Week 1944, when there was fox hunting round the camp, 'Halloo! Halloo!' their captors began to take them for woodland walks because they thought their prisoners were going insane. But it was the opposite of that. The malarkey kept them on track. It was the walks in the woods that drove them mad: Freedom without Freedom, though Adrian kept trying to make it real.

At the end of the play some of Terry Frost's paintings are projected onto the doors. Circles, circles within squares, circles and half circles and a painting made in the camp. It's nothing like his famous abstractions but it was the beginning.

## NO THEM. ONLY US

Natalie, today I imagined walking down your street, opening the gate to number three and taking your keys from my pocket. Just one turn and I'd be in your place. I'm sorry to say it's a real mess, walls peeling, ceiling sagging and something terrible seems to have happened in the bathroom. The estate agent says a lot of work needs to be done to bring the house up to scratch, though at £37,000 it's a give-away, cheap even for here. Someone could make a killing. Who can resist a bargain? I'd like to ring him and enquire about the vendor because, though I know you lived in Grenville Walk, I can't be sure that this is the house where you lived. It's because of your circumstances that I'm imagining number three was yours and trying to put myself in your place. I'm looking at the photographs and imagining the smell of must and damp and other things. I'd be glad to get out of your house, go out of the tiny, cluttered garden into the back lane and follow the ginnel that leads to the open spaces; to rise above the town onto the moors and find a sheltered spot to sit and think. Just somewhere to be alone: Natalie you imagined getting away, changing your existence, and in a way you did.

I imagined going to Natalie's house and afterwards, I imagined I'd visit the archive at Bolton library and see the letters that Walt Whitman sent to the plain-speaking northerners he called his staunch, tender fellows. Whatever did he say to them? A GP and a clergymen, office clerks, merchants and factory overseers, ordinary Victorian working men and women. Wallace, Johnston, Fred, Thomas, Charles, Minnie and Alice. What was it that they had in common, that kept them all in close touch? They had strong minds and wills, a shared belief in non-conformity, socialism and spirituality; they were comrades who shared a love of nature and fun; scandalous free love in Bolton back yards. Later, on Whit Sunday walks, they would wear lilac to remember the poet by and Whitman's birthday rambles up Walker Fold were walks of witness, climbing high above the factory chimneys to Barrow Bridge and Brian Hey. In 'By Broad Potomac's Shore' Whitman wrote: 'Again the freshness and the odours, again Virginia's summer sky, pellucid blue and silver/ Again the forenoon purple of the hills/ Again the deathless grass, so noiseless, soft and green/ Again the blood red roses blooming' . He could have been writing about Rivington Pike where, given clement weather, Whitmanites still share sandwiches and a loving cup. On Whitman's anniversary poetry lovers come from all over the world to face into the Pennine wind and take turns to read out his poems, his celebrations of the great out-doors.

Bolton library has Walt's stuffed canary, it's faded now but they keep it as a trophy, a sign of his commitment to his loving comrades, though a dead singing bird seems a strange memorial to a poet. I'd rather have read the letters, I imagine their tone was lofty, instructive. How the comrades must have hung on his replies. That first time came straight out of the blue. They'd sent a birthday salutation and a little cash but never expected to hear back. But what excitement! A letter, came all the way from the United States of America to Lancashire, from the famous poet to sooty Eagle Street. I imagined that, with the help of a Bolton street map, I might find this place, although, of course, so much has been demolished to make way for improvements. Still, I imagined standing outside the Eagle Street College which was really a modest terraced house. I like the idea of their comparing Wallace's two up two down, in one of Bolton's 'worst streets', to a university. However unlikely it may seem, the letters, and later, their visits, forged a strong link between Eagle street and the Potomac, between a group of passionate working class readers and Walt Whitman, who never came to Bolton. When, in March 1892, it became obvious Whitman was failing, Wallace wrote that he dearly wished he could come for a moment to the poet's bedside and 'be it as if I were



with you', sent an X as a token of his love. In his last letter to Wallace, dated 9<sup>th</sup> February 1892, Walt, who had only six weeks to live, wrote of his hopes for the future, 'more and more it comes to the fore that the only theory worthy of our modern times for great literature, politics and sociology must combine all the... people of all the lands, the women not forgetting'. But then the poet said the mustard plaster on his side was singing so he had to stop and wished his friends a last goodbye. I know just what he meant about the mustard singing.

I imagined all of this: driving down the M61 to Bolton, finding somewhere to park and directions to the library and the archive. I imagined the creased and discoloured envelopes with their collectable stamps. I wondered if I would be able to decipher the handwriting. And afterwards, when I had had enough of libraries, I imagined walking those streets and finding the Congregational church where I used to recite for the poetry exams: Distinction. Quite Exceptional. But now it's a mosque, the biggest in the area and I'm not sure the Poetry lovers Fellowship still exists.

I imagined this because a searing, singing ache in my side stopped it from happening. And there were aunties to see, Noreen, Lillian and Jean. They are old now, so they must be seen. Auntie Noreen says 'Pauline likes a book' but she doesn't say which one and Lillian does not know how to turn on her new TV. Once it's on, she can't turn it off. When my children were small, she used to take us to the Pleasure Beach, watch them ride on the Tea Cups, the Ghost Train and the Carousel and when it was getting dark and time to go home she'd take us all for tea: steak pie, chips and peas, bread and butter and a pot of tea and afterwards some red jelly and warm custard. She never wanted to say goodbye, so we'd walk down the pier with a bag of shrimps between us and wait for the illuminations to be switched on. Now she doesn't go into Blackpool, not since the day she forgot which bus to take home. She still goes to the top of the road to get her hair done though, 'And look!' she chirrups, 'it needs cutting now'. I see them all and we repeat the same stories as before, go through the tea time rituals. My father, who lives alone, says he's eating too much and that he'll have some whipped cream with his apple pie. On the drive home he complains about Noreen's Irishness, she's always been the same. Later, he says he doesn't visit Lillian because she doesn't visit him. I point out she is more confused than him and he says he isn't confused at

all and turns the volume on the television up. Every night we sit in his darkened living room because he sees no need for light. He says he has £1000 in the cupboard by his bed but why waste money on electricity? I think he's like his mother who also sat in the dark. He never takes his eyes away from the TV screen and gives a running commentary about everything he sees. He likes rugby league almost as much as football now: Wigan and Castleford, Warrington and Leeds. 'Look at them run, Ooof! They're big strong lads', unlike my sons who have let him down. Not an athlete among them, though Max showed promise in goal years ago, before he decided to be a writer. My father says he doesn't read books because they are only what other people have written. I think I will have to find a different gift this Christmas. Every hour the train on his favourite clock rushes out of the station, whistle blowing, carriages going clackety clack. See, it's right on time, two o'clock, three o'clock, four, five, six. I'm wondering if my dead mother chose to be stone deaf and what is going to happen to her teapot collection? When the time comes, how will I be rid of all this? There will be no archive. Not even a grave.

On the last day of my visit, horizontal rain sweeps in from the Irish sea and three times my new umbrella turns inside out. Tattooed and pierced families in plastic ponchos throng the streets and there's a long queue outside Blackpool Tower. You can smell misery on rainy Saturdays in seaside towns. But I am full of purpose and hurry across the town centre to the Grundy Gallery. It's solid and proud, the same as all the Northern municipal galleries I've ever been too. But now it seems washed up, beached among the last chance to buy closing down sales and newly opened Pound shops, though millions are being invested in Blackpool. They're putting back the cobble stones, creating an artificial beach on the promenade, clinging to something it's increasingly difficult to believe in, that sliver of municipal pride. I'm only here because there's an exhibition I want to see called *Rank: Picturing Social Order 1516-2009. Who Do We Think We Are?* It claims to be the first exhibition to examine the way British artists represent the shape of their society and it was recommended by *The Guardian*.

Once I thought of making a map of Cornwall and instead of stitching the names of tourist destinations I planned to mark the number of homes that had been re-possessed. Later I thought a suicide map might be more apt. A shoreline of black crosses. But the maps are

already here in Blackpool, someone got here before me. In a section of the exhibition titled *Picturing Geographies* there's a map of Britain showing asset poor households. Outside of Greater London, almost nowhere in the south of England has high densities of poor households, except West Cornwall. It seems apt that on this map, poverty is signified by the bright blue of the sea off St.Ives and of the new rococo bus shelters in Hayle. But then there's a map that asks you to imagine regions as nations and compares the GDP of the Westcountry with that of the United Arab Emirates, though Wales only compares to Kazakhstan. It doesn't make sense, until you realise that this Westcountry takes in all of Devon, Somerset, Avon and wealthy Gloucestershire, as well as Cornwall. In 1898 Charles Booth made 12 maps of London in which he classified streets into seven categories, from rich in gold, to semi criminal in black. He began to make the maps to demonstrate that poverty was not widespread, but ended in concluding he had massively underestimated its extent. In *Picturing Politics* there's an illustration from *Lanark* by Alasdair Gray which is based on Hobbe's *Leviathan*. It shows the nature of Gray's imagined land, dominated by a kingly figure whose right hand holds a sword marked force and whose right arm is peopled by soldiers. But in his left hand, the figure holds a sceptre marked persuasion and though most of the figures that make up the arm are kneeling, one or two, who look like Gray, are holding their arms up in protest. On the right, the truncheon, soldiers and tanks, on the left scrolls, school teachers and university degrees that end in car assembly lines. Between them is a statement: 'By Arts is Manufactured that Great Mechanical Man Called State'.

In *Picturing Mythologies* there's a photograph, taken by an anonymous photographer in 1896, showing a bedraggled man between the shafts of a barrow. It's hard to see what the barrow contains, perhaps rag and bone or his few belongings. The effect is pitiful but it's not what it seems. The image was created by a church to raise money for the poor and the title is *One of Them* with an accompanying text: 'they are the poor...poor physically, mentally and spiritually...It's easy to say hard things about their lack of enterprise. Of forethought and of thrift'. In the exhibition catalogue *One of Them* is opposite a red and black text work by Mark Titchner, which reads *No Them Only Us*. Titchner has taken the phrase from an early speech by Bill Clinton. At first, it appears to contradict the church text and be about the universal brotherhood that the Whitmanites extolled, but, as the catalogue points out, in isolation the text is empty and could be interpreted to mean quite the opposite. According to the critic Sally Vickers in the *Financial Times*, this work of Titchner's implies 'the tipping

point between one world view and another cannot always be easily pinpointed'. It seems to me that one of the purposes of art is to illuminate those tipping point moments of confusion, when the signs, though difficult to read, become impossible to ignore.

Once I was lost in Blackpool. It seems an easy place to know, a strip beside the Irish Sea. But I had been driving all day. I'd had the call I dreaded and raced up the motorways to see my mother at the hospice. She was lying in the corner bed, the other three had been replaced. They took it in turns to die in that room and now my mother's skin was the buttercup yellow that meant her time was coming too. I sat with her but she did not wake. When I left I thought I'd taken the right road, from North Shore to South Shore, by a direct route. But I found myself trapped in a one way system, looking up at the tower, almost on the sea front. A policeman showed me the way when I started to cry and told him my mother was dying and he lead me to the promenade. But it was the last place I wanted to be. Illuminations traffic was crawling along the seafront at five miles an hour. Children were sticking their heads out of sun roofs to see the Sleeping Beauty tableau, Alice and the dashing White Rabbit; there was Doctor Who and his Tardis and flashing Eddie Stobart wagons; spinning mirror balls and supine mermaids. Then, as I drew close to the Pleasure Beach, there were massive yellow Ms strung across the sky: M for Margaret my mother I thought, the yellow for her skin. It was a sign of how far gone I was, how lost in the illuminations.

## THE DARK MONARCH

Tate St.Ives is a place of contradictions, a post modern pastiche, all romantic gestures and impractical spaces built to house a collection of modernist art. But in the winter of 2009 the gallery was transformed for *The Dark Monarch* exhibition. White walls were painted blood red, shades of damson and deep green and the big window overlooking the sea turned into a dark mirror. For Halloween, they held a Dark Weekend of late performances, conversations, film and music. A Damien Hirst unicorn with golden hooves and horn stood in the entrance and upstairs a showcase contained Ithell Colquhoun's library of books on surrealism and magic, which includes practical guides to witchcraft and popular astrology. Sven Berlin's 1962 book, *The Dark Monarch*, was about the way mysticism, mythology and the occult had influenced British art for the past 100 years and the curators had selected historical examples

to exhibit alongside new work which showed the re-emergence of ‘romantic and arcane references’.

The opening night was packed and generally, people loved the show. Romance is ruthlessly seductive and portraits of languishing, pale faced aristocratic ladies, half clad avenging angels and rampant magical beasts were going down a storm. The moonlit rituals of *Apparitions and Encounters* in Gallery 3 were replaced by Arcadian landscapes of *Path through the Wood* in Gallery 4. The Neo-Romantics certainly knew how to pull a crowd, but I’m averse to magic and mysticism. I lived through the psychedelic sixties and blighted seventies and magic mushrooms hold no further interest for me. According to the little black booklet that accompanied the show, ‘Eric Ravilious’s intensely felt images of agrarian and rural landscape also evoke a powerful sense of the open countryside as a site of ancient historical forces...silent, heavy with a strange or powerful mood as though a wanderer or explorer had disturbed some invisible magical or supernatural presence’. They remind me of the sacred landscapes favoured by the modernist novelist Mary Butts. Butts died in Penzance in 1937 but not before she’d published a series of increasingly anti semitic novels about a group of neurasthenic aristocrats who loitered around the Dorset landscape and sought help to protect it from an evil Jewish Bolshevik who wanted to build a petrol station and pornographic cinema on Dorset’s ancient sward. The point is, these idealised landscapes, like the de-industrialised landscape of Penwith, are no more ancient or magical than any others and they are silent because, though agrarian, there is never any agricultural activity going on in them. No grubby ploughman or cattle herder. The closest Ravilious comes to acknowledging activity is a disused plough. The real life of the countryside, the hardships and labour, are of no concern to wandering aesthetes seeking atmospheric locations for their fantasies. Butts wrote an essay called ‘A Warning to Hikers’ which was intended to dissuade the lower classes from leaving the cities to explore the green ways. She wanted to preserve rural England and Englishness against contamination and as such, has been heralded as a proto conservationist, which, by association, does nothing to further the cause of conservation. I had imagined that I wouldn’t read of Grail inspired rituals, druidic gatherings and mythical scenes or ‘primeval, mysterious places, responsive to occult and mystical influences’ once I’d completed my BA dissertation and thrown Butts to the back of the book shelf in disgust. But the reactionary forces of hocus pocus are rising and here was a Tate exhibition that proved it.

I decided to leave before anyone asked what I thought about *The Dark Monarch* and met a nice young man and his partner on the steps outside. For some mysterious reason, I stopped and we began to chat. They said they'd come to Cornwall especially for the opening of the show. I asked what they thought about it and they seemed impressed. After some talk I discovered he had work in the exhibition. I think it was the first time I'd met a young artist who exhibits at the Tate and I said how exciting that must be. Mark Titchner smiled and didn't say much more.

When I arrived at the Tate for the Magic and Modernity symposium, the room was overflowing. Marina Warner had cancelled but that hadn't put anyone off and a new row of seats had to be added at the front. I was lucky to get one and found myself sitting next to Mark Titchner. I felt very foolish at having congratulated him on being included in the exhibition, since I'd discovered he'd been nominated for the Turner prize in 2005. But he didn't seem to hold my ignorance against me.

In his brief introduction the artistic director and one of the show's curators, Martin Clark, talked about escapist dreams of utopia and a current 're-engagement with some of the murkier practices of the tangled histories of modernism'. He said *The Dark Monarch* revealed terrible landscapes of monsters and mermaids and Tate St.Ives was the perfect location for such a show. Then he introduced Chris Stephens from Tate Britain who described Sven Berlin's experience of war and the terrible events he'd witnessed. When Berlin returned to find that, astonishingly, St.Ives was virtually unchanged, he marvelled, calling it a cuckoo town though later he described it as lost. There is a recurring fantasy, that St.Ives escapes history and its consequences and this often attracts outsiders, but in this case it was almost true and made the town the ideal place for Berlin to recuperate and rediscover his creativity and interest in pagan spirituality.

In the group discussion, ideas of Penwith as a dark, mysterious and pagan landscape were explored, though I'm not sure what the Methodists would make of that. John Wesley drew some of his largest crowds here and even now some chapels are full on Sundays. Someone said that D.H.Lawrence suspected blood sacrifices were made when he lived out at Zennor

and John Heath Stubbs, who stayed in Zennor for a short period in the fifties, described this part of Cornwall as ‘a wicked country [where] abortions of the past hop through the bogs’ . This appears to contradict the idea of St.Ives as a town of no consequence, but perhaps this is another reason why Berlin calls it a cuckoo town, as if the place exists in an alien landscape, a timeless idyll surrounded by a boggy minefield.

In 2004, when Bob was looking for poets for his literature festival, John Retty, the publisher of *Hearing Eye* books, who ran Toriano, the Camden poetry club, suggested John Heath-Stubbs might come. Bob knew he had lived down here in the past and had been friends with the poets W.S.Graham and Arthur Caddick and must be quite elderly, but made the booking anyway. When Heath-Stubbs got off the train Bob, who had known the poet’s sight was impaired, realised that the eighty six year old was now completely blind. They proceeded to the Lifeboat Inn and had a good session, but during the night Heath-Stubbs became disorientated, causing a number of breakages in his B&B bedroom and was evicted the next morning. All day Heath-Stubbs held court in the Salthouse and many came to pay their respects. Visitors were entertained with colourful stories and alcohol and as the time for the poetry reading approached it became obvious that Heath-Stubbs was in no fit state to conduct the proceedings. Fortunately, several of his books were at hand and Bob and a fellow poet, Phil Bowen, read the poems, while Heath-Stubbs interjected and made salient whisky fuelled points. It was a grand night but there was the difficulty of accommodation. As luck would have it, my house was full and the towns’ hotels were reluctant to take him in. I thought of a friend who has a large house and understands the ways of old men and she came to our rescue. This is why, only a short while before he died and after his last performance outside the capital, we found the poet T.S Eliot called the greatest critic of his generation, sitting over a bowl of cold porridge and dismantling ‘Cargoes’ by John Masefield. He had asked my friend her favourite poem and was pointing out some discrepancy in tidal currents that would have prevented the Quinquireme of Nineveh from rowing home to Palestine or the dirty British coaster butting through the channel on a mad March day, but none of us can now remember which.

The curator Michael Bracewell described the work selected for the exhibition as ‘art of recuperation’ representing re-birth, a natural process following war, and I glanced sideways to see how Titchner would respond. Titchner didn’t seem perplexed at all but I was. It is a fair description of the art produced in the aftermath of two world wars, during periods of spiritual recovery from trauma, but I failed to see how the contemporary work in the exhibition could be defined as recuperative. What were these youthful artists supposed to be recovering from? There had been mention of artists achieving harmony with nature and I’d assumed much of the contemporary work was about the threatened landscape. But the threat to our ecology is ongoing and it seemed to me that this was no time to be distracted from the realities by ecstatic visions or escapist periods of recuperation.

During the tea break I went to see *The Mantic Stain*. The black book describes how occultists try to control the course of events by using magic and talked of mysterious effigies and mystical artefacts in this lower gallery. Titchner’s sculpture, *Z.O.P.*, was elaborate and strange. Unstable watch towers appeared to be guarding signs and symbols within a ritual space, phials of St.John’s wort were slung on a cordon between the tottering masts, providing more magical protection. The symbols within the protected area reminded me of the Dennis Wheatley books my mother used to borrow from the public library, though the black book claimed they ‘embody properties...derived from the writings of the Welsh occultist Dion Fortune’. Apparently, Fortune’s book *Psychic Self Defence* (1930) had offered ‘practical guidance officially sanctioned as an occultist contribution to the war effort’. Thank goodness Hitler and the Nazis had no truck with mystics and occultists or the war might have turned out differently.

The seminar ended with a showing of *Be Glad For The Song Has No Ending*, a film, made for the *Omnibus* series of arts programmes in 1969, which the BBC sensibly declined to show. According to the seminar programme, the film shows The Incredible String Band ‘at the height of their powers, casting a spell on the audience...a sense of magical mystery pervades the film, from the opening ritual naming of instruments through to the final hallucinatory death and rebirth ritual in the fantasy fable *The Pirate and the Crystal Ball*.’ 1969 was the year I joined an organisation called Gandalf’s Garden and seriously considered



trepanning, having a hole drilled in my head so I could develop the third eye, so I'm aware of what The Increds were up to. Fifty minutes of Robin Williamson and Mike Heron trippily cavorting with dark eyed maidens and crystal balls made me wish the song had ended much sooner.

When I got home and put one and one together, I realised that I had encountered Mark Titchner more than once before. I had chosen to interpret *No Them Only Us* as inclusive, an invitation to belong, but *Z.O.P.* seemed to be doing the opposite. The work repelled, kept you out of the magic circle. It struck me that, far from recuperative, this work was paranoid and that it was possible I had misread *No Them Only Us* too. Mark is a nice chap and I decided to ask him, but so far he hasn't replied to my e mail.

## SKITTERINGS

At the solstice fairies and elderly unicorns noisily processed through the streets of St.Ives from the New Millennium gallery. A poet, who once conjured a cloud above his head while reading a poem about rain in the Salthouse, had chosen to wear a scholars' cap and gown. Bob came home and told me all about it and when I rang the gallery to find out what was going on it sounded as if they were throwing a party, but we hadn't been invited. They were processing to Porthmeor beach to watch the sun go down, but this late March evening there was heavy cloud and fine drizzle, so they didn't see the sun. *The House of Fairy Tales* was moving on, if I wanted to see the show there was just one day left.

There was nothing particularly strange or very magical about the gallery downstairs. It wasn't the Tate, this was a selling show, so the first thing I saw was a wall of prints by well known names and a rash of red spots. *Story Time* is by Rachel Whiteread, *Melancholia* by Gavin Turk and for £1400 (unframed) someone was going to take a portrait of the fairy Peter Blake saw at the bottom of his garden home. Blake's garden is very green and overgrown and down in the left hand corner, quite hard to see, there's a very small person peering out from behind the foliage. In Paula Rego's *The Guardian*, a suspicious woman oversees a sleeping child. You wonder what might happen next in that nursery. On the window sill were Angela Cockane's clever 'Skitterings', wax birds with crab claws for beaks. Beside

them was a glass case with a collection of bits and pieces: *House of Fairy Tales* do-it-yourself passports and a manifesto that asks if you are Brave, Bold, Good and True? It seems that to prove your rightful place in the magical land you must prove yourself worthy by being a pragmatist, strategist, mixologist, fabulist, escapologist, extremist, illusionist, alchemist, futurist, surrealist. I would like to have seen the pragmatic cocktail maker and the extremely fabulous strategical escapist processing through the town, though I'm not sure if you have to be all those things or just one or two. How would I identify them in the street? Is the poet rainmaker a pragmatist or strategist? Maybe it was best to focus on the show. The case was crammed with stuff, little books and badges and pretend compasses and wishes written on luggage labels. One says 'I wish children didn't break so easily'.

Upstairs there was a bug with a human face and a headless five-legged dog that was rolling on his back for a tickle. There was an animal skin of ruffled pegs and a puffin library. The puffin was real, a taxidermist's specimen, but instead of innards there were tiny book cases and library steps and rows of little leather bound books. There was a stone mermaid that wouldn't look out of place at a garden centre and a lot of wooden boxes with rag dolls bound up with wire and string. There were a few antlered beasts and eight red spots next to a print of a horned satyr challenging a deer whose antlers have blossomed into a tree. Here were *Mr. and Mrs. Beast* and *The Great British Beast Chase*, a *Cabinet of Natural Curiosities* and *Bluebeard's Room*. *Moth-Fur* was made of an old fur coat, wire and thread; *Belief* from gold leaf and thorn on canvas. You get the picture. Tim Shore's horrible *Head with Antlers* was made from burnt newspaper and masking tape and Rupert White's *Hand of Glory* from wax, hair and nails is an outstretched hand with wicks for finger tips. Oliver Clegg's *Oh 'Tis Sweet to Love*, is an embroidery on a child's nightdress. The nightdress is wide, well worn, a faded cream colour and it looks as if a real, robust child once wore it. A child who would have not broken easily. Clegg has embroidered a botanical drawing of a flowering plant, complete with roots and annotation marks, onto the nightdress and at first I thought it must have belonged to a grown woman and the embroidery was about fertility and growth, but I suppose I was mistaken. Among all the contrived weirdness I found Clegg's work fresh and unexpectedly moving. Then I began to think of all the articles of clothing I could have embroidered. Why hadn't I thought of this before? I'd thought of embroidering a map of Cornwall onto an old piece of lawn, a tablecloth or a worn sheet, and stitching small crosses where suicides occurred, until I found the statistics so hard to uncover. I know about the

narratives of quilts, how fragments of cloth tell stories about family and frugality, but I hadn't thought of working on the clothes themselves, when they're such an obvious part of the narrative. I used to think it funny when my mother introduced me to her clothes 'Look Pauline, this is a Bettina Jane, pure silk! Here's a Claire Louise jacket!' I'd never heard of any of those names. Now I think that if Dad and I hadn't packed them up to be sold in charity shops only days after she died, I could have embroidered those clothes with the story of her life. I could have stitched the history of her illnesses into her Californian Cottons. Why didn't I think of it then? I was too busy with practicalities, with not losing my place in the book, but here in this exhibition of re-hashed dreams, I found something that's showed me a way to go. I imagined embroidering a whole wardrobe of stories.

## TURKEY FEATHERS

A curator of Native American Art from the Smithsonian Institute in Washington shows a film at the University of Exeter. Alan Micheson, a Mohawk, has returned to the land where the Lenape people once roamed. He has canoed down the heavily polluted Newtown Creek in Queens at night and filmed the shore. The landscape of empty parking lots and closed stores is dashed with yellow light and darkness exists only in shadow. Petrol stations bathe in chemical brightness and cars tear through the night, their tail lights semaphoring street junctions and flyovers. The artist has projected these images onto a wall of white turkey feathers which have symbolic meaning for his people and he has made this film, 'Mespat' and the effect is entrancing. We're adrift in a rippling memorial, a slow moving vision of a cruel history.

This image has been removed by the author of this dissertation for copyright reasons.

Figure 8: "Mespat" by Alan Micheson, Smithsonian Institute, Washington DC.

## ANGER AT ART EXHIBITION

*It's not often that I go to a gallery and become emotional but when I saw the Richard Cooke exhibition at The Exchange gallery in Penzance the emotion I felt was that of anger. With all the talented artists we have living and working in the area why did they give space to these weak, pathetic works?...The Exchange never fails to disappoint and this time it has really surpassed itself.'* Tony Mortimer, Letters and Comment, The Cornishman, 21.10.10

Richard Cook was Partou Zia's partner and he is the lover who inhabited her dreams and hovers over her in her paintings. The paintings in his exhibition at the Exchange gallery, *Under the Summer*, have been made in the two years since her death. Even before I see them I know that my response to Richard's paintings will not be anger. First, I visit Anna, once my closest friend, who recently became a friend again after many years when we did not speak. Anna has a small painting by Partou in her living room, she tells me that it has been accidently damaged, points out a damaged corner and I notice it is not a true square. She says

the painting, which she bought when she could ill afford it, has been with her through all kinds of troubled times and we know that, what she means, is I have not. We talk a while, before going to the gallery together. I know that I can do this with Anna. There are some people I would not trust these paintings with, some people they should not be exposed to.

When I first see them I wonder if I will like them. Richard uses a lot of paint. I remember visiting his studio years ago, when there was so much paint on the floor it bounced, as if it was sprung for ballroom dancing. I wondered how much time and how many layers of paint it takes to create that effect? Usually Richard's landscapes have a restricted pallet, mainly tones of grey, but in these large new paintings he has introduced rose and blue and a blue green that, at first glance, I think I do not care for. There is less paint on the surface, but the paint is applied and worked vigorously and touch me textures are created with the flick of a wrist. There is a painting called *Mauveine*, a mauve grey and white sky with the suggestion of a thin blue moon, the crest of an ochre hill and beyond it a streak of cerulean. Beneath the hill there are darker downward brush marks, maybe a fence or even figures and in the foreground a cross hatching of brownish green which could be a hedge. Soaring over this, into the white, there is a mauve bird or rather, there is the sign of a bird though you can't be sure. These paintings need to be looked at, they deserve time and they draw you closer, in fact, the closer you get the more you see. And when you move on and catch a glimpse of that same painting from another angle, from across the room, you see it fresh again. Smoke is rising in *Dreaming* and figures are drawn into the white, Anna isn't sure about the lye of the land, the weight of the smoke, but when she turns back she sees it differently. It's this seeing, not seeing then seeing again that makes this experience so special. There are two portraits of Partou in grey and white, perhaps she is in a hospital bed, then *There is Always* in which a path rises through brown over-painted with streaking white horizontals, as if a big wind is blowing. The path rises to a dark shape, mysterious against an opalescent sky. In *Fading Land*, sea and sky are stirred as if a storm is brewing and the sea seethes in *Sudden White*. All these paintings are suffused in bright light, there is so much white paint, but it is never still, never empty.

Just before Christmas in the winter of 1981, the lifeboat, the Solomon Browne, launched between Mousehole and Newlyn, was lost with all hands. The storm that night was so wild that only one man from each Mousehole family was allowed on board and the seas were so

ferocious that, when the lifeboat reached the bottom of the slipway, it stood on end. But they kept on and despite accounts that the lifeboat was twice thrown onto the deck of the foundering ship, had taken aboard most of the passengers and crew of the Union Star when they turned back for those remaining. No-one knows what happened then, but the boat was never seen again. The day after the tragedy we had a table reserved at a restaurant in Newlyn for Sunday lunch and we set out not knowing what had happened. I remember driving down the A30 towards Penzance, the sea was flat, lead grey, but the sky was radiant with light, pale pink with shafts of gold and we thought it must be the aftermath of the storm. It wasn't until we reached Newlyn that we realised something had happened. There were grey clusters of folk on the street corners. I suppose they were still finding out names. I don't know if they'd entirely given up hope then. It's the sky on that day that I'm reminded of by Richard's paintings.

Richard's sketches are quite different from his paintings but have the same boldness and energetic application. Watercolour, painted wet on wet or perhaps in driving rain, splashes, seeps and runs; more careful, but still lively lines contain the colour, mark boundaries, fences and hedges. Dates are important, boldly inscribed, part of the composition but his signature is small and neat, a seeming rebuke to all that wildness. I haven't seen his sketches before but now I imagine Richard wrapping up, working in all weathers, at all times of year and I guess that, before she became too ill, Partou would have gone along too.

After the sketchbooks there is a smaller painting called *Safe Water* in which a figure seems to be looking out over a calmer sea from the lee of a cliff. It is not always easy to make out whether these brushmarks are figures but in *Under the Summer* there is a definitely a dwelling on top of a hill, a place to try and reach from over the green and according to the information sheet, Richard says 'human presence...is crucial to his engagement with landscape and somehow challenges his working methods'. Before I leave the gallery I tell the invigilator how much I've enjoyed the exhibition and that some of the paintings have almost made me cry. I tell her I haven't seen the horrible letter in the newspaper and she fetches it for me and says I can take it home, it's last week's news. I want to write something in the visitor's book but it's not something I usually do and I find it hard to know what to say. Eventually I write that I think the paintings are wonderful and they make me wish I was him.

When I get home, I read the information sheet and find Richard has said about his sketches: 'The studio is a place to which I return with these moments of energy, line and colour. Here the drawings may wait, sit around for days, sometimes years until, again prompted by an unseen demand, I find I am impelled to repossess that moment, to reclaim a fragment of line and time'. Since I left the gallery I've been going over what I wrote in the book. I've thought of other things I could have said. I think that saying I wished I was Richard was quite strange. What I meant to say was I wished those paintings were mine; that I could stand in his shoes and make marks like him. Now I've read what he says about feeling impelled to reclaim fragments of line and time, I realise that we are not so different and our methods are much the same. I write from the same point of view that he paints. Repossessing the moment in response to unseen demands is what these imaginary journeys have been about.

## DRIFT

The circle of psychogeographers is mostly male, urban and well acquainted, so I smiled when I saw Robert Macfarlane's *TLS* review, 'A Road of One's Own'. Iain Sinclair's book, *Edge of the Orison* is a record of his attempt to trace John Clare's journey out of Essex, while the title of Macfarlane's review refers to Virginia Woolf's claim that a room of one's own is all a writer needs. Indoors is no option for psychogeographers. Clare navigated by birdsong and slept in ditches but Sinclair lapped the M25, lodging in chain hotels and making forced detours round industrial parks. Robert Macfarlane writes these discrepancies 'were variously amusing, alarming and poignant', Sinclair found no 'blissful Arcadia [...] but an industrialised agri-scape: ecologically and emotionally devastated'. Sinclair and the chums Macfarlane calls 'an elite team of co-deriveurs: the mock shock troops of the psychogeographic brigades' crossed golf courses and shopping malls with Clare as their guide and little birdsong to give direction. Macfarlane, who has since complained psychogeography has become 'modishly over used and under comprehended' (*The Guardian*), instructed anyone who might want to give it a try to: 'place a glass, rim down, anywhere on the map and draw round its edge...walk the circle, keeping as close as you can to the curve...Log the data-stream...Be alert to the happenstance of metaphors, watch for visual rhymes...coincidences...family resemblances'. You ought to begin by unfolding a street map of London but I was planning something different. I was going to stay alert to metaphors, visual rhymes and family resemblances on a P&O cruise round the Mediterranean. According to Macfarlane you could 'trace the Turin shroud onto a street map and walk Jesus' face. Walk between halal butchers or catholic churches or hairdressers' (*TLS*). but I wasn't going to do that, because my journey had already been mapped: seven six hour visits to ports of interest. There would be no time to track Jesus or find the right kind of butcher. And it was just as well I'd made few plans and no appointments with hairdressers, because a couple of days before my journey began, an e mail arrived from Carnival, the company who own P&O. They had reversed the itinerary, setting everything at odds for reasons of their own, which they didn't disclose

A force nine gale is blowing in the Bay of Biscay and my chin rests on a toilet seat. In my handbag, is one of the Necrocards Stewart Home passed around last week, at a lecture at the



University of Exeter's Cornwall campus. It looks just like a kidney donor card but it claims 'I Support Sexual Liberation and Want to Help Others Experiment Sexually After My Death.' I haven't signed it or ticked my preferred sexual activity: 'gay only, straight only, I do not wish my body to be dismembered or disfigured during necrophiliac sex'. It's not that I'm fussy, but I'm thinking of leaving it for someone else to find, somewhere on this ship. Perhaps I'll leave it on a table in the Starlight lounge which is directly below my cabin and where, right now, there's an afternoon bingo session going on. When I am not vomiting I listen to the numbers. If only I had a bingo card and pen and could control my hands. Then it's 'House! And some Luckee Cruiser wins Thirtee-Five-Pounds!!!' Oceana shudders, lurches port to starboard, rears and bucks and the bathroom floor falls away and I'm Alice tumbling down into the starlit bingo. Rabbits, playing cards. In a little while, I'll be wheeled along hushed corridors, into a glass elevator, through an art gallery where strawberries and gooseberries have faces and spindly legs, across the atrium, into the Yacht and Compass bar, past afternoon tea drinkers in Tiffanys, down four more decks until we reach the medical centre where I'll be sick again and the sick bag won't hold. A vivid yellow stain will seep across my nightdress and bile will trickle between my legs. After another while, I can't say how long, a dishy South African doctor will give me the injection that will put me to sleep for 18 hours. When I wake, the wind will have dropped, the sea will be calm and the ship will have entered the Med. This will have been a bad dream.

Last Saturday, just seven sleeps ago (that's how excited cruisers mark time to embarkation on P&O's community website), I was at the Salthouse Gallery for a showing of Brian Catling's films. Only two of us had turned up, so I was grateful my friend Joan was with me. Bob had converted the downstairs gallery into a cinema, blued out the windows and arranged rows of folding chairs. A Frenchman was fiddling with his projector while Brian stood in the sun outside, looking like he could kill a fag but wasn't sure if smoking was permitted in St.Ives. An Oxford art historian and one of Iain Sinclair's mock shock walking companions, Catling is a big man, handsome, with a thick wing of snowy hair and I'm not surprised Sinclair describes him as looking like a porn star masquerading as a hit man. He's fresh off the train and couldn't be mistaken for a local. Brian's friend, a publisher and poet who features in his Lard Book film, had brought his cool son and we were hanging around in the square hoping others would turn up. I went for bottled water and met a Swiss girl in Norway lane. She was looking for the gallery, so I brought her back. Then two bikers unexpectedly arrived and there

were five. When we all went downstairs, what with Bob and the son, it seemed the room was almost full, though I was sorry when the Frenchman said he'd have to be going soon.

The film begins with a sound I can't identify. Then Brian fills the screen, his face flecked with white. Sea spume? Spittle? Shaving foam. He's wearing a heavy black coat like the one my boyfriend, wore in 1968. But we're a long way from Blackburn Army Surplus Stores now: this coat has been left over from an eastern front, maybe Russia, the Steppes or Siberia. Brian's clutching a bird that flaps its wings mechanically and there's a soundtrack of wings cranking, fluttering. He's sombre, gripping the body of the bird as if he's trying to stop it from escaping. Then he opens his mouth wide, puts the bird's head inside and the wings flap against his face. It's horrible. After a few beats more he pulls the head of the bird out of his mouth and holds it so that we can see his whole face, except when the bird's wings slash across it. He starts to put the bird inside the breast of his coat and the bird becomes frantic, its head jerking and wings flapping. But this is a mechanical bird. It does not break and once Brian has it inside his coat it's as if a big heart is beating there. Then the film suddenly ends and after a moment we clap, but I don't know what to make of it and hope the next film will have some kind of story I can follow.

There's a short wait, then the second film begins with music and monochrome waves crashing over rocks and a woman's voice chanting words I don't recognize but I think might be poetry. The screen goes black and there's silence for a moment, then a close up of Brian's face. He has a plaster on his forehead, up high, near to the hairline. The camera closes on the plaster and fumbling fingers peel it away to show a narrow wound. A fifty pence piece is slipped into the opening and after a clunk, a punked up English country dance tune begins. There's discordant, jangly banjo and accordion, singers that sound like they've been stringing dead crows from washing lines. And the man with the wound in his head suddenly has arms full of fish, I can't count how many. They're small and silvery, slithering about as if they're alive and it's all he can do to hold onto them. The juggling with fishes goes on for quite a while. They aren't as big or beautifully marked as mackerel and I'm wondering if they're too big to be sardines when the screen goes black and in a moment the waves are crashing on the rocks again and the woman is reciting words I think might be Latin, though I was never any good at Latin. Brian's here again, jerking around like a scarecrow tossed about in a storm,

so it's a miracle when the plaster is peeled away and the fat fingers slip another fifty pence into the wound. Clunk, the play begins and this time he's juggling with a loaf of bread. A big crusty circle of bread, a real peasant loaf that hasn't come from a supermarket, but from some continental bakery, perhaps some Polish speciality shop. This man, this Brian, could come from anywhere except here. He's stepped right out of a book or film; from some long line of trudging refugees or partisans in winter. It's as if he's come in from a wasteland of snow as far as the eye can see. He's tearing apart the bread. It's the first food he's seen all day but he can't get it to his lips. Somehow, the bread escapes him, leaps into the air. He's shivering, his fingers fumbling. The screen goes dark

Another 50p and another and this time there's wrestling with knives. An armful of knives, the slim sort a butcher uses to separate bones from flesh. Brian, if the butcher is him, looks straight out at the camera. He's having a lot of trouble with the knives but he doesn't look down, doesn't lose concentration, just gazes straight ahead, as if he's strung on a wire between two towers. I think he could pedal a bicycle backwards while doing this. It seems he has a perfect head for heights and nothing shatters his composure. But then the money runs out, the band stop playing and the screen goes dark again.

Next time it's mirrors, mirrors with handles, the sort that used to come in dressing table sets. Brian's producing them from inside his coat and now he's not gazing straight ahead but at his own reflection. We watch him watching himself. But this number of reflections is too many to handle decently and soon the mirrors take on lives of their own and are flying all over the place. He barely has them under control and we all know there'll be decades of bad luck if the glass is smashed.

Now he's becoming secretive. Believer or non-believer, he has an armful of crosses. They're simple wood, all sizes, no crucified figures. He's got rulers too, set squares and dividers, the kind of equipment architects and mapmakers use. Brian's hands are full and he struggles to stop the crosses and measuring tools from falling. He slides the crosses between his fingers, trying to slip them into his coat where he hid the beating heart bird. He looks like Edward Scissorhands, like the crosses have become blades and the rulers, crosses. Next

Wednesday in Barcelona, I'll pay nine euros to visit the Sagrada Familia. The nave of Gaudi's weird church is filled with builders and I'll try to ignore their noise and dust and the other tourists pressing against me and gaze up at the roof, at all those blossoming intersections. Later, I'll wonder about masonry and the mathematics of it all, about the geometry and multiplications of the cross. But for now, there is just this black and white moving image projected onto the Salthouse gallery wall. The image of a man, a holy fool or architect, wrestling with a whole monastery of crosses, enough crosses to fill a sack. Enough measures to build a steeple. Then the money runs out and just when you wonder what can possibly come next, it's all over. The End.

*The Lard Book* film comes next and I can't understand it. A kneeling man is reading aloud from a big book. He turns curling pages stiff with lard, marked by gouges and black ink stains, words carved into rendered fat. The book is smoked, its edges singed. I don't really know what's going on but some of the words he reads make sense to me. I remember, not that many years ago, piles of burning animals turned the local countryside black and made the smell of roasting beef repugnant. But when the film is over I can't find the right words to talk about it. Instead, I ask Brian about the dance of death, because while I was watching his juggling, an image sprung up uninvited, a silhouette of carnival characters capering across a skyline. Spreading plague? He smiles his slow smile and says *The Seventh Seal* is a constant source of inspiration. I ask him if the man in the film is a wiseman or a fool? He says I've got it just about right and I'm glad, though I know I've only partly understood, only half sensed what the travelling showman is playing at. He slips off to get some wine and I wish I was younger, slimmer, more attractive. Perhaps then I could hold his attention, pin him down and find out what this is really all about. Maybe we could make a film. When he comes back, I tell him I'm going to a Stewart Home lecture next week and he giggles. 'That will be a rant' he says.

I don't know what I expected Stewart Home to look like, but, if I'd really thought about it, I might have expected him to look like he did: a macho urban punk approaching middle age, with cropped hair and a body conscious tee shirt. Before I realized it, he'd begun and was talking about Geno Washington. He said Geno's manager had published his novel *Cunt*. That takes me back. I don't know about *Cunt* but I do know about Geno Washington. And

now I think maybe Home is more mod than punk and older than he looks, though it's true Geno never knew when to quit. I went to his first farewell performance at Southport Floral hall in 1967 and that was mostly out of nostalgia, though I wouldn't have admitted that then. In the mid sixties, Geno Washington's Ram Jam Band was the fall back band of no choice, the band who played Manchester's Twisted Wheel when no Motown or Stax unit was in town. Mostly, we preferred dancing to records, exclusive imports that marked us out as cool, but Geno was all right and I remember his goodbye gig as a good night. Home moves on, now he's talking very fast about the role of the artist no longer making sense, he's questioning what it means to produce art today, to try and chart a world that disappears before our eyes. He mentions James Kelman and Tom Leonard who wrote about the difficulty of writing about an under imagined place, Glasgow. It's funny, because I remember what they said when I'm writing about Cornwall, an over imagined place. Kelman, Leonard and Alasdair Gray taught creative writing together at Glasgow university, what a blast that must have been! I think of Gray reading from *Lanark* at the Salthouse and Morag, his wife, shouting from the back row 'You silly fool don't you know you've an early train to catch'. But he just kept on reading and later she accused the audience of trying to kill him by asking for more. Home is really making connections, hitting all the points and ricocheting off them like a pin ball, too fast for me to take in. He sprints up the lecture theatre steps, handing out necrocards and copies of 'Down and Out in Shoreditch and Hoxton'. He's the most energetic and generous speaker I've come across. When I've finally got through Iain Sinclair's *Rose Red Empire* I'll move right on to Shoreditch, though I'm unfamiliar with these locations. Then he's onto Canary Wharf and the London Psychogeographical Association, ley lines and the Bishop of London. He mentions his friend Richard Essex, a psychogeographer who's really Fabian Tompsett, if you believe it. Instead of tracing the Turin shroud, Essex cycled round Tesco's car park in some part of London I've never heard of. Round and round, never stationary but getting nowhere. This I understand. Then Homes is talking about the Luther Blisset project, a society of avante garde artists. Later, my son Max tells me Blisset was a striker for Watford who scored a hat-trick for England in his first international, a 9-0 drubbing of Luxembourg. Though he says it's probably a football myth that when AC Milan paid £1,000,000 for Blisset in 1983, they thought they were buying his team mate John Barnes, he proved a rotten investment and was back at Watford within the year. Blisset became a symbol of heroic failure and this is where Harry Kipper comes into the story. I notice Homes is lecturing without notes.

In 1995 there was consternation in the international art world when the British conceptual artist Harry Kipper disappeared on the border between Italy and Slovenia. Kipper had been cycling between towns and cities in Europe on a conceptual journey which, when drawn on a map, would spell the word ART. I'm not sure how much of the word he had yet to complete when he disappeared. Some months later, when there was still no trace of Kipper, Stewart Home showed an Italian television company around the artist's East End haunts for documentary about his disappearance. I like to imagine they visited Rachel Whiteread's house. For Kipper never existed and was a figment of the collective imagination of the Luther Blisset Project. I'm inspired by Kipper and wonder about the possibility of spelling something from my Mediterranean ports of call. Perhaps CUNT.

Home speeds on and I try to keep up. He's talking about pranksterism; about his friend Nigel Ayres, Bodmin Moor and a particular game of three sided football on an octagonal pitch. A Cornish connection with the avant garde. Bodmin, only really noted for its mad house, where my godson lives after slicing off a toddler's pigtail in the street, because of a hairdressing obsession. Bodmin, where my poet husband named the hospital wards (Fletcher, Garner, Fettle and Harvest, this last unfortunate because nurses associate it with death). Now, Homes says, if you want to find the contemporary avant garde the place to look is Latin America. So he shows two films made by Anibal Lopez, who has been known as A-1 53167 since 1997. In *Liston de Plastico Negro (2003)* 120 meters of black plastic is dropped from a viaduct in Guatemala and the plastic floats over the valley below, a continuously moving, shape changing black line drawn against the bleached landscape. I think of how Ben Nicholson described the trajectory of his golf ball as a soaring line drawn on a cobalt Cornish sky. This real landscape drawing is very beautiful, but I'm not sure A-1 53167 means it to be. I'm not sure beauty is the point because A-1 53167 makes extreme gestures, once staged an armed robbery to fund an exhibition, turning the unwitting victim into an art sponsor and those who went to see the show into accomplices. And later, at a lecture by Robert Macfarlane, I'll discover ribbons of black plastic have been used in other parts of the world as part of environmental protests: most famously, in the US when activists inspired by The Monkey Wrench Gang dropped a tapering 300 metre length to create the impression of a massive crack in the Glenn River dam. But I don't really feel my perceptions are being challenged here, not sure this work says much about legality and illegality, subjectivity and objectivity, security and terror as the critics claim. This art of the moment is impossible to

reproduce, except on film, it subverts the idea of art as a commodity but it tours the world's art galleries. In A-1 53167's second film *Una Tonelada de Libros*, a truck tips a load of books into a busy stream of traffic. Frustrated drivers climb from their cars while passers-by clamber onto the book mountain, make their selections and carry them off. It's the opposite of a mobile library. There is no siren, no sign of the police but they must surely be on their way. In the meantime, there is a ton of books in the road and no-one can pass. Is this about the importance of the written word or about its disposal? About its power or its pulping? Subjectivity, objectivity. What A-1 53167 proves is that books can hold up traffic.

I think the lecture might be over and I'm ready to go but Home has one more stunt to pull. He's going to read from *69 Things To Do With A Dead Princess*, his book which 'illustrates that schizophrenia may well be the only sane response to capitalism'. Unfortunately, he doesn't have the book with him and can't remember the text, but he says he knows someone who can and produces a dog. It's not a real dog, it has Home's arm shoved up inside it to control its floppy mouth and it turns out Home is a pretty good ventriloquist. He is at least as convincing as Peter Brough was on the radio years ago. It's hard to imagine Home spending hours and hours practicing in front of a mirror. He introduces the story as 'a book about an English student in Aberdeen who has a breakdown', though his publishers say it's about 'a randy 20 year old...having an affair with a mysterious older man, Alan ...obsessed by a cult book called *69 Things to do with a Dead Princess* whose author claims he was hired to secretly dispose of Princess Di's body by dragging it around Aberdeen's ancient stone circles until it decomposed. Alan tries to test the author's story by dragging a carefully weighted ventriloquist dummy around the stone circles'. So it seems apt that the excerpt is delivered by the dog. 'I found myself trapped in darkness thinking about Jennifer Lopez...with a gun at my back...it wasn't that I didn't find Nancy attractive'. The dog talks almost as quickly as Home and in my notes I only wrote 'she told me to take off my clothes...stone circle...her hand down her white panties...I found myself identifying with...she took him to Lake Stein at gun point', so now I don't know if this was the ventriloquist's dummy talking or the dog.

The day after the Stewart Home lecture was one of those ordinary days. Bob needed a haircut before the cruise, so I drove him to Penzance and afterwards, over the Penwith moors to St.Ives. I'd been home a few minutes when the phone began to ring and I saw a policeman

climbing the steps to my door. Uniformed policemen remind me of *Pere Ubu*, in the play by Alfred Jarry, which Jarry claimed wasn't written for puppets but for actors pretending to be puppets. On this occasion I thought my father, an ex-policeman, must have died. But no, the policeman had come to break the news that my husband was missing. The route from our house in St.Erth to Penzance and from Penzance to St.Ives and St.Ives back to St.Erth forms an isosceles triangle and had I doubled back, retraced some of my journey and taken the B3309 to Ludgvan before rejoining the main A30 to get home, my route would form the letter A (for art, absent, absconded or away) which might make sense in a Harry Kipper sort of way. However, my husband, painter and poet who therefore does not drive, is not a conceptualist, nor the invention of activists and pranksters, though he may sometimes regard himself as a failed hero. He was not missing in Penwith but had just opened his art gallery a little later than usual on account of a haircut. And I explained this to the policeman.

It's not uncommon for signs in St.Ives shop windows to say 'Gone Surfin', 'Gone Fishin' or simply 'Gone Away'. It's part of the charm, the fantasy that lures tourists and second home buyers to the town. It attracts the dreamers, twisters and intentionally disappeared who regularly fetch up at the Salthouse gallery. Lured by the idea of living in a picture postcard view, by the myth of escape and reinvention in a timeless place of no consequence, they don't notice the town newspaper is called The Times and Echo and even when they do, they don't heed the obituaries. I know a painter, an ex forensic artist, who took me to his studio above Porthmeor beach and described how his shoes had flooded with black blood at his first murder scene. He has a recurring dream of a burning man whose hands are melting. Late in his career, he spent seven days in a cell with Fred West, drawing faces, guided by West's helpful descriptions of the unidentified girls he'd killed. Now the policeman who has escaped his past, paints tessellated Cornish landscapes with body parts concealed in them. Cobalt, cerulean, ochre and Hookers green, with hints of flesh. We sell them to unsuspecting Americans who hang them in their parlours and sometimes, months later, call the Salthouse from Long Island to say they've discovered torsos and severed limbs. Another ex policeman has realized his ambition to become a stand-up comedian. A French cameraman filmed him with an accomplice, capering through the streets in nightgowns. He's never talked to me about murder. There's a man who took a cross bow and shot six bolts at an ex girlfriend's door before going on the run. He paints neat still lives with 000 brushes and he's still angry. For a few months there was an expensive wandering man who pissed in his pants and left a



Salthouse gallery opening with bronze angels tucked in his pockets. An aborigine artist went walk about and was never heard of again, though we still exhibited her work, thinking she would turn up. Bob kept forgetting her painted totem pole was outside the gallery and late at night drunks would take it and leave it in other parts of town. In the morning, the police would ring and ask for the pole to be picked up. There was an octogenarian painter who had toured Europe in her salad days and spoke Italian to friends on the phone, so other residents in her care home wouldn't know what she was saying. It was one of the long, ever changing cast of regular and irregular visitors to the gallery who called the police to report Bob a missing person that morning. Ex *Big issue* salesman, self dramatist, he'd dialled 999 more than once calling himself by different names. The first time he was Mr. Wild. Word had spread around that Bob was missing, had even reached my son in London and I wasn't happy, but there's no point in holding what he did against him, because not long afterwards he died a lonely death on the beach below the town museum.

I wasn't finished with Stewart Home. I discovered he'd visited an artist, Ralph Rumney, in Paris in 1989 and called their interview 'About the Historification of the Situationist International'. And for a while I've been curious about the Situationists and their influence on Psychogeographers. What I now know about Rumney I learned from Home's interview and *The Consul*, a slim book of conversations with Gerard Berreby, published after Rumney's death in 2002. A moderately successful painter, Rumney quit painting and instead lived his life like a work of art. He drifted around the margins of post war Europe's major art movements, knew everyone but was fugitive, always disappearing off the edge of the picture. For example, he was a founder member of the Situationist International and attended their first meeting in Cosio de Arroscia in 1957 but because he took the photographs, there's no visible record that he was actually there. Rumney claims that by representing the London Psychogeographical Society in Arroscia, he made the group truly international. The Consul records an imaginative life of unthinkable coincidences and it's probably to avoid complications that it begins with the statement 'All individuals, places, and events discussed in these interviews have only a solipsistic existence. Any relation to the realities of anyone else is an unthinkable coincidence'. How slippery can you get?

Rumney was raised in Halifax by his father, a miner turned vicar, a socialist who had once shared his bed with Keir Hardy. He ran away from art school at 17 to avoid National Service and arrived in St.Ives where he worked for the sculptor Barbara Hepworth. But soon he was off to Paris where, by chance, he attached himself to what he calls a 'cult of drinking and thinking', a loose group of philosophers, writers, artists and hotheads who roamed the streets from café to café passing for existentialists. In *The Consul* Rumney describes how the Moineau gang, named after a favourite bar, became part of the local fauna. Scruffy and penniless, stealing food and drink, they conned tourists with offers of guided tours and had a kind of seedy glamour that fascinated him. Later, Guy Debord, the most charismatic and intellectual member of the group, would call their footloose drifting in the city a 'derive' and compare it to the unconsidered flow of words under psychoanalysis. Unchartered and dreamlike, the derive was about wandering less travelled paths; going missing for a while before sensing direction. In *The Consul*, Rumney says the derive was 'all about state of mind'. If, at the outset, the state of mind was good, then even in an unknown city you would find your way. He claims he once used a map of London to find George Brecht's place in Cologne.

If you can find a place in Cologne by looking at the London A-Z then why not use a map of Paris to find a place in Blackburn? After all, the kind of dissolute, romantic life Rumney describes was what I hoped to find when I left an old fashioned girls grammar school and went to college. I joined a group of Blackburn art school aesthetes who used to meet in the back room of a tea shop (because it had velvet curtains and was so Parisian). It's hard to believe that when we were philosophising over homemade ice cream and raspberry vinegar it was just ten years since the first Situationist meeting. There were arguments, even fist fights, about art and life and poetry because that's what we thought artists and existentialists did. We didn't know existentialism was already out of date and hadn't heard of the Situationists. We postured and posed and re-named a short, freckled student called Alan Flood, Delugé and for months he wouldn't answer to any other name. Part of the Blackburn fauna, we might have ventured further afield if we had known about the Situationists, but as it was, when the café closed, unless we were going to the chip shop, we put on our raincoats and drifted to the boulevard to get our buses home.

The Moineau gang were attracted by the ideas of a young Rumanian refugee, Isadore Isou. Tired of ambiguities, Isou had declared Surrealism dead and formed a new group with the intention of radicalizing bourgeoisie Parisian society. The Lettristes meant to remake the urban world in the shape of a letter and quite naturally, they began with poetry. Initially, they reduced lines of poetry to single words, which became single letters, until finally letters became sounds synchronised with music. I'm reminded of a long evening at the Salhouse several years ago, when two elderly and white bearded poets chanted a poem, 'Bananabanbananabanbananabanananabanabanabanaban.....' it seemed never ending and I was bored, but now I wonder if they were latter day Lettristes. Back in the day, Isou's movement grew, gathered energy and soon there were paintings made up of letters, letters scrawled over photographs making self portraits, then letters were replaced by hieroglyphs, personal signs and symbols. They never had much influence on urban planning but this was life writing of a kind and these self mythologizing days you can find Lettriste influences everywhere on the streets, from advertising hoardings to graffiti and tattoos.

When Lettristes began making films there was no big story. But their titles say it all: Isou's *The Drivel and Eternity treatise*, awarded first prize in the new Avant-Garde category at the Cannes festival by Jean Cocteau; Lemaitre's *Has the Film Already Started?*; Debord's *Screams in Favour of De Sade*. Film stock was blackened and scratched and there were occasional bursts of bright light and random voices, brief glimpses, overheard snatches of conversation, unannounced comings and goings. The films were another version of the derive, of undirected night wandering and street life, of meaning tangled and spooling out of confusion and I can't help feeling Catling would have felt entirely at home.

Rumney went to London and met a man in a bar who had money to burn and with his backing started a Lettriste magazine 'Other Voices', declaring in its first issue in 1955:

**'We are trying to assert the right of the artist to be civilized**

**We are fighting a war against the middle class mind**

It is the perpetual war of the **Artist**

We have no association with the Readers Digest'. (*The Consul p.21*)

After only six weeks as editor Rumney, who had never worked so hard, got pneumonia and the magazine failed, but he had made useful connections. Peggy Guggenheim was invited to his first show at the Redfern gallery and probably under the influence of her lover, the Surrealist Roland Penrose, decided to buy Rumney's painting *The Change*. In the winter of 2008/9, the painting was included in an exhibition at Tate St.Ives with work of the St.Ives school. Dating from early 1957, *The Change* is an abstract painting of seemingly random dabs of colour across a broken grid of black lines. Purposefully non-committal, Rumney says 'everyone around us could take it to mean whatever they liked' but the Tate's catalogue suggests that these chance marks imposed on an ordering device can be interpreted as a metaphor for the interactions of the subconscious and conscious: Rumney acknowledging order before making an apparently random exploration of territory. It's the pattern for his adventures in Cologne, the nightly ramblings of the Moineau gang, even Sinclair's psychogeographical excursions in Essex. The map exists but it's the drift that counts.

Later that year, Rumney arrived at Cosio de Arroscia, where, he says, Debord and the gang stayed drunk for a week. He told them he was a committee member of the London Psychogeographical Society, but admitted to Berreby that this was 'pure invention, a mirage.' The committee was a one man association, but by talking the mirage into being, Rumney didn't just invent the psychogeographical society, he made the Situationists international. According to Rumney, the Situationists didn't invent anything but knew how to put ideas together. The Futurists, Dadaists, Surrealists, Lettristes had all come 'unstuck', but the Situationists' time had come and they would 'synthesize all that was there before and say new things with new words' and there's nothing new in that. It's possible, that years later, Rumney was doing something of the same, re-inventing himself out of a collage of events that he may or may not have attended. Writing himself a part in the historicification of the avant garde.

Rumney says that at the Situationists first meeting, he suggested making a psychogeographic exploration of Venice. The project, 'The Leaning Tower of Venice', would de-spectacularize Venice by showing unknown routes to parts of the city where no-one went. He also planned to pour red dye into canals to reveal the way water circulated around the city but never carried out his plan. Rumney says he wanted to make films but because he didn't have a

movie camera he decided to make a 'photo story'. The first picture in 'The Leaning Tower of Venice' is of a man standing in a Venetian square in front of graffiti which reads HOLLYWOOD. Opposite is a blurred map with a route marked on it, though it is difficult to make out and could simply be a stain made by a wine glass (*The Consul* p.50).

Although the Situationists were initially enthusiastic about Rumney's project, it led to his expulsion from the group. His time in Venice was 'extremely complicated'. By then Pegeen, daughter of Peggy Guggenheim, was his heavily pregnant partner and Rumney decided the baby should be born in Switzerland because he thought that best for an illegitimate child. Inconveniently, the baby arrived while the couple were still in Venice and though they decided to give him an Italian name, he couldn't be Italian, because he would have no right to citizenship. Rumney had his photograph taken with the baby (who was possibly fathered by Pegeen's first husband though he denied it) and stuck the photo to a legal document which recognized the child as his. By subterfuge, involving Guggenheim's lawyer, Rumney managed to get this document officially stamped (he told Berreby that he regretted the document had since been lost because he could have used it in a collage) but the baby still had to be taken to the British consulate in Geneva. There he was registered on Rumney's passport, 'Sandro Rumney, son of Ralph Rumney, a British citizen born of unknown mother'.

Rumney claims these events meant 'The Leaning Tower of Venice' arrived too late to be included in *Internationale Situationniste, No.1*. He says that, despite the trouble he had gone to, Debord 'considered the birth of a child was a bit of foolishness that should not distract a true revolutionary from his path'. Instead of the planned article, Debord wrote one titled 'Venice Has Conquered Ralph Rumney' declaring that Rumney, 'sucked into the milieu he tried to traverse...has disappeared and his father has yet to start looking for him. Thus it is that the Venetian jungle has shown itself to be the stronger, closing over a young man, full of life and promise, who is now lost to us, a mere memory among so many others'. There's a whiff of the patriarchal about Debord's announcement. It's hard to imagine the Halifax vicar setting out to find a son who was never really lost. It's Debord who shows no interest in looking, who abandons Rumney and expels him from the gang. But though he had been cast off, reduced to mere memory, Rumney could never really leave Debord behind. He stole his wife and describes the rest of his life as a *derive*, a sixty eight year drift.

My psychogeographic exploration of the Mediterranean was not turning out to be so straightforward. I remained alert to metaphors and family resemblances but it's hard to drift with a P&O itinerary. Barcelona was a mad dash, a hurtle between Miro and Gaudi and though Cannes was very beautiful it was filled with film festival insiders, which made it hard to find places where no-one went. The experience was turning out to be more Readers Digest than I had hoped and I didn't dare leave my Necrocard in a public place in case we were escorted off the ship. I left it for the room steward to find but I doubt he even read it, he was more concerned with topping up the biscuits and telling us about the photograph he'd had taken with Brad Pitt. My project was going nowhere. Then the ship reached Livorno and we boarded a coach for Florence. An Australian tour guide talked without pausing. He had a Situationist's turn of phrase and pointed out the stacks of multi-coloured containers on the dock saying he liked to think of them as the terraced gardens of Livorno and as we crossed a bridge over a rubbish strewn canal, he announced we are entering Livorno's Venetian quarter. On the drive out of town, past closed down garages and shuttered shops, he pointed to empty fields where sunflowers would soon be growing and told us the distant mountains were where Carrara marble is quarried but we couldn't see the mountains that day because of the mist. The journey seemed longer than it is, but eventually we reached the outskirts of Florence and he began to recommend cafes which would let us use their toilets and gave us a map on which they were marked by crosses. We only needed to mention his name to get a discount in handbag shops. The designated route formed an isosceles triangle and when we left him in the Piazza Santa Croce we took the narrow street he suggested. We went to a gelaterie and bought the chocolate, pistachio and chilli ice he recommended, but we didn't mention his name.

We did all the things tourists do, joined the queue to take photographs in front of the statue of *David* that replaced the real statue of *David* after his toes were attacked by a vandal's hammer. We peered over the heads of Japanese schoolchildren at some gold doors where our guide had told us to look out for a drunken soldier in the bottom panel and when the children left we found him lying next to his empty wine sac. Then we moved on, avoiding the expensive handbag shops but still following our map, until my husband, the poet who has no sense of direction, saw a poster for an exhibition, *Galileo: Images of the Universe from Antiquity to the Telescope*. We detoured, drifted across several squares and busy intersections. I wasn't sure we would find our way back but we found the Palazzo Strozzi.

To direct us around the exhibition we put on headphones and selected the English commentary from many other languages. A Home Counties voice, the voice my mother wished I had, told me we would be taking a journey through space and time from Mesopotamia, Babylon and The Nile Delta to Greece and Rome, from Islamic, medieval Christian and Renaissance cultures to Copernicus and Galileo. Listening, we joined the flow of international tourists from room to room, to stand and gaze at stone carvings, at complicated diagrams of heavenly bodies, at gleaming astrolabes and centuries old planetaria revealing the way men have always tried to work out their place in the world. We silently regarded the evidence of lives dictated by signs and symbols, records of government decree by comets and omens and ships steered by stars. In the tenth century Abd al-Rahman claimed astrolabes had 1000 uses and I learned that the time of sunrise, sunset or the culmination of a star can be found by setting an astrolabe to the circumstance of the event. I wondered about these circumstances and the culmination of stars, looked at the symbols and dials and could only imagine the precise alignments you would need to plot an event. Clustered around these exhibits we were like visitors from alien planets, avoiding eye contact, not touching, we were separated by our explanations of when and where, how and because. I moved through the rooms with a head full of questions and knew I wouldn't be able to go back. Then, after all the priceless paraphernalia, I arrived at a glass case containing a simple sketch book. The open page dates from 1609, the year Galileo went to Venice in the Spring and found a child's toy, a short tube with a lens at either end, that magnified distant objects. In Galileo's hands the toy became an instrument to explore the night sky and his six simple watercolour sketches were the most accurate depictions of the moon yet made. They are as clear and fresh as if they were painted yesterday and I took off my headphones because no interpretation was required.

After two weeks we voyaged home to find no-one had bothered to report us missing or made up stories about our travels. I'd failed as a psychogeographer, I'd been a tourist, plain and simple and no matter which way I looked at the map, our ports of call didn't spell any recognizable words. The only thing to come out of that journey was the memory of Galileo's sketch book. We could reminisce about that.

A few days later I went to the Newlyn gallery where there was an exhibition of text works by an American conceptualist, Lawrence Weiner. In 2000 Weiner made manhole covers for 19 locations in New York that bore the message 'in direct line with another and the next'. This reference to the grid system of the city streets was part of Weiner's project to introduce texts to the urban landscape and expose his work to multiple points of view. Because we were just back from Florence, his message made me think of alignments and astrolabes and I began to wonder about navigation by manhole cover. What would Ralph Rumney have made of that? But the texts at Newlyn were about the gallery's seaside location and on a large window AT A DISTANCE TO THE FOREGROUND overlooking the sea the words appeared to rest on the line of the horizon that I'd sailed across so recently. Had I been part of the installation? Foreground to distance to the foreground again. For the short time before I disappeared into the distance, wasn't I in direct line with another and the next? And with Harry Kipper?

On the wall of the large gallery upstairs, in a typeface Weiner invented and calls Margaret Seaworthy Gothic, cerulean blue words were trapped between truncated black tramlines. Weiner's words described a wave, but the short messages felt more complicated. '*Within a realm of relative form...a pursuit of a form...an essential compression of a form...an essential expansion of a form...a degradation of a form...an objectification of whichever form*'. The words are supposed to be about the way waves shape and surge before disintegrating, but because they were trapped by black lines which ended abruptly in a void, they seemed sinister to me. Pursuit-compression-degradation-objectification... the threatening words were contained by tram tracks that closed down all possibilities and lead nowhere.

A few weeks later Max came to visit and I took him to Lamorna Cove but when I'd parked the car, I couldn't remember why. The road ends at the quay and there is nothing to do except walk along the sea wall and gaze at the empty horizon. So we turned and walked back up the steep lane I'd just driven down. It was a hot day but the lane was cool, shaded by overhanging trees and we climbed up to the hotel for lunch because that's the only reason I could think of for being there. I noticed a small sign almost hidden by foliage. The sign had been there for a while, its edges were curling and its letters faded but it was still possible to read: ICE SKATING. We sat in the sun by the hotel swimming pool and ate lunch. Max



said it was like the south of France and I remembered my son Oliver had said only a couple of weeks before, when we were in Cannes for a few hours: that he couldn't imagine anyone who lived there ever being unhappy. I like the idea that Cornwall might be like the south of France. Happy. On the way home we stopped to see the new show at the Newlyn gallery. There was a warning to take caution in the dark but Weiner's nightmare tramtracks had all gone. They'd been replaced by an installation by Linda Tedsdotter, *One Way*, a video work on a continuous loop. In an idyllic landscape of rolling green hills, a small figure was skating round and round the perimeter of a field. Tedsdotter is Danish and I know now that the fields she filmed are near San Francisco, but I could only think of the curious, out of place sign I'd seen at Lamorna. Then I heard birdsong and followed it along a dark passage to the next room. I've never been able to identify the songs of birds but I like waking early and hearing them in Spring. Here, it was as if birdsong from every morning of every day in May had been recorded and was playing through the 600 earpieces dangling from the ceiling. It wasn't until I left and read the artist's explanation of *Distortion* that I discovered I'd been listening to human voices: to 100 people speaking in many different languages, each one talking about an issue important to them. And they sounded just like birds.

## ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WORDS.

Summer 2010

Bob sits in the middle of the room. The gallery door is open and occasionally someone wanders in from the street. You can look around, Bob says, but we are closing. Then he goes back to sorting his papers, reading everything he finds, patiently straightening screwed balls of poetry, carefully peeling receipts off paint pallets. In the to keep pile: *The Story of the Forest*, a booklet, cover orange, produced by St.Saviour's Church, Colgate 1871-1971, it's a second edition, re-issued in 1985 'in response to continued demand for it, all five hundred copies of the first edition having been exhausted for some time'; a leaflet for the Maker Sunshine Festival 2002, four days of camping and music on the Rame Peninsula; draft pages of act 1 of *Two Lockets*, a libretto by Bob Devereux; a page from *Yellow Dwarf*, also by BD: 'Flocks and flocks and flocks of golden sheep/ Can you hear them? (Lord is my shepherd bleat)'; a paragraph which begins 'For me the word colour should always be written in capital letters COLOUR'; a photograph of an unknown man playing an acoustic guitar; an invitation to *The Divided Meadows of Aphrodite* opening at Tate St.Ives on Friday 22 March 2002; page 4 of 'Nothing Changed' by Max Liu; *Poetry St.Ives* 1968, cost three shillings: on page 4, 'Rusty Phoenix' by Bob Devereux (a young poet then, I expect he was pleased to be included), on page 7, 'The Beast in Space' by W.S.Graham: Shut up. Shut up. There's nobody here/ If you think you hear somebody knocking/On the other side of the words, pay/ No attention...

On 28<sup>th</sup> August the lease on the Salthouse expires and thirty years of art comes to an end. There will be no more excellent! but loss making shows, no more brilliant! readings with tiny audiences, no more artists, enraged misfits, vagabonds or sympathetic bailiffs dropping by. No more drink and consolation. The Salthouse will be gutted, revamped by a glitzy operation from up country or converted into a stylish flat with mezzanine. It's hard to imagine, so we don't try. We must survive the summer first.

Late June.

I'm at Tate St.Ives watching Lily Van der Stokker putting together *No Big Deal Thing*. It's funny because the show opened last week and her helpers have nowhere near finished her work. I stand in the round gallery overlooking Van der Stokker who is working on the floor below. Behind me, a crouching man is putting the final touches to a wall painting of a giant pink rabbit. Van der Stokker is mixing paint, pondering the exacting shade of a sugar mouse, occasionally glancing up at me, her audience. She's wearing gloves and a school sweater spattered with paint. I suspect this is a performance and that nothing accidental is happening. She's mixing sherbet colours, applying them to test sheets, making minute tonal shifts in lemons and mauves. Around the gallery sketches are sellotaped to pillars, each section numbered, each colour named. One of her painters is resting, looking out of the window at the sea and easing his back, knuckling either side of his spine. Behind me, 'A Nice New Winter Coat' lopes in large letters above the rabbit's back and ears, and beside it, scrawled like a diary reminder, 'I should go shop for this already in August because in September all the good sizes are gone'. And I think this so true. Sounds echo as a white box with black spots is hammered onto a wall and a man drags a lime green sofa across slate tiles. When all is quiet again, Van der Stokker looks up at me with a faint smile. I want to say, Excuse me? Do you mind being watched? But a yellow Genie Runabout reverses across the tiles and screeches a high pitched warning.

Steve Dove, an artist who has exhibited at the Salthouse, brings through a party of art lovers. He's struggling. 'You'll notice the artist has also painted the chairs', he says, 'coloured exactly in acrylic paint'. His party stare blankly at the rabbit. In the rotunda outside, a child wearing a sweet pink sweater and spotted trousers looks up. From where I am standing, the spots match Van der Stokker's in both colour and size. I wonder if the artist has noticed or even if the child is part of the play and I mention this to the woman in black who is invigilating, watching me watching. She tells me it's the child's second visit today, she's here with her grandma, a member of Steve's Art in Hand group. Then the invigilator turns her attention to the good looking young man who's just finished painting the rabbit and mock casually invites him to a party. Van der Stokker has also turned away, she's making busy and I'm thinking I should go, when a man's voice loudly declares 'There's nothing to see. It

looks like a pig. What am I supposed to look at?' His elderly female companion looks at me, raises her eyebrows and says, 'Mr.Grumpy. As bad as a child'.

It's time to move on and I pause at the far end of the gallery where there's a table with a sketch of a different rabbit and plastic pots of paint are neatly arranged in rows. Each pot is numbered and named: brown Winter Closes, pale blue RITA, pink Hart, Grys Dunker, Winter Kitchen, Kees, Armchair, 3<sup>rd</sup> Flap. Why do It? is a paler pink.

In the next three rooms an exhibition called *Object:Gesture:Grid* includes forms in alabaster and limestone by Barbara Hepworth, the graceful *Sculpture a Etre Perdue Dans la Foret* by Jean Arp, *Amoeba* by Louis Bourgeois and *Voyage to Labrador* by Alfred Wallis. This is more like it! Steve is more comfortable, standing in front of a Rothko talking about the 'ferocity of paint, this inner angst coming out'. It strikes me that his audience, men in cream holiday slacks and ladies in comfy Ecco sandals, might once have found this work as bemusing as the Stokkers, but Steve makes it easy for them, he's leading them into the minimalist room now, where 'You know what you're looking at. Minimalism. It's a word you use when you're choosing a kitchen'. As I scoot past a Sandra Blow, he's beside another Hepworth, talking about how she sent her triplets to boarding school so she could 'get on'.

As I leave, I pass between *We are Going to Sleep in our Pyjamas* and Patrick Heron's massive, imposing stained glass window. It's hard to tell if Stokker means the title as a challenge or a party invitation. She says the idea for the exhibition came to her on a tram one morning when she looked at the other people and thought that, half an hour ago, they were all in their pyjamas. I'm not sure whether to believe a word, because for all the curator's talk of childlike innocence and disarming naivety, these playthings are rigidly policed. But what Stokker says about bringing the private and personal, family and the everyday, into public space and subverting what's grand (though it was never meant to be) is interesting and later I realise it chimes with the title of the conference I've been invited to at the University of Sussex: *Intimate Publics*.

Some of the time, it's hard to know why I'm at the conference. There are academics, scholars of biography and autobiography, from all over the world who greet each other like old friends and family. But I don't know them, I'm an outsider. Most of the time I have no one to speak to, so I just keep smiling until my face aches then I go back to my tiny hotel room, sit on the bed and eat sweet and sour pork from the takeaway across the road. Each day I try to choose sessions that will mean most to me, where I see a connection, but I keep getting the feeling I'm missing something important. On Monday afternoon I choose Come closer: confessions of an intimate spectator when, if I had read the programme properly, I should have been at Intimate Lives in Public Spaces to hear Julia Watson talk about Tracey Emin. I'm interested in Emin but I'm glad I made the mistake because here there are three presenters and only three spectators. Before the session begins, we are told not to sit high up in the empty lecture theatre but to come closer and I assume that's because we are so few but afterwards I'm not sure. The three, who seem to know each other well, share a script and play different roles in the presentation. Introducing a short film, Rachel Zerihan tells us she does not like strawberries, it's not exactly an allergy but she never eats them. We see Rachel enter *Adrian's Garden* a space created by the artist Adrian Howells for a one to one art experience. There is nothing particularly interesting about the setting he has created, just a few drooping plants and somewhere to sit, like a forgotten corner of a garden centre. The point is not the installation but the meeting of Rachel and Adrian. There is some walking about, talking quietly and stroking of hands and then, just as I am becoming bored, Howells asks if Rachel likes strawberries and she says she does. Later Rachel will say that she does not know why she said this and it wasn't wise because Adrian now begins to feed her strawberries. Not just any strawberries, the biggest, juiciest ones I've seen. Watching Rachel taking bites from the strawberries Adrian holds and watching her chewing and the juice running down her chin is unpleasant. I hope I would not have eaten from a stranger's hand and I like strawberries. This is too intimate and I can't understand why Rachel is so compliant. One to one art is unfamiliar to me and at first I assumed that Rachel was the spectator and Adrian the performer but I begin to wonder if it is the other way around and if we three have innocently become part of this seedy arrangement. Is this what I'm supposed to feel? Are these the questions I'm supposed to ask? What is it about this staged relationship in an artificial environment that makes Rachel perform in this particular way? What would I have done in similar circumstances? I suspect I would have fled and convinced myself I felt brave for turning down Adrian's offer. But what would I have missed? Might he have offered me something different? The discomfort I'm experiencing comes just from watching

a film! I feel implicated and there's nothing I can do to stop the thing from going on. I wonder if this is how you feel watching pornography and I wonder what Tracey would have made of it. After the film, Rachel talks about another encounter with a one to one artist in which she lay in bed with a woman who was wearing a negligee. There was kissing and fondling and it was very nice and though Rachel tells us she is not a lesbian, she confesses to pangs of jealousy when she left the room and saw the queue waiting outside. Strawberries! Lesbians! Should we believe a word she says? As she describes her experience Rachel blushes and I feel like a voyeur just hearing about it, so, though I have many questions, I don't ask any because I don't want to prolong the encounter. But I write the details of the next one to one event in my diary.

At a session on photography I see a series of photographs Michael O'Brien calls *Mum's got to sell the house*. We see the Palm Sunday cross above her bed, the bed her carpenter husband made and we see her hand, but we never see O'Brien's mother. It's a record of a house and I want to know why he didn't make it a record of her, though I know that what's left out is at least as significant as what's included. He calls the photographs 'glimpses beyond the threadbare' and I sit in the lecture theatre looking at the pictures and thinking of the conversations I didn't have with my deaf mother before she died. Of the times I tried to talk to her but she said I was shouting or talking too low. One late afternoon session an American academic, John Barbour, talks about his family memoir. He has written of an unspoken event: the death of a family member by suicide. He's spent many years writing and now his family don't want their memoir published. Parents, siblings, cousins, all have objected. His memoir is sitting on a shelf. What's to be done? There are no answers and the discussion keeps returning to the same point. Whose story is it? What's to be done? Then someone breaks out, says his story, the story of the writing and non publication of the memoir, sounds like the script for a Woody Allen film. And we laugh but it's not so funny.

On Wednesday I'm at a session called Critics Turned Life Writers and notice that the American whose memoir cannot be published is just a few seats away. Thomas Couser begins reading from the memoir he has written of his father who died in 1975. But Couser weeps. He begins again, reading letters sent to his father by Edgar, a gay man with whom he had a romantic friendship, but Couser keeps breaking down. He struggles on but finds it so

difficult I wish he would stop. Then Jeremy Popkin, from the University of Kentucky, starts jauntily reading a section of the Popkin family archive, which he says is about ‘coming to terms with parents’. But when he begins to speak of his dead father his voice fails, his throat dries and he has to sip a little water and try for few words before it fails again. These critics turned life writers have been silenced and I’m wondering whether this has ever happened to them before when I notice that on the screen behind them a computer error message reads: This memory cannot be read. Press escape to de-bug the system.

That evening, I run along Brighton seafront to avoid being late for the conference dinner and, without meaning to, sit next to Popkin. I’m pleased to find he has recovered his extraordinary bass voice but appalled when I realise that next to him is Philippe Lejeune, the eminent French theorist. I wouldn’t have chosen this seat. Years ago, when I was just beginning to be interested in life writing, I read Lejeune’s essay on the autobiographical pact so when I saw he was to be at the conference I reserved a place at the workshop, A Conversation with Philippe Lejeune. I don’t know what I expected, maybe a baffling display of firecracker French intellectualism, but in the event it was less and more than that. Lejeune was amiable and expansive but I could understand little of what he said. A translator explained that the critic’s main interest is now in gathering a collection of French life stories, mostly diaries, and Lejeune is adamant that no attempt is made to edit these personal histories or shape their narrative. They are as they are and he is content to preserve them and keen to promote the setting up of similar collections in other countries. There are some showy academic questions that Lejeune seems almost reluctant to answer and he shrugs them off as if he is puzzled by their needless complexity. I get the feeling that he has had enough of theory and that he’d like to turn away from it now. I’d like to ask if he thinks that, for him, theory was a young man’s game, but there’s the possibility that I have misunderstood and I don’t want to appear foolish. In any case, there was not much conversation at the workshop and there will be none for me tonight, because I speak only restaurant French and anyway, what could I say that would interest him? We sit eating limp salmon in silence, although Popkin demands the vegetarian option and I think Lejeune and I understand each other when our eyes meet briefly over his plate. The mushroom tart looks a lot tastier. Before dessert we’re told to change tables and mingle but there’s no-one I know and I’m left standing, so I nip off back to my hotel, glad to have left before the singing begins. The following day, on the train home, I think about confessions, intimacies shared among strangers; of Barbour,

Couser and Popkin and the unspeakable difficulty, after years of writing about the writing of others, of writing about ourselves. By Truro I begin to feel strangely optimistic. I think that, finally, I've realised what I will write.

The day after I get back from the life writing conference the door falls off the fridge and my husband and I squabble while trying to fix it. Bob throws a phone book at me and I throw it back, winging his ear. That night, though I don't learn about it until morning, my sister in law takes her life. She hangs herself in a hotel room and does not leave a note.

## July

The day I travel north for the funeral is mostly sunny but at intervals the sky blackens and rain beats down, battering the garden and flooding the road. I'm soaked just walking to the car. When I get to Newquay airport I find my flight to Manchester delayed and I sit in the departure lounge between a surfer in flip flops who still smells of the sea and an elderly woman drinking white wine from a plastic tumbler. After another hour we splash across the tarmac in the rain and when we board we're told to keep our seat belts fastened for the entire journey because of turbulence. I remember the friend who has never flown since experiencing turbulence on a flight from France and wish I'd chosen the train. But when the turbulence comes, it's not as bad as I feared and after a very short time we arrive over Manchester. The pilot speaks again, we can't land, there's a thunder storm over the airport, so we have to continue north. When I hear someone say 'There's the Tower' I realise we're approaching Blackpool, in the sky above my father's apartment, when the real turbulence begins. BmiBaby's little aircraft is tossed around the sky like a toy in the hands of a furious toddler. It shudders, plunges and levels before plunging again. A woman is screaming, shouting Fuckfuckfuck and I hope she isn't me. I am on my best behaviour, because the young tax inspector sitting beside me is very afraid, so I clutch her hand, say Oh dear and think that if I die here it will be convenient for my father and there will not need to be a funeral.



Angela, you had 'Made in China for Boys and Girls' tattooed on your back. A joke about your identity that only the privileged few would get. But at your funeral, Phillip Keegan, a bevvied young Evertonian, who moments before had been staunchly defending his catholic faith, (I take my kids to mass, confess my sins every week!) said indignantly that no-one would believe him when he said he was  $\frac{1}{4}$  Chinese. But why would they? He has fair hair and hasn't even got a Chinese name. He told his mates that his grandad was Chinese but they didn't believe him. My sons, who, like him, are  $\frac{1}{4}$  Chinese, were laughing and the other cousins, the twins, who are  $\frac{3}{4}$  Chinese were laughing too and they all do have Chinese names. Gold Mountain, Jade Mountain, Kee Fu chose them. I remember when he told me I was more important to him than his daughters because I was the wife of his son, the mother of his grandsons. Angela, I have the wedding photograph, where you are my bridesmaid, shy, twelve years old. It's a photo that hangs on a wall in a house in a village in China. When Kee Fu went to visit the family he'd left behind, he had a photograph taken with his siblings and they are standing in front of it. Complete strangers to me, but all family, all smiling and behind them a picture of my wedding party. How could I have known you'd die before me? Now they've opened Kee Fu's grave and paid £600 so you can lie above him, though no doubt he would have preferred the space to have been saved for his sons. Susan organised it all, she thought you ought to be with him. Susan, the surplus daughter, the one he gifted to friends. The wife was barren, so Kee Fu shaved Susan's head and took her across town as a gift. Roy was wailing in the pram and Olive beside herself, already carrying the next. Kee Fu knew why.

I'm at your funeral because Susan says, though Roy and I divorced long ago, I'm still family and your friend Maxine says you loved me, though I hadn't seen you for years. So I'm family and when we leave the church for the short drive to the cemetery, I'm saying that I haven't seen Eddie Keegan, another family divorcee, when I turn a corner and there he is and I say Eddie, because it's been some years and he looks at me and says Angela. But we both know you are dead.

In those long ago art school days, it was all sugar necklaces and penny sweets. Roy bringing them home from his father's shop with boxes of noodles and fillets of beef, my beautiful Chinese boy. Liverpool 13 as exotic as Shanghai to me. Your father off playing mah jong,

wrapped up in the game and finding the ship had set to sea. So he played all the way to Milford Haven and back, with Olive minding the shop and seven children not knowing where he was. I remember the Fitz's wedding where we had to pay protection money to the kids on the railings outside the pub and, inside, the best dressed shoplifters in the Dingle. The wedding photos Roy took, and the absconders who couldn't be in the picture and then the film didn't come out after all. We were so scared there'd be trouble and we were burgled, but everyone said the Fitz's wouldn't do that because we were almost family. After the reception, Eddie Keegan came running after us along the tenement walkway, a man with scars on his face, taking Roy by the shoulder, pulling him round and I was thinking this is it, it's over, and all he said was, Roy, come and see your sister sometime. Please? Later Eddie became our best friend and when we were leaving Liverpool, catching the train to St.Ives, he was pushing rolled up notes into Roy's hand. Looking after us. Like always. Family.

I'm looking across your grave Angela. My son Casper is carrying your coffin, with Roy and Daniel, your nephew Phillip, his brother Paul and father Eddie. Max can't do it because he's too tall. I look at Beryl who I know least of any of you. She looks so small, her delicate face stricken. I remember that beautiful pale face covered in bruises when the mad bastard had done his work, sold the gas fire and the furnishings and Mae Lee was just a tiny baby. The flat was icy cold and Beryl even thinner than she is now, just bones. Then you are lowered into your grave and I brush your coffin dust off Casper's shoulder, not knowing what it is and Daniel just stands at the edge of your grave and stares and stares.

Angela you made your choice. It's all on record. This family fight over photographs. At your funeral I see a picture of before you were born. It must have been about the time my parents bought a painting called *Miss Wong* and Beryl and Pauline were chosen to walk up Snowdon for 'Inn of the Seventh Happiness'. It was a hot tiring day and Roy was kept at home, though they'd really wanted him for the film because he was a boy. Who knows? He might even have had a speaking part. In a box that they found in your flat there are photographs of you as a kid and in your police uniform. I think that was when it all started to go wrong. The stress. The night shifts. But that was when you came out and there were good women from that time at your funeral, I met them at the bar. Women you trained with, that don't fit with the crowd you've recently been running with. Their purple ties and

carnations and Tamara the girl you were going to marry, wide-eyed, her hair in corn rows but not so innocent. Your four sisters are chic in black but she's wearing trainers.

Eugenie was the love of your life I guess and she can't step forward and take the handful of soil to toss onto your coffin. She couldn't if she tried. She's shaking so hard I can't hold her still and Janine, who you helped her raise, can't still her either. So we stand either side of her, supporting this bereft, bewildered woman who's nursing a dying father and couldn't have known you would go before him.

I come from Blackburn, my name was Entwistle, my father was a policeman, my mother a secretary and because I almost killed my mother being born they couldn't have another child. So when I married into this teeming family and changed my name to Liu, it wasn't easy to get along with all those beautiful feuding sisters in law. But looking around at your funeral Angela, the one good thing to come of this, is that your family is in this room together for the first time I can remember. Sisters who haven't met for twenty years are reminiscing, divorcees making eye contact for the first time since decree nisi. Cousins: two tough policewomen, two bad lads going straight, two nurses, my sons, more, talking, drinking hard to forget what you did.

It's quite a while since I saw you, you showed me your art and I found it interesting but you were only at the beginning, only starting to find your way. Now there is nothing left to say. At the hotel, the place where you worked, there's a film of what you did, though the final act was behind closed doors. You tidied your desk. I remember how you were mad about stationery when you were young and everything had to be in its place, though Susan says lately that had gone to pot. Tamara was expecting you to take her shopping next week but you'd made other plans. When everything was neat, you took a hairdryer with a long flex from your drawer and walked away from the camera down the corridor. And that's the last we see of you.

Sorting things out at home, a week to the day after Angela's funeral, I found *Miss Wong*. I can't remember how she got here. It's impossible to imagine my parents going to Mr. Cronshaw, the fine art dealer of Copy Nook, Blackburn and buying this painting of an oriental woman with a green face. I don't know how much they paid, but today five people are bidding for *Miss Wong* on eBay: £30.54 with three days to go. This afternoon there's an event at the Penzance literature festival: 'Bring Along Your Favourite Painting and Tell Us The Reason Why' and when I said I might take it, my friend Dave laughed and said hang on to that, if you want to make a 60s set for a murder mystery, it's perfect. I don't think I'll be doing that but it's not as though this was ever my favourite painting. I remember getting off the bus outside Copy Nook when Cronshaw was exhibiting another Tretchikoff in the middle of his window. *The Lost Orchid*, was a painting of a flower discarded on a broad staircase (oh why did you have to leave the dance so early?). Though there'd be detention if I was late for school, I lingered, making up stories and wondering how anyone could paint a drop of water on a petal so perfectly. But it was *Miss Wong* I grew up with. And when my mother eventually decided she preferred a seascape, to remind her of Cornwall, silver sky and waves, sun breaking through, grandma took *Miss Wong* next door to hang over her fireplace and I began to know her all over again. She was exotic, a green faced Mona Lisa, an interesting choice for a grandfather who still warned of the yellow peril and a father who asked if Roy could handle a knife and fork when I brought him home. Though, later, he said that he was only being funny.

## August

I leave Bob to carry on sorting out his gallery and visit my father at his apartment in Lytham St. Annes. After his last health scare he has stopped drinking whisky and we sit in the dark watching football on his huge flat screen TV until he takes himself off to bed at 9.30 because, now the match is over, there's nothing to keep him up is there? The following day I sit on the balcony where my mother used to sit and read his *Daily Mail* until he falls asleep and I can go into Blackpool and visit the Grundy art gallery. The art gallery is besieged, surrounded by pound shops and each time I come I expect it to be gone. Now I wonder if it will outlast my father. They are staging an exhibition called *Jacob Epstein and Blackpool*, which may as well have been called Blackpool and the Holy Grail for all I know about it. But it turns out there is plenty to know and think about. The exhibition consists of newspaper cuttings and

two films about a period from 1939 to the early 60s when an impresario, known for staging end of the pier variety shows, opened an art gallery in one of Blackpool's main shopping streets. Jacob Epstein's naked *Adam*, a bold example of anatomically correct modernist sculpture, was transported from London on a low loader, to be exhibited against a dark red velvet backdrop in an old drapers store. Despite the fact that Epstein was a controversial artist and some critics declared his biblical works crude and unwholesome, even scandalous, the greatest uproar was caused simply because his work was to be shown in Blackpool during the holiday season. London critics did not regard Blackpool, with its Golden Mile and Illuminations, as a suitable venue for art. But these opinions were confounded by the success of the exhibition. According to newspaper reports at the Grundy, up to 20,000 people a day paid a shilling to see the sculpture and after visiting Blackpool Epstein was impressed and willing to sell more of his sculptures for exhibition there. What puzzles me is that, during the 50s, I was often taken to Blackpool when Blackburn closed down for weeks. We stayed in the Savoy Hotel and visited all the attractions but I don't remember the gallery and I don't remember seeing *Adam and Eve*. I'm sure I would remember if I'd seen them. After my parents bought *Miss Wong* we started going to Cornwall on holiday and my mother took me into lots of galleries but perhaps when they were holidaying in Blackpool my parents hadn't yet become art lovers.

There is hardly any food in my father's apartment, just satsumas, extra strong mints and M&S choc ices. Like royalty, he has some cornflakes in a plastic tub and in the fridge there is margarine and two miniature pork pies. I think of the days I used to go back to Cornwall with carrier bags stuffed with food because my mother didn't believe I ate properly. On my last night there, after my father has gone to bed, I entertain myself by taking photographs. There's a programme about Bruce Chatwin on BBC 4 and I try to get a picture of Chatwin below one of the tea towels my mother embroidered. I'm only partly successful. The contrast is too great. The framed tea towel is shrouded in darkness, whereas Chatwin is radiant and his features are lost in the glow. I have more success with Salman Rushdie. I take some photos through the window, trying to capture the new blue street light outside the mock Tudor pier. Then I open the fridge and take a picture, it is empty except for the pork pies. It is Tuesday tomorrow and my father has prepared for an early start. His cup is on the breadboard with its tea bag and single sweetener. Next to it is a slice of bread and next to that, the opened margarine carton with an upright butter knife plunged into it. I photograph

these preparations but don't know why. I feel like a thief in the night but what else can I do? In the morning the janitor's wife comes to say she can't clean today. She's visiting her father in law who might have to go into a home. My father's bottom lip trembles and she gives him a hug and says not to worry, she won't put him in one. He brightens and they banter and flirt. It's as if they have forgotten I'm here. I find it hard to stomach but it's soon over and I suppose you have to get your comfort where you can.

When I get home, Bob has started to fill the house with art. There is a tall white pyramid in the front garden, some granite flipflops on the doorstep; his paintings line the walls in the hall and there are boxes of books in the dining room. He has promised not to make a mess in here because this is where I work but already the heaps of paper are growing. At the top of a pile next to the computer I notice a Penwith District Council guide to the solar eclipse of 2001.

*Live in Translation*, an exhibition by the Japanese artist Tatsumi Orimoto, is at the Exchange gallery. I have missed his *Breadman* performance, when he attached baguettes to his body and with a group of bread clad assistants, toured tourist spots in the town, offering bread to anyone who was hungry as a gesture of kindness. I wonder how many accepted. But mainly the exhibition consists of photographs Orimoto has taken of his mother, whom he names Art Mama although her name is Odai and has nursed since she developed Alzheimer's disease. Orimoto says 'the two of us enjoy creating these collaborative works. Perhaps she is happy that her existence will remain in my work after her life. Also, she hopes her face will be recognised and become more and more famous'. And it's true that some of these photographs resemble photographs of the famous, but they are those pictures snatched in vulnerable, telling moments, Madonna looking her age, Jennifer Aniston overweight, Princess Diana at the gym. Art Mama's face is photographed in close up again and again and over time it loses definition, gurns and pouts, becomes pliable like dough. She does not smile, she rarely looks happy, often gazes, unfocused, into the camera lens as if she no longer cares if she is here or there. There are intimate photographs of Art Mama performing intimate tasks. Peeing, sitting on the lavatory, her behind exposed as she fumbles to pull up her big pants. Art Mama lying on the floor between coffee table and TV, Art Mama sleeping. In the kitchen series, Art Mama stands in the corner of a busy commercial kitchen. It doesn't look very tidy or hygienic. Art Mama has a pile of newspapers tied to the top of her head. It

looks very heavy. No-one is acknowledging she is there. Then there is a photo of Orimoto in the kitchen and he also has a pile of newspapers on his head. I notice how similar mother and son are and I think perhaps they are collaborators after all. But who would volunteer to be weighed down by all that weight? Even for her son. There are photographs of Art Mama feeding pigeons. The pictures are dull and grey and have no particular merit unless they are just records of her day. If they weren't Art they might end up in a collection like Philippe Lejeune's. Art Mama is photographed with two friends. They are sitting on a bench, doing their best to ignore the camera. One looks up to the sky, all have rubber tyres round their necks. I remember the way my mother and grandmother would preen for photographs, the delay while they straightened their hair, even put on a strand of beads. Do these women enjoy being necklaced in black rubber? I find it hard to imagine they do. But look! Orimoto has fashioned a gift, a pair of shoes for his mother who always felt too short! Huge Minnie Mouse shoes that make her eight inches taller and could contain her small feet many times over. She can't walk in them, can only just stand upright and shuffle if supported when wearing them. Orimoto says he wants to make the disabilities of older people, once revered now forgotten, more visible and that too much is thrown away in Japanese society and this is why he used the tyres, 'to give them one last life, as an art work'. A little like his mother.

During the show, there's a discussion called Where Art Meets Dementia which is about making art about and with dementia sufferers. I am one of a group of middle aged women and one man who sit on the chairs lining the room, looking at each other across the divide. Are we artists or carers or both? Are we newly diagnosed? A woman introduces a film she has made about her mother, an absent, mind-wandering woman with the high cheekbones of a model. It's full of romantic images, long corridors, dressing table clutter, drifting drapes and it's very beautiful. I think the audience sighs because it's the sort of film we wish we'd made ourselves. Another woman has produced a very different film about her father. The screen is divided into images of him and you select which version of him you want to see. When you've chosen, he talks about all sorts of things. Though he is ill, there's humour and poetry in what he says and you are glad to hear his voice, his opinions. When the discussion begins, no one talks about Orimoto, which is really why I came, to find some different points of view. But people don't want to say much about art, instead, they talk about their personal experiences, the stories of their lives of coping and caring for parents and partners. A robust young woman talks about the project she runs where dementia sufferers dabble in arts and

crafts. Did they do that before they had the disease? We're told that having dementia doesn't mean you can't learn new skills and I wonder if Art Mama could learn to use a camera, take photographs of Orimoto pulling up his pants. When I ask if anyone else found the photographs voyeuristic there's a long silence. I have spoken out of turn. We aren't at the gallery to criticise the art. I try to explain my position: I'm a life writer and the ethics of life writing narratives concern me. Now it's an academic point I'm making, the silence alters, becomes less antagonistic, but still persists. Then the woman sitting beside me says 'But what about the shoes! Surely he made them out of love!' No, I'm tempted to say, he made them out of recycled cardboard but the moment passes and she goes on, 'There's a different culture at work here and we really shouldn't criticise what we don't understand'. So I feel ashamed. It's only when I'm driving home and thinking I hope my sons won't do that to me, though I know at least one of them could, when I think of foot binding, of how young female feet were once crippled for cultural and aesthetic reasons. And I think again about Orimoto's gift.

There's a Fluxus weekend during Orimoto's exhibition and I'm hoping it'll be an opportunity to learn more about his work. There'll be live art performances, speakers and discussions, a Fluxus feast and a procession through the town. Fluxus was an avant garde movement that emerged in New York and was prominent during the sixties and seventies. It challenges the commodification of art and perhaps because of its zany, do-it-yourself aesthetic and emphasis on collaboration and communication, it remains influential. There were many young students who went to art school in the sixties, thinking they could draw and paint, who learnt that really wasn't a requirement. Entire fine art departments went out on a limb. Unless it worked for you, unless you could go with the flow, your creativity was blasted to kingdom come and you left art school with shards and a third class diploma. I'm thinking of Mick, who, after three years of fine art study, could only feed fish in an aquarium. Part time. I remember walking into Liverpool's Hope Street College of Art in 1971 and finding a group of students staging their degree show. Every minute, for twenty four hours, they were writing the time on the walls of the main hall. I'm reluctant to say this was a pointless activity but if the manifestation of an idea has no power, doesn't communicate anything beyond the obvious, it seems fairly redundant to me.



At the Fluxus symposium, the keynote speaker talks the talk. He's an attractive Glaswegian so I don't mind listening. Or is that a sexist remark? See the point is, hinnie, does Fluxus break down binary oppositions or even recognise they exist? How exactly does it represent the symptomatic disfunction of the state? (I can't help but think, if he had been talking symptoms, disfunctions, states instead of the state, I could make the leap to Alzheimers here). But now, there is a slide show and this photograph might be of the Dresden bombings or is it Blackpool illuminations? And does it really matter? The question is what's the relationship between photo and event, between the myth and our understanding of it? And how do concepts of eternal networks function today? What are the principles of Fluxus now? I drift. I hear Falmouth, free drink, music, sex, a bottle of whisky, a cassette player, vibrator, a plastic vagina but because I have momentarily slipped away from the event I don't know anything about the myth. I'm puzzled, then I hear him say Blackburn and I'm wide awake again. It seems that in 1972, the year I came to live in Cornwall, a Fluxus show was travelling in the opposite direction. FLUXshoe left Falmouth, showed in Exeter and eventually ended up in Blackburn. The Lancashire Evening Telegraph of Monday July 9<sup>th</sup> 1973 reports 'a photograph of a naked woman covered in whipped cream from head to toe, hangs from a wall in Blackburn Museum and Art gallery... another photo, captioned *Solo for Guitar*, shows a man kicking the remains of a guitar along a New York street'. Organiser Mr. Dave Mayor, a 24 year old Cambridge graduate in mathematics and fine arts explains 'On a simple level the idea is to show art does not necessarily have to be about paintings...People in London have seen all this before, and they tend to say So what? This show won't be going to London'. Mr. Mayor says he is studying for a doctorate in 'all this'. But the newspaper isn't overly impressed and says, as if to put southerners in their place, that Mayor 'is not the only one involved in bringing the avant garde to Blackburn. A Hungarian artist Mr. Endre Tot, who specialises in typing noughts on pieces of paper, is already here'.

This is all news to me and I'd like to find out more but the Glaswegian, though friendly, isn't very forthcoming, so we go into the bar until we're invited into the live performance. While we are having a drink, I notice a small Japanese woman dressed formally in a tidy white shirt, black skirt, pale stockings and court shoes, as if for the office. It's a different crowd here tonight, so her outfit might just be a particular fashion statement but when we go through to the gallery I see she is the main event. She sits at a table on which there are plates of different foods: marshmallows, cubes of cheese and meats, bread, assorted fruits. She sits

passively while a contraption is attached to her head. It's a metal cap, the sort of thing that might be used for reading brainwaves in a medical situation but attached to it are three jointed mechanical arms and it is wired to a control pad on the table. Secretary has become robot. At the touch of a button a mechanical hand swoops down, selects, clasps a piece of food and in a series of clicks and jerks trundles it towards her face. She opens her tiny pink mouth, waits until the food is deposited inside, then chews and swallows. This continues for some time, the food does not always reach her mouth but mostly it does and she feeds without expression. I wonder how long this can go on, there is a lot of food on the table, must she eat it until she is sick? Then a man steps forward and fiddles with the machine and I am relieved because I think it's all over. But I couldn't have been more wrong. Now we spectators are invited to control the machine and what little control she had before is removed. After an embarrassed pause, someone steps up to the table, presses the button, selects what she should eat and, without looking at him, she chews and swallows. He seems to be enjoying the situation because he keeps pressing the button and she keeps chewing and swallowing. I've had enough and we leave before the end but I do wonder, afterwards, what the end would have been.

There's a seam of cruelty in this work I don't understand unless it's to teach the spectator something about power, about how far they will go, what they will do in what circumstances. Anna tells me that she could not go into the gallery during the early days of the Orimoto show. She lives round the corner and passed by every day but after glancing in through the window, she didn't think she could stand to see the humiliating images more closely. Then one day something drew her in and what she found there surprised her. She discovered tenderness in the photographs and a man, an artist, who was trying to bear the unbearable. You bear your experiences she said, you inflict your humiliations on others or you act them out in other ways. I'm unsure what she really meant by that. Do these photographs allow Orimoto to act out his humiliation in caring for his mother or Art Mama's humiliation in suffering her disease? What I think, after visiting the show again, is that there is a void of understanding. But perhaps that is the point too.

It's the end of August and the gallery has to be cleared. Bob's friends are helping every day. The ex policeman stand up comedian and Kier, a painter, hire a van and bring plan chests to the house, heave them up the steps to the front door and to the bedrooms upstairs. They pant

and sweat because these drawers are heavy, it is hot and they are not young. I provide cold drinks and drive backwards and forwards with boxes full of paintings. Bob sits in the gallery sifting and sorting but rarely throwing anything away. He is building an archive because he thinks someone will want to write about all this one day. Friends drop by, there is drinking and poetry and music late into the night. Some people met their life partners at openings here, some people moved to St.Ives because of the friendships they made while performing in the square outside. They all want to pay their respects. To relive their memories. Phil from Birmingham turns up, he has long grey hair and a waxed moustache. He comes face to face with Robin from Kingston, who also parts his long white hair in the middle and waxes his moustache. They look like Gandalf the Grey and Gandalf the White. They have been coming to the gallery for years but they have never met before. They exchange e mail addresses. Although the lease runs out on the 28th there is no sense of time running out, in fact there's an air of celebration as if something wasn't dying here. As if Bob wasn't leaving his life behind. On the fourth day it seems as if the gallery is almost empty. Then Bob takes down the wall underneath the stairs and the clearing process begins again. I find a dusty piece of board and take it outside for a better look. I wipe it with my sleeve. The painting of a red horse is exactly what I hoped it would be. Low down, along the side edge, is a signature: Yankel Feather. I remember visiting Yankel at his house, out near the cliffs at St.Just, in the early days when Bob and I were first together. As I remember, Yankel didn't really have a studio, just lived among his paintings and for his work. The living room was full of large dreamy canvases, strolling groups of players, naked young men. In a way they were old fashioned paintings but they'd be bang up to date now. Yankel was a sick old man even then but he was a visionary and a technician, he could handle paint, knew when to apply it thickly, when to let the ground sing through. We sat there in the clutter drinking black tea, my mind spinning stories, I wasn't really listening to the talk, although Yankel could really talk, about his long ago Liverpool days, John Lennon and Ye Olde Crack. You don't often come across paintings that you would like to take home, that you want to inhabit your days. But I knew I could live with Yankel's paintings and they would have enriched our lives. We set up an exhibition and carefully selected the work. It was going to be important, Yankel's first major show for years and we expected it to re-launch his career. Six months later we took delivery. Yankel had turned abstract. The naked boys were gone, replaced by squares and rectangles. By vacant, uncertain spaces. We couldn't sell them and the show was not a success. A few years later, when Yankel had returned to figuration and to telling tales, we showed his work again and this time all went well. Yankel was so delighted that he left

behind some works for us to keep. His gift. And in all the devastation, the red horse was what I found.

On day five, an artist comes to collect his paintings. We've been telling them to do this for a long time but few have bothered. I don't think anyone believed the gallery would really close. Bob has phoned this man and asked him to collect work he left 25 years ago. He's emigrated to Australia and come back since then. But I have made a mistake. I have taken a pile of work home that should have stayed put. He starts to get excited, belligerent, says we must have sold his work and kept his money, though Bob knows he hasn't. He wants his money now. Bob's a thief, always has been, some people from Penzance wouldn't exhibit here, why, at the party last night he heard someone say he wouldn't lend Bob a corkscrew (and there's good reason for this because I eventually find half a dozen). He's shouting and all the helpers are looking the other way while a man who sits in the corner, looking for bargains, carries on leafing through dusty broken frames and crumpled sketches. Bob tries to pacify the artist and I explain I'm to blame, promise to bring his work tomorrow but he won't calm down and in the end I've had enough and tell him to bugger off. He turns his attention to me then and starts to complain loudly that I have sworn at him, so I tell him to fuck off before I really get angry. It seems he's about to explode but Bob puts a placating arm across his shoulder and leads him to the door and to my surprise he slopes off muttering. I feel ashamed because I made things worse so in a little while I go to the shop to get milk to make tea. I meet the artist in Norway lane and I apologise, kiss his cheek and we embrace. We stand there weeping while the tourists pass by. It took six days to clear the gallery of thirty years of art. It is stored all over my house, some of it, the special things, are hanging on the walls.

In September I borrow the estate agents key and let myself into the Salthouse: this newly available property in an ideal trading location in the heart of St.Ives. I'm going to use a new camera to take photographs of the gallery because when I got back from visiting my father, my cheap pink camera refused to switch on and the photographs I took at his apartment were lost. The empty rooms are silent except for the echo of my footsteps, the electricity has been switched off. I put the camera on automatic to record the scene. For years Bob has been painting over penetrating damp, covering livid stains with art.

Now the seeping walls are exposed they tell an entirely different story.



Figure 9: Salhouse Gallery, September 2010

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