

**Creative Artefact: The Taste of Translation
&
Exegesis: The Inner Outed**

**Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

Anne Gambling

**Swinburne University of Technology
Faculty of Higher Education, Lilydale
February 2012**

Abstract

How is new knowledge produced? For Deleuze & Guattari, “the new is an outside that exists within this world, and as such it must be constructed” (O’Sullivan & Zepke 2008, p.2). My work demonstrates that practice-led research offers a liberating framework toward such “production of the new” (O’Sullivan & Zepke 2008, p.2), an opportunity for the intuitive and creative wellspring of heart-knowing to cross-fertilise with the intellectual and reflective reservoir of the mind.

Beginning with direct experience of the collective unconscious (Jung 1995), the research question I addressed in this project was: How do I bring inner knowing out onto an external plane? The particularities of my process toward the following research outcomes – an Exegesis titled *The Inner Outed* and a Creative Artefact, *The Taste of Translation* – documents how creative practice unlocks intellectual understanding as much as reflective inquiry underpins and enables ongoing creativity. In this way, research and practice coalesce to form a seamless whole.

A rhizomatic methodology was used to explore an expanding fabric of interconnections, “all manner of ‘becomings’” (Deleuze & Guattari 2004, p.24), my writing the tool to chart territories explored as they were traversed. The rhizomes of both exegesis and artefact thus form a single “plane of consistency” (Deleuze & Guattari 2004, p.9), of becoming knowledge, where thematic concepts such as engaging the other, memory, landscape and translation are interrogated together with what it means to love: “Love is as love does [...] We do not have to love. We choose to love” (Peck 1978, p.71).

This submission is a small offering to the conversation on peace consciousness in a post-9/11 world which seems to have forgotten how to love according to the perennial philosophy (Huxley 2009) – that different religious traditions may appear to divide but compassion conjoins us all; that we are one humanity with many faces; and that we live in a world where, as Buddhist teachings suggest, love is “at the centre of all things and all things are the same thing” (Kerouac 2008, p.137).

Acknowledgements

To my sizeable rock in the shifting sands of the intertidal zone, without your complete and unconditional presence throughout, none of this would have been possible.

A heartfelt *Chapeau!* goes to Associate Professor Dominique Hecq and Dr Christine Sinclair, super supervisors who shared the journey in principally virtual space and time.

Editing, proof reading and document formatting were conducted by Joan Howard in accordance with the Australian Standards for Editing Practice (ASEP) for research students' dissertations.

And with gratitude to the Academy for the Australian Postgraduate Award scholarship which provided financial assistance for the duration of my candidature.

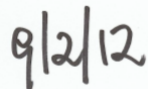
Declaration by Candidate

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where reference has been made in the text.

Signed: Anne Gambling

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anne Gambling', written in a cursive style.

Dated: 9 February 2012

A handwritten date '9/2/12' in black ink, written in a simple, clear style.

Contents

Abstract.....	i
Acknowledgements.....	ii
Declaration by Candidate.....	iii
List of figures and illustrations.....	v
Exegesis: The Inner Outed	1
Introduction	1
Chapter 1: Becoming Desire.....	12
Chapter 2: Becoming Landscape	21
Chapter 3: Becoming Conscious	41
Chapter 4: Becoming Product.....	56
Chapter 5: Becoming Myth	74
Creative Artefact: The Taste of Translation	85
Panel One: Laleima’s Story (Excerpt).....	88
Panel Two: Cantigas de Santa Maria (Excerpt).....	109
Panel Three: Kisha’s Story (Complete).....	130
References.....	309
Appendix 1: The Taste of Translation: glossary, citations and references	317
Appendix 2: Second-Person Text included in Panel One, Laleima’s Story	332
Appendix 3: Report of Dreamwork in relation to Panel Three, Kisha’s Story .	334
Appendix 4: Lorca’s <i>Duende</i> as an expression of Embodied Knowing	336

List of figures and illustrations

Figure 1: Alhambra, Granada	2
Figure 2: The Process of Becoming.....	10
Figure 3: Mapping the Stories.....	12
Figure 4: Daylily Rhizomes	13
Figure 5: Producing the New	16
Figure 6: Becoming Landscape	27
Figure 7: The Three Faces of Anne	44
Figure 8: Cycles of Embodied Action and Reflection.....	45
Figure 9: Becoming Product	57

Introduction

When Deleuze & Guattari (2004) elaborated *A Thousand Plateaus*, the text had neither beginning nor end, but started somewhere in the middle. They advocated a rhizomatic, as opposed to an arboreal, approach to the production of knowledge; and within the text this became the means by which to link their diverse series of thought. The concept of the rhizome, therefore, operated as both a touchstone and guiding principle to their process:

...unlike trees or their roots, the rhizome connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature [...] It is composed not of units but of dimensions, or rather directions in motion. It has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (*milieu*) from which it grows and which it overflows. [...] the rhizome pertains to a map that must be produced, constructed, a map that is always detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable, and has multiple entryways and exits and its own lines of flight (Deleuze & Guattari 2004, p.23).

Describing the work as an 'intermezzo' performance, their approach to writing created a perpetually expanding fabric of interconnections resulting in "all manner of 'becomings'" (Deleuze & Guattari 2004, p.24). The concept of plateaus – defined as "any multiplicity connected to other multiplicities [...] to form or extend a rhizome" (Deleuze & Guattari 2004, p.24) – took on the role of an organising strategy for their writing. In this way, their "production of the new" (O'Sullivan & Zepke 2008, p.2) acquired form and consistency. "To attain the multiple, one must have a method that effectively constructs it" (Deleuze & Guattari 2004, p.24).

Suffice it to say that this project led me on a similar dance toward the production of new knowledge. But rather than confuse you, the reader, upfront with my multitude of middles, I will offer a semblance of a beginning to this paper, nevertheless acknowledging that this exegesis will be infused with an ongoing dynamic of "travelling and moving: proceeding from the middle, through the middle, coming and going, rather than starting and finishing" (Deleuze & Guattari 2004, p.27-8).

To begin then, I invite you on a journey to the Alhambra in Spain, the Moorish palace of Granada, seat of the Nasrid dynasty until the close of the 15th century.



Figure 1: Alhambra, Granada

It is July 2000, late afternoon, and I am just another tourist in the crowd, until I bear witness to a scene that elicits no response from those around me. A girl, perhaps in her early twenties, crosses my line of vision. She has long black hair, is wearing a plain linen shift, and is walking, crying, blood staining her hands, her dress, all:

I see a girl torn

Bright blood courses shameful thighs

Pain cannot be hid (Gambling 2011b, journal entry 29/07/00).

Perhaps I should backtrack to another point in the rhizome to provide context for the experience. It is rare, but not without precedent, that I see, for want of a better word¹, images of what has been, what is, or what may come. Mostly these arrive in the form of dreams, but occasionally as waking visions. The occurrences are always unexpected and always leave me shaken.

What occurred in the Alhambra more than ten years ago was such an event. While walking alone, admiring the architecture, mosaics, my work colleagues having moved ahead to other rooms, I was caught short by the sight of vents set in the stone floor. A memory was retrieved in an instant. I had seen these vents before in a dream some six months prior. I grew excited by seeing

¹ According to Watson & Jenkins (2006, p.7), "I saw" is a signature phrase in the writings of religious mystics attempting to describe their lived experiences. This in no way suggests that I place myself in such company, only that it is the most accurate way to express the uprising of images in language.

them, in actuality, in the palace and recalled that in the dream I had looked down onto a subterranean level, fascinated by the steam which coursed through the vents. As everything looked the same as in the dream, it seemed natural to repeat the same sequence in reality. I looked down through stone archways and a girl crossed my line of vision – a girl who had not been part of the dream, but was here, now, oblivious to my witness.

The image lasted no more than a second or two and a message accompanied it, arriving separately from this reservoir of the collective unconscious² as words which did not interpret the image but seemed to form their own statement of fact simultaneously with the image³. The message was: *Muslim princess, Christian servant, miscarriage or abortion gone wrong*⁴.

I became nauseous and sat down where I was, unheeded by the crowd. My work colleagues returned. It was towards closing time. We climbed a high tower to take photos of each other as a record of our brief respite from professional commitments; a record I look back on for other reasons.

If I was to understand more than what I had seen, it would take research. Temporally a brief half-millennium at least lay between the girl and my vision of her. An entire culture and religious heritage separated us spatially. There was a narrative to be discovered, a life and all its contents. And why had the mists of time parted, there, then, for me to bear witness to her suffering? Based on previous experiences I had had, I knew there must be a reason. Yet it lay obscured.

More than a year would pass until the horror of 9/11. I was ten weeks pregnant with my third child at the time; restricted to a Kuala Lumpur hotel room instead of engaged in a roundtable on sustainability initiatives on behalf of my employer. Local extremists had threatened to fell the Petronas Twin Towers in

² According to Jung (1995), “the collective unconscious is common to all; it is the foundation of what the ancients called ‘the sympathy of all things’” (p.160).

³ The 14th century mystic, Julian of Norwich, called this mode of revelation “words formed in my understanding” (Watson & Jenkins 2006, p.78) which her editors clarify as “evidently not heard physically but in some sense” (Watson & Jenkins 2006, p.78). In this context, they cite St Gregory’s 6th century assertion that “the heart [is] informed [...] the speech [...] rather made or performed than heard” (Watson & Jenkins 2006, p.78).

⁴ The reader is asked to note that my recording of “words formed” shall appear in italics throughout the exegesis in acknowledgement of the completely contrary nature of such arisings from normal thought processes.

the city. Shock had muted us all. Again I saw the girl and her blood, but on this occasion she spoke to me directly: *There is not enough love in the world.*

On that specific day my love was concentrated on a child in utero. I took flight in the uncertainty of the moment thirteen hours home to Zurich and a normalcy not reflected in the nightly news over the days, weeks, months and years to follow. Skittles crashed across the globe. There were terrorist attacks, declarations of war, hatred and paranoia expressed in a new-found Crusader zeal on both sides of a religious divide intent on co-opting faith to achieve geopolitical ends. Throughout, the image of the girl and her words grew stronger, more insistent. I needed to conceive of a way to honour her visitation, her message and her continued presence in my life.

The year 2000 has long since passed; the intervening time has been spent circling her message, a *tabula rasa* beyond a single image, a frozen moment to which a before and after needed to be grafted if sense were to be made of her coming. I felt propelled to enter into a contract with the souls of the dead, in my own meagre way echoing Virgil's plea which Atwood (2002) quotes in the context of her negotiations with the dead: "You gods who rule the kingdom of souls! You soundless shades! [...] Grant me to tell what I have heard! With your assent may I reveal!" (p.173).

Atwood's (2002) contention is that "the dead may guard the treasure, but it is useless treasure unless it can be brought back into the land of the living and allowed to enter time once more" (p.178). The treasure in my case was to translate a brief moment of witness into something with the potential to resonate in a world of *not enough love*.

Following Jung, Jaffé (1983) suggests that "any content that emerges from the unconscious into consciousness involves a spiritual or moral task" (p.72). I felt ethically bound not only to understand, but also to share what had been gifted. I resigned my position in the corporate sphere and committed to applying skills – acquired over decades as a professional writer – to bring a medieval Moor's voice, story and myth out onto an external plane, to add her message to the conversation on 21st century peace consciousness.

To achieve this, I created a work of literary fiction which takes the perennial philosophy (Huxley 2009) to heart in a world which seems to have forgotten that different religious traditions may appear to divide but compassion conjoins us all; that we are one humanity with many faces; and that we live in a

world where, as Buddhist teachings suggest, love is “at the centre of all things and all things are the same thing” (Kerouac 2008, p. 137).

An immense and myriad amount of research loomed before I was in a position to create. I needed to understand the processes by which the collective unconscious operates before being in a position to extract and share its treasure. The learning curve to produce a fully-formed creative artefact was thus more than amply matched by an arc of Deleuzo-Guattarian becoming which this exegesis shall illuminate.

My multitude of middles began with desktop research into Moorish Granada, an island in a sea of Castilian Christianity, where it was a sin to love one from another faith. That much had been clear from my act of witness. But to write her into existence, to gift her with an afterlife, to bring her message up and out into the temporal and spatial reality of today? Taking Atwood at her word – that the treasure was useless unless relevant to now – I constructed a link to contemporary culture, settling on the backdrop of the Bosnian War of the 1990s, specifically the Siege of Sarajevo, as related by a young woman who suddenly finds her home divided along religious and ethnic lines.

The decision to undertake this project in the context of practice-led research was not made lightly. I could have produced an artefact without reflection on praxis. Yet for the particularities of a process which engaged the collective unconscious, practice-led research offered a liberating framework where the intuitive and creative wellspring of heart-knowing could cross-fertilise with the intellectual and reflective reservoir of my mind. I found that creative practice proved as much a key to unlocking intellectual understanding as reflective inquiry worked to underpin and enable ongoing creativity, and over time I observed how they coalesced to form a seamless whole where research-led practice was the other side of my practice-led research coin.

In clarifying the specific research question for the project, my critical issue was to understand how new⁵ knowledge is produced, thus echoing Guattari’s claim that “the only question is how anything works, with its intensities, flows, processes” (Deleuze 1995, p.22). If my initial question based on the vision was: What do I do with the image locked inside me?, the research question surfaced as: How do I bring inner knowing out onto an external plane? Answering this

⁵ For Deleuze & Guattari, “the new is an outside that exists within this world, and as such it must be constructed” (O’Sullivan & Zepke 2008, p.2).

question satisfied my need to understand direct experience of the collective unconscious, one where I needed to adopt an interdisciplinary approach fusing philosophical, psychological and spiritual dimensions to assist my inquiry.

As O'Sullivan (2008) holds, in producing the new "our encounter and *engagement*" (p.99) with the new is also crucial. Therefore, to chart the vastly unknown territory of the collective unconscious onto which the vision in the Alhambra had opened me, I sought guidance from a range of social research paradigms. Encountering these different paradigms was a process of discovery in itself, while my engagement with the methodological concepts and tools that I appropriated for my own process was the experience of finding unlikely conversation partners, and thinkers whose research resonated for my investigations, in the most unexpected locations. My production of the new was made possible, I believe, because I took Deleuze & Guattari's (2004) invitation to heart – "to lift a dynamism out of [their work] entirely, and incarnate it in a foreign medium" (Massumi 2004, p.xv) – and followed a rhizomatic approach to knowledge production.

The Artefact – The Taste of Translation

In acknowledging the constraints of the academy in terms of submission length, only an excerpt of the artefact is included for examination. Nevertheless, my research question talks to the whole of the process of artefactual development as well as the product outcome in its final form. An overview of the full artefact is thus provided to assist the reader's consideration of both the exegesis and the excerpt.

The Taste of Translation is a triptych – a three-panel piece which forms a single work. I conceived of this form, as opposed to the linearity of a trilogy, in order to convey the sense of holistic knowing which comes from unfolding or opening up all three panels to the light. In this respect, I was drawn to the original meaning of the word, a Byzantine description for a hinged three-panel icon or altarpiece. With an icon of this type, meditation on the one via the three draws the viewer into an embodied circle of spiritual knowing (Webb 1999). From a contemporary perspective, the triptych works of Mark Rothko convey a similar intent. We may aesthetically engage with each panel and its distinct idea, yet the work's meaning remains incomplete and potentially misleading unless embraced as a whole (Wick 2001).

Such is the case with this artefact where Panel One is devoted to the life of Laleima, a medieval Moor; Panel Three is the preserve of Kisha, a Bosnian Serb exiled from her home; and Panel Two, the slim sister in between, is the home of an icon of the holy mother of God (in Greek, *Kiria*, our Lady). A medley of voices against diverse backdrops offer their witness, but the three panels as a single piece is the story of one – Laleima – and her message of love beyond borders raised by time, faith traditions, cultures, languages, geo-politics.

The excerpt comprises several chapters of Panel One at separate points of the narrative, two small sections of Panel Two similarly, followed by Panel Three in its entirety for this is where Laleima's treasure becomes useful. By including portions of Panels One and Two, my aim is to bring to the reader's attention content that is integral to the narrative developments in Panel Three; as well as provide examples of different forms of writerly expression required to honour the sources in the collective unconscious. I felt ethically bound to be faithful to a spirit of translation throughout, to undertake my work 'lovingly' as Benjamin (2007a, p.78) counsels, even though it impacted on language, style⁶, voice, tone and texture, both within and between panels. These issues will be elaborated on in following chapters.

Panel 1: Laleima's Story

The story is told in forty chapters, preceded and postscripted by witness reports. The first witness sees Laleima's agony in the halls of the Alhambra *in a time before time, in a place before now*. The last witness is an historian who looks back on everything told and reports that *yes, this did all happen once*. The narration of her life follows her passage to adulthood against a backdrop of mid-14th century Moorish court life where she loses her mother to the plague, her father to a violent death. Her older brother Muhammad – heir to the throne – and her sister, Ayesha, are the rocks to which she turns when the family seek sanctuary in North Africa after a coup; and also when they return from exile three years later, herself *a child a woman become*. This is the description offered by a courtier, the celebrated poet Ibn Zamrak, who wishes to ask for her hand. But she has promised herself to Allah, to a life spent understanding love of the divine following a vision at her mother's deathbed. Her tutor in this Sufi

⁶ This included the decision to dispense with quotation marks for dialogue to not disrupt the flow of voice, thus helping to ensure that the rhizome of the triptych stayed "open and connectable in all of its dimensions" (Deleuze & Guattari 2004, p.13).

knowledge⁷ is Ibn al-Khatib, the wise man of the court, the caliph's (her brother) chief vizier. During this time, in and out of court comes a scholar, Ibn Khaldun, who also seeks her hand and brings her precious gifts. He is the witness of the last report.

One day Khaldun returns from a mission to the court of Castile with an entourage of Christians, a translator and his staff. King Pedro would inscribe the words of Moorish poets on his own walls. This is the era of *convivencia*, of mutual comradery and cross-fertilisation between kingdoms. When the translator's attendant falls ill, Laleima is asked to assist in his stead as she knows Castilian as if it were her mother tongue (learned at the knee of her childhood nurse, Sara). In a slow dance in and around scripted verse, she and the translator, Sébastien, fall in love. And through this earthly love, she is able to explore the divine depths of her Sufi faith.

Indeed, love gives her the strength to 'die to self'⁸ three times over the course of the remainder of her on-earth journey, a journey mapped on a medieval scroll. As the fallout of her sin becomes known, Zamrak, in thrall to power becomes cruel and cunning. Cheated of his prize and starved of affection he plots to overthrow his mentor, al-Khatib. For Laleima the end approaches. But her deaths have been so complete in life – sacrificing her lover, her child, her ego – that when she is stoned to a bloodied pulp for the crime of adultery, she has already flown and is busy with the next stage of a journey beyond space and time, counselling Klee's 'Angel of History', as interpreted by Benjamin (2007b, p.257), to re-find his lost hope in love as the salvation of a torn humanity.

Panel 2: Cantigas de Santa Maria

Cantigas are songs, medieval troubadour hymns to love. Santa Maria is the holy mother of God. The specific text to which the title of this panel refers is a 13th century illustrated manuscript which Sébastien brings as a gift to the Moorish court in Panel One. It is a cantiga he sings to Laleima to explain how time and space dissolve into an eternal now because of love's energy at the centre of all creation.

⁷ Sufism is the mystical branch of Islam where one knows God in one's own heart (see Corbin 1998a&b).

⁸ A common expression across faith traditions to convey the notion of dissolution or annihilation in the face of divine wisdom (see Armstrong 1999, Corbin 1998a&b, Spearing 2001, among others).

In this panel, we follow the journey of a troubled man, El Crucio (the sad one), as he weaves a meandering course across the landscape of medieval Europe. Because of his experience, he will never write again. His story is told in four voices. The Song of the Brother begins the text, told by the companion who is ever at his side, knowing he must stay for however long this aimless wandering continues before El Crucio finds peace. The Song of the Gypsy is a story of prophecy during their illogical journey. Because of a vision years before, the Gypsy waits for *the one who would come* outside the church of the Virgin in Mystras, begging bowl in hand. When finally he arrives, she sees the agony of one lost in the wilderness with no faith in the written word, yet is able to read his fate and tell: *There are other ways to write*. The Song of the Monk is told by the abbot of a monastery on the isle of Candia (medieval Crete) whose workshop produces icons traded throughout Byzantium. Here El Crucio settles, begins to paint, writing⁹ the same icon over and over, never varying the script of the holy mother of God by whose grace his pain is translated to peace. Finally, the Song of the Revelation, told in the voice of an unnamed omnipresence, completes the story of the Brother in the years following El Crucio's death. In so doing, it folds the panel back onto itself and into the first panel, a process anticipated at the conclusion of the third panel by the protagonist herself.

Panel 3: Kisha's Story

Kisha, a Bosnian Serb, is a graduate student in comparative literature and linguistics at the University of Sarajevo when the Yugoslav Federation disintegrates and war breaks out in 1992. She lives in the centre of town with her partner, Samir, a Muslim professor at the same institution. Like all contemporaries, theirs is a secular love. Religion plays no part in lives brought up on communist ideology.

Her story is told in seven symphonic movements separated by the intermezzo performances of a chorus of dead, the souls of those randomly cut down by sniper bullets, mortar attacks or machine gunfire during the long months and then years of siege; souls not yet ready to fly, souls waiting, watching, until Kisha, just one among the many, can find a way to lift her inner

⁹ To write an icon, rather than to paint an icon, is the usual expression for the act of its artistic creation. This possibly goes back to Theodore the Stoudite (759-826), who said: "The gospels were writing in words, but icons are writing in gold" (Eastmond & James 2003, xxix).

siege and embrace life afresh. As this panel is presented in its entirety, further elaboration is considered unnecessary.

Producing the New

In Selimovic's (1996) *Death and the Dervish*, the following exchange occurs between the Sheikh and Hassan:

S: Nothing exists until it is told.

H: Nothing can be told until it exists (Selimovic 1996, p.108).

When one deals with the collective unconscious, the chicken and egg notion, where one wonders what came first, operates similarly. Did Laleima and her story already exist so it could be told? Or only in the telling was its totality conjured into existence? What is existence in any case? The outing of what is within on an external plane? Or the sum total of consciousness, visible and hidden?

There are no answers to these questions in this submission. Whatever my experience or understanding, the work must enter its own conversations with the reader, a creative artefact tabled as literary fiction, as a work of imagination, and an exegesis which documents the particularities of my process to bring inner knowing out onto an external plane. My research question will therefore be interrogated according to the following model (Figure 2), in order to demonstrate that becoming is itself a state of being toward the production of new knowledge.

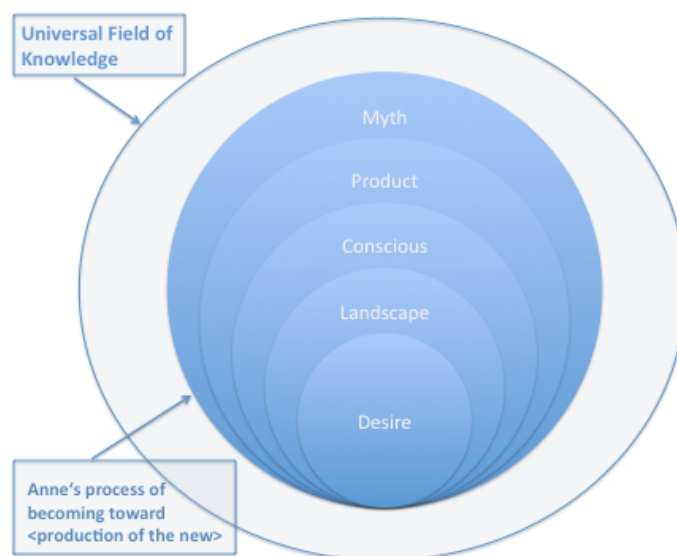


Figure 2: The Process of Becoming

The above graphic (Figure 2) charts the unfolding of a series of exegetical layers in my process, where each stage of becoming knowledge is a chapter prefaced by a sub-question of my overall research question as follows:

- ✚ Becoming desire – harnessing the energy to transform not knowing into knowing
- ✚ Becoming landscape – accessing the place where the story is
- ✚ Becoming conscious – engaging within and outside the landscape of the story
- ✚ Becoming product – bridging inner and outer spaces with the writing of the artefact
- ✚ Becoming myth – supporting the artefact in its afterlife with the reader

According to this model, my arguments develop by accretion, with a literature review and tools from my methodological toolbox included in each chapter, as relevant, to support problematising as it occurs. In approaching the exegesis in this way, I hope to facilitate the reader's journey toward the rhizomatic knowledge I myself have discovered.

In sum, my experience of practice and research, and the interplay between them given the circumstances encountered, involved an unwieldy and lonely charting of a tiny section of the ultimate unknown territory; an inner universe as dark as any beyond Earth's atmosphere and where tiny firefly sparks pinpoint various zones of clarity as much as stars in the night sky help us navigate the seven seas. A map explored as it was traversed, this submission documents my full opening to the production of the new and offers guidance to others willing to explore the depths and return to the surface, treasure intact.

Chapter 1: Becoming Desire

In this chapter I will interrogate my becoming desire with the question: How can I harness the energy of desire to transform not-knowing into knowing via a robust yet flexible methodology to lure the inner out? In the vocabulary of this project, I define desire as a productive and enabling energy, a creative force to bring potentialities into being. With its roots in “energetic, constructivist, productive [...] desire” (Deleuze & Boudas 1993, p.12), a central plane of Deleuzian philosophy is “the articulation of a theory of transformation and change, [...] a theory of pure becoming” (Deleuze & Boudas 1993, p.4). In this context, Deleuze writes:

Every assemblage expresses and creates a desire by constructing the plane which makes it possible and, by making it possible, brings it about (Deleuze & Boudas 1993, p.137).

What Deleuze calls desire, therefore, expresses the same intent behind the creative force I experienced.

There was no question I had becoming desire. The intensity of the vision’s impact on my need to know her story was compelling. But how should I harness it? I thought I had a firm beginning – to research medieval Moorish life and place the vision in its most probable time and place. However, this proved immediately problematic as the texts I investigated led to other texts, questions and thoughts, a seemingly endless exploration of temporal and spatial territories far removed from the site of the vision itself.



Figure 3: Mapping the Stories

I was swamped by the chaotic intensity of my desire to know coupled with a plethora of voices percolating up from the fecund swamp of the collective unconscious with their desire to tell. By way of example, I tried to map the stories of my main characters (Laleima and Kisha) as separate realities but they refused to conform to this structure, instead

interconnecting in illogical and seemingly random ways. The following observations provide a view of expectations unmet.

The map could not be contained to a two-metre long table. Thoughts spilled and lapped at the edges of consciousness in their desire to be heard and recorded across diverse trails. I tried colour-coding different elements according to temporal and spatial criteria but it led to unexpected results, unconsciously morphing into a literal red thread which conjoined conduits and circled key points along and between trails. It captured the fluidity of thought well enough but the core I thought was a core simply became one of many middles.

I have since found labels for what was happening – plateaus, lines of flight, planes of consistency, circles of convergence – but at the time, my inability to effectively transform not-knowing into knowing was agonising. To take a break from such disrupted expectations, I decided to do some weeding. My task was to clear a three square metre patch of terraced garden of a particularly vigorous species of daylily.



Figure 4: Daylily Rhizomes

As I weeded, yanked and cursed, there was plenty of time to reflect. The multiplicity of these tubers was seemingly infinite, their density multi-dimensional. A cubic cross-section revealed the material thickness of their construction, a state of constant becoming, ever-emergent, never static, their order chaotic. It was the thought of

endlessly weeding a never-beginning-nor-ending root system, as well as the unpredictability and sheer stubbornness of their unabated spread, that resonated.

Methodology had found me. Jung would call it synchronicity¹⁰ but I shall return to him later. For now, enter Deleuze & Guattari's theories on knowledge production using the rhizome as metaphor, guiding principles of which include interconnectivity, heterogeneity, multiplicity and cartography: "... any point of a

¹⁰ Synchronicity is "the meaningful coincidence or equivalence of a psychic and a physical state or event which have no causal relationship to one another" (Jung 1995, p.419).

rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be” (Deleuze & Guattari 2004, p.7).

The beauty of a rhizomatic approach to research inquiry is that there is no beginning or end. It affirms that all is and must be, as Deleuze & Guattari insist, a work-in-progress. Like life, so are the becomings of a life’s work. A rhizome’s plethora of entryways is akin to a map’s many paths, “open and connectable in all of its dimensions” (Deleuze & Guattari 2004, p.13). Wherever one enters, one is immediately connected to the whole. There is no right or wrong way. All are simply paths, exploratory trails via which to make sense of the whole.

Deleuze & Guattari are not the only theorists to use the concept of the rhizome in theoretical modelling. Environmental systems-thinking, based on the Gaia hypothesis of the early 1970s, has similar foundations (Lovelock 2000); while in the fields of organisational culture and communications research, systems-theorists suggest models of rhizomatic networks to help facilitate “the process of problematisation as one of the major sources of learning” (Yu, Moon & Kim 2008, p.291). Qualitative researchers who enact living inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2002; Ison, 2008; St. Pierre, 1997) are sympathetic to rhizomatic thinking, while Jung (1995) goes beyond into the realm of the unconscious.

Life has always seemed to me like a plant that lives on its rhizome. Its true life is invisible, hidden in the rhizome. The part that appears above ground lasts only a single summer. [...] Yet I have never lost a sense of something that lives and endures beneath the eternal flux. What we see is blossom, which passes. The rhizome remains (Jung 1995, p.18).

With this analogy, Jung expresses his understanding that conscious life is the tiny ephemeral plant on the rhizome of the collective unconscious within the eternal flux (Peck 1978, p.270).

I found it synchronistic that the methodology helping me work with the energy of desire also offered an opportunity to understand how the collective unconscious functions, and returned to my map’s red threads conjoining a multiplicity of seemingly disparate thoughts. Now I could see clear systemic relationships and the value of a multitude of alternate lines of flight:

A rhizome may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines [...] There is a rupture in the rhizome whenever segmentary lines explode into a line of flight, but the

line of flight is part of the rhizome. These lines always tie back to one another (Deleuze & Guattari 2004, p.10).

Liberated from my conditioning to seek out the logical and the linear, I accepted order within disorder, form within chaos, and surrendered to the inevitability of rhizomatic thought rather than attempt to limit its perpetual becoming. The productive energy of desire was thus enabled via a robust yet flexible methodology to facilitate a process of becoming on a “plane of consistency” (Deleuze & Guattari 2004, p.9):

All multiplicities are flat, in the sense that they fill or occupy all of their dimensions: we will therefore speak of a *plane of consistency* of multiplicities, even though the dimensions of this “plane” increase with the number of connections that are made on it (Deleuze & Guattari 2004, p.9).

I could not have conceived of this approach in the abstract. It was as if it were necessary to grasp the material thickness of a rhizome between scratched and grubby fingers for the ether and intangibility of what I was experiencing to take on understandable form and texture. In this respect, I was informed by Conquergood’s definition of embodied knowing¹¹: a “way of knowing that is grounded in active, intimate, hands-on participation and personal connection” (Conquergood 2002, p.146). As the project continued this became fundamental to answering my research question.

In order to describe the cartography of the metaphorical rhizome Deleuze & Guattari conceived of an explanatory framework utilising the concept of plateaus¹², clusters of word-concepts from which ideas escape down lines of flight to connect with other clustered zones. As Vincs (2007) states, research of this kind “involves constructing a simultaneous engagement with a multiplicity of elements” (p.100), one which has the capacity to host “an unlimited number of connections, in every sense and in all directions” (p.106). Within a rhizomatic model, plateaus are regions from which a multiplicity of becomings ensue: “Becoming is involutory, involution is creative [...] Becoming is a verb with a

¹¹ It is the “view from the body” as opposed to an abstract “view from above” (Conquergood 2002, p.146).

¹² They drew the notion from the work of anthropologist Gregory Bateson (1904-1980) who defined a plateau as “a continuous, self-vibrating region of intensities whose development avoids any orientation toward a culmination point or external end” (Deleuze & Guattari 2004, p.24).

consistency all its own” (Deleuze & Guattari 2004, p.263). Plateaus represent a way of organising or containing the knowledge arising from such a process.

St. Pierre (1997) uses Deleuze & Guattari’s concept of a nomad traversing the landscape of the rhizome to describe the “mobile arrangements of space where thought can settle for a time and then multiply and recombine” (p.410) before moving on and out again. Wherever my thoughts settled, circles of convergence began to form – birthplaces for the thematic plateaus of the exegesis. Geomorphologically speaking, plateaus form through tectonic activity combined with surface-level forces such as erosion, wind or water action. Their sculpting, and continual becoming, reflect a combination of interior and exterior phenomena which I found analogous to the interplay between unconscious and conscious forces at work in this research project.

Hence, the flow diagram (Figure 2) describing this project’s unfolding fields of becoming can be presented as plateaus, storage tubers of knowledge within the tangled web of the rhizome fed by a central wellspring of desire. The following graphic (Figure 5) therefore offers an alternate way to anticipate the chapters to follow; the reader is asked to visualise a tangled web underlying the neat presentation of a ubiquitous computer application.

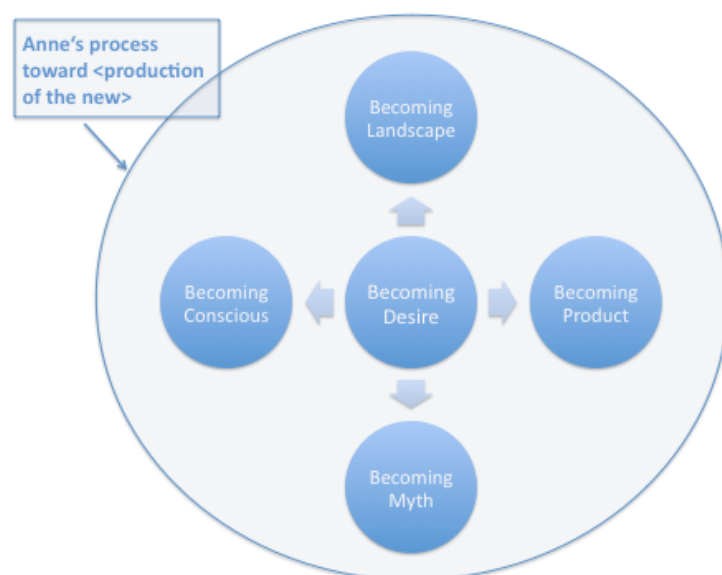


Figure 5: Producing the New

In working with the model of plateaus within the rhizome, Deleuze & Guattari describe their experience thus:

Each morning we would wake up, and each of us would ask himself what plateau he was going to tackle, writing five lines here, ten there. We had

hallucinatory experiences, we watched lines leave one plateau and proceed to another like columns of tiny ants¹³. We made circles of convergence [...] We just used words that in turn function for us as plateaus (Deleuze & Guattari 2004, p.24).

In my project, circles of convergence formed around the word-concepts related to various loci of becoming. While at times they appeared to shift, merge or break away on alternate lines of flight, ant armies deterritorialising as successfully as any Deleuzo-Guattarian battalion, my becoming desire was the single constant which fed diverse inquiries with productive energy.

Onto the rhizomatic foundation of my methodology, I built scaffolding drawn from qualitative research fields in order to further understand the various dimensions and multiple layers I encountered. I engaged in research which was “multi-method led by practice” (Haseman 2007a, p.12) and like Haseman, I do not hold that my research can be rolled into a pre-existing qualitative framework. It is housed in its own performative framework by which “research outputs and claims to knowledge [are] reported through symbolic language and forms specific to practice” (Haseman 2007b, p.148):

When research findings are presented as performative utterances, there is a double articulation with practice that brings into being what, for want of a better word, it names. The research process inaugurates movement and transformation. It is performative [...] it is itself (Haseman 2007a, p.12).

The strength of this approach is “its capacity to forge new, hybrid or mutant research methods” (Haseman 2007b, p.155), thereby supporting the dynamic approach to knowledge production which Arnold (2007) advocates as the hallmark of practice-led research. To document my investigations, I used a reflective journal to operate as the bridge between artefact and exegesis: “The link between the two is the opportunity to reflect upon the writing, the reading, the thinking, and the process” (Arnold 2007, p.8).

The following points provide a brief outline of the tools I appropriated from qualitative research fields as my scaffolding:

¹³ Here, the visualising of columns of ants accords with escaping lines of flight within the rhizome. While not hallucinatory, I had similar experiences of thought jumping to other plateaus during the writing of specific chapters, something the reader will find I describe as my “ant armies” being on the move.

- ✚ The inquiry cycle (Heron & Reason 2008) of action research involves planning, action, observation and reflection as an ongoing process to facilitate change. This method supported my clarification of the different forms of knowing enacted to bring the inner out at different stages of the process – whether experiential, presentational, propositional or practical.
- ✚ Reflective practice (Schön 1983) involves the use of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action via interactive feedback loops. Graphics throughout this paper demonstrate the value of engaging Schön's approach, where my reflection took place during practice as well as in response to practice.
- ✚ A/r/tography (Springgay, Irwin & Wilson Kind 2005) includes methodological concepts to enact living inquiry as an aesthetic encounter. The authors' description of "openings" (p.905) as temporal-spatial holes which enable "artist/researchers to move within the research text, penetrate deeply, and shift the boundaries of perspective" (p.906), provided a visual aesthetic to my understanding of encounters in the project's becoming landscape. According to their method, I used my reflective journal as a discourse space "characterised by fluidity, the open interplay of elements, and the possibility of infinite re-combinations" (p.906).
- ✚ The idea of writing-as-inquiry or writing-as-data-collection (Colyar 2009; Richardson 1994; Schulz 2006; St. Pierre 1997) was a central proposition I used to bring the inner out in the process of becoming product; a way to honour the voices arising from the collective unconscious without assuming that what percolated up constituted a final artefactual form. Further, it supported my reflective journaling as a "historical record for writing a narrative of the self" (Richardson 1994, p.526), thereby informing the production of this exegesis.
- ✚ Interpretive ethnography and its reflexive practice, as elaborated by Denzin 1997, and Denzin & Lincoln 2002, holds that dialogic processes explicit in the production of research texts are "many sited, open-ended, [...] refus[ing] [...] closure" (Denzin 1997, p.xvii). As both researcher and subject, this qualitative framework assisted me to understand the self-reflexivity which sat squarely within the texts I produced.

✚ Performance ethnography (Conquergood 2002; Donkor 2007), whereby fieldwork itself is considered a sacred performance, was an important supporting structure for my engagement with the sources in the collective unconscious – something I shall interrogate at length in the next chapter.

The need to build scaffolding onto a rhizomatic methodology, using different tools as and when required by the process, was highlighted early in the project when my reflective journal, begun as a simple written document, mutated into various forms due to the multi-dimensionality of the rhizomatic utterances I explored and my attempt to record the images presented.

Nimkulrat (2007) describes her “search for suitable methods for my research [...] eventually to [develop ...] methods to suit my research” (p.3) as an effort to facilitate self-awareness, leading to specific methods to document “the artistic process [as] performed” (p.6). Similarly, my documentation evolved into a framework of symbolic interlocutors to house my embodied knowing. It comprised texts (prose and poetry), photographs, artworks, touchstones to enter the performance space of becoming landscape, creative and exegetical maps, and supporting mandalas. This latter form acted to contain the circles of convergence in their process of becoming as well as to document emergent plateaus as they coalesced – an “approach to data collection, which is both containing and capable of eliciting complex responses” (Parris 2008, p.73). In this regard, I was also informed by Jung’s use of mandalas in his therapeutic praxis to bring unconscious elements to consciousness (Jung 1995, p.415-6).

The methodological framework I have described ensured that, following Vincs (2007), I did not “privilege any one of [the] set of interrogations taking place simultaneously” (p.102); and it empowered me to “value the complexity and rich multiplicity of concerns” (p.102) that were brought up from the rhizome of the collective unconscious into conscious awareness. As a multi-method approach, it embraced interdisciplinarity and proved as robust as it was flexible during my search for understanding across innumerable territories – from continental philosophy and psychology, through literary and cultural studies, geo-politics and history, sociology, cartography and geography, to art and aesthetics, translation studies and theological/mystical perspectives.

Like Deleuze & Guattari, I needed a “toolbox” where the central question was not: “is it true? But: does it work?” (Massumi 2004, p.xv). In the same spirit, I investigated different approaches, built scaffolding on the foundations of my

rhizomatic methodology, and arrived at a toolbox capable of bringing the treasure up and out onto a plane of consistency. With neither beginning nor end, but a multitude of middles, the following chapters discuss this toolbox in action in my production of the new.

Chapter 2: Becoming Landscape

The question explored in this chapter is: How can I access the place where the story is, the inner space from which the treasure needs to be lured out, as well as navigate its territories?

The story behind the vision does not come out to engage with me. I need to go in to where it waits for me. "The story is in the dark" (Atwood 2002, p.176), a rhizome where disparate elements are illuminated in random flashes of insight, and where my task is to make connections between these lines of flight to create an artefact that reveals the story. Firstly, though, I need to be able to access the place where the story waits, and not become lost in the rhizome, submerged in its fecund swamp.

Deleuze holds that "to the extent that events are actualised in us, they wait for us and invite us in" (Deleuze & Boudas 1993, p.78). He quotes the French poet Bousquet's First World War experience: "My wound existed before me, I was born to embody it" (p.78). This mirrors Emerson's perspective that the soul already contains in itself the event that befalls it, "for the event is only the actualising of its thoughts" (Emerson 2003, p.21). For Deleuze, the event is an opportunity for transformation from the moment of its embodiment:

The event is not what occurs [...] it is rather inside what occurs [...] that] is what must be understood, willed and represented [...] to become worthy of what happens to us, and thus to will and release the event, to become the offspring of one's own events, and thereby to be reborn (Deleuze & Boudas 1993, p.79).

It goes without saying that I hold the event of the vision in the Alhambra in this light. I had borne witness to real suffering and in my body's reactions (nausea and stomach cramps) the girl's experience had become instantly housed within me. In Deleuze's reckoning, I was invited in to my own body knowing to will and release the event, but like all transformative work, it was not as easy as his glib call to action would have it.

As previously noted, I carried the image inside me for years, circling its message in countless manoeuvres before the creative energy of desire proved powerful enough to push through the innumerable walls I envisaged closing me off from knowing more. One wall, for example, was the critical dilemma of the

personal and cultural conditioning I brought to the work. I had conceived of the broad outline of a story to make sense of her coming. But how could I, a middle-aged white Anglo female, convey the world of a medieval Moor ritually killed for her beliefs, let alone a young Bosnian Serb, survivor of siege, war and displacement? Neither culture my own, nor life experience – I was, and remain, distinctly aware of the social and cultural constructs which inform my personal and very limited understanding of the world.

Yet via the event of the vision and my growing desire to transform not-knowing into knowing, I came to understand that the place into which I was invited was one of universal dimensions, a sort of everywoman/everyman place where socio-cultural background melts away if we remain open to “the sympathy of all things” (Jung 1995, p.160). Jung’s definition of the collective unconscious in these terms specifically resonated in the context of my critical dilemma. If I was to enter such a space, where the treasure was, where the story was, it needed to be in a spirit of sympathetic engagement, with conditioning shed, and in acknowledgement of the multiplicity of images and further events I would encounter there.

Based on experiences early in the candidature, of inner voices percolating up from the fecund swamp, it was clear that I needed to construct a place within me to engage with the story; an embodied space around the event – like Bousquet’s wound – through which I could enter a conversation with the collective unconscious about the story it housed. Nevertheless, my understanding of this space unfolded very slowly. Intuition supported my early forays into uncharted territory, but returning to surface consciousness to reflect on these experiences enabled further journeys to be made with clearer signposts in place.

It seems I was following in the footsteps of other rhizomatic researchers. The German writer W.G. Sebald described his doctoral experience thus:

[It is] the same way in which [...] a dog runs through a field. If you look at a dog following the advice of his nose, he traverses a patch of land in a completely unplottable manner. And he invariably finds what he’s looking for (Sebald, cited in Schwartz 2007, p.95).

To capture the activity arising from the advice of my sniffy dog's nose, the reflective journal operated as a "plane of intimate exteriority"¹⁴ where I could chart the emergent territory of becoming landscape in a cycle of action and reflection between experiential knowing in the inner space and presentational knowing, data collected and uplifted onto the plane of intimate exteriority¹⁵. Such data included artefactual writing done out of the becoming landscape, unwieldy descriptions of my encounters there, process diagrams, maps and mandalas. With these tools, I traversed the fecund swamp "in a traverse which orders the planes, landscapes, coordinates, but which leaves behind it the chaos, closing on itself like the sea on the wake of a ship" (Nancy 1996, p.112).

Undertaking my engagement in the becoming landscape with such qualitative scaffolding, my aim was not to deny the chaos of the collective unconscious but rather follow Guattari's principle of chaosmosis: "a process of emergence out of what seems to be chaos" (Bifo 2008, p.25). With the construction of an inner space in which to engage the story, as well as a plane of intimate exteriority where I could review captured data, the chaotic variability of unconscious arisings was crosscut and given consistency (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994)¹⁶.

In methodological terms, it meant that I arrived at a sense of rhizomatic order in my traverse of the fecund swamp via practice itself and via reflection on

¹⁴ Drawing on Deleuze & Guattari's idea of the plane of consistency, Zourabichvili (1996) elaborates the concept of a "plane of intimate exteriority" to describe the following phenomenon: "The [inner] landscape does not return me to myself: it involves me in a becoming where the subject is no longer coextensive with itself, where the subjective form is inadequate when faced with the unformedness of becoming" (p.196). In outing the treasure from the inner space, several planes or stages of exteriority were implicated in this project (to be elaborated on in Chapter 4). The first plane is intimate, operating only in a circle of my own subjectivity (to be elaborated on in Chapter 3). This is a classic example of the dynamism of the rhizome as my ant armies move off to other plateaus. Nevertheless I crave the reader's patience to stay with this plateau on its own journey toward becoming.

¹⁵ To clarify how I use these terms from the inquiry cycle of action research, I draw on the definitions proposed by Heron & Reason (2008): "Experiential knowing is by being present with, by direct face-to-face encounter with, a person, place or thing. It is knowing through the immediacy of perceiving, through empathy and resonance. Its product is the quality of the relationship in which it participates, including the quality of being of those in the relationship. Presentational knowing emerges from the encounters of experiential knowing, by intuiting significant form and process in that which is met. Its product reveals this significance through [...] expressive imagery" (p.367).

¹⁶ According to Deleuze & Guattari (1994), "we require just a little order to protect us from chaos. Nothing is more distressing than a thought that escapes itself, than ideas that fly off, that disappear hardly formed, already eroded by forgetfulness" (p.201).

practice in the spirit of Schön (1983). I analysed processes which so often occur, as Schön (1983) also notes, “without conscious articulation” (p.139) and found that action and reflection formed a dialogue¹⁷ in my circle-of-self¹⁸ to fuel a process of becoming conscious which saw “each new experience of reflection-in-action enrich [my] repertoire” (Schön 1983, p.140). I began to understand the dimensions of a becoming landscape constructed as it was explored but still felt the need to develop a synergetic framework to ensure that following cycles of action and reflection would lead to more effective transformation of not-knowing into knowing.

In the previous chapter, I alerted the reader to Conquergood’s (2002) definition of embodied knowing as “the view from the body” (p.146). In another paper he confirms this practice as an “intensely sensuous way of knowing” whereby the “embodied researcher is the instrument [... in] active, participatory [...] fieldwork” (Conquergood 2006, p.352). By reading Deleuze on the rhizomatic line of flight noted above, I understood that the event, my embodied experience of the vision, had invited me in. In a moment of clarity, the rhizomes intersected. The content of the vision, as well as the embodied knowing afforded by my own sensory reaction and intuitive response to it, was the mechanism by which to access the place where the story waited.

Yet the reader is reminded that I felt hamstrung by the social and cultural constructs which could potentially limit my ability to sympathetically engage once in the inner space. Could I overcome the imprisonment of my “cultural consciousness” (Jung 1995, p.275) to work with the story in the spirit it had been gifted? Via embodied knowing of the event of the vision, I began a process of dissolving such constructs. To do this, I added acting and performance tools to extend and deepen my reach.

Throughout, because of the structure of academic writing, this paper may read as a systematic and conscious use of appropriate methodologies and tools at relevant junctures. Again, I am at pains to communicate that this particular instance, like other examples presented, was not a planned course of action but rather an organic arising of various puzzle pieces sourced from different locations to, over time, contribute to sense-making on my arc of becoming.

¹⁷ “The practitioner gives an artistic performance [...] their art [...] a kind of reflection-in-action [...] engag[ing] in a process whose underlying structure is [...] a reflective conversation” (Schön 1983, p.130).

¹⁸ I will interrogate my concept of the circle-of-self in Chapter 3.

In this instance I had been reading about the actor Daniel Day-Lewis' dedication to embodied knowing according to the Stanislavsky method which saw him take a loaded shotgun to Christmas dinner with his young family rather than step out of character. The idea resonated and I investigated the application of an extended process of character immersion as a way to embody lives that were not my own. Theatre techniques drawn from Brook 1998, Daw 2004, Sonenberg 2003, Stanislavsky 2004, and Ten Eyck 2002, informed this work, whereby I assembled sensory mediators and symbolic interlocutors, and rehearsed aspects of my characters' everyday lives to assist in accessing the space as well as my sympathetic engagement once arrived on stage¹⁹.

Just as Joyce Carol Oates (2003) holds that "stories come to us as wraiths requiring precise embodiment" (p.35), so I felt the need for the incarnation of my characters to be as embodied an experience within me as possible. I needed to embed myself in worlds far distant from my personal and cultural conditioning to engage in the space and, indeed, to perform.

Informing my understanding that the inner space constructed around the event of the vision was actually a performance space were not only immersive acting techniques, but Dwight Conquergood's notion of performance ethnography where fieldwork is a sacred performance (Donkor, 2007). Via Conquergood I explored the idea that my engagement in the inner space was analogous to his fieldwork – "ethnography of the ears and heart that reimagines participant-observation as co-performative witnessing" (Conquergood 2002, p.149). This enhanced my understanding of the dimensions of the becoming landscape as well as my role. I was entering a "polyvocal world of speaking subjects" (Madison 2007, p.828) where my sympathetic engagement could be likened to that of a Conquergood-trained ethnographer in co-performative witness of the story.

Conquergood's (2002) position, that "deeply felt insights and revelatory power" arise from an ethnographer's embodied experience of fieldwork where "proximity, not objectivity, becomes an epistemological point of departure and return" (p.149), spoke to my subjective experience. Indeed, proximity was as

¹⁹ By now the reader will have noted my use of metaphoric language drawn from various disciplines to help explain how I experience various aspects of my practice. In this instance, theatrical expressions amply assisted in defining "who" the *Anne* was who performed in the inner space of engagement as well as her role in the performance. An ant army has wandered to Chapter 3 where this shall be elaborated on, while another has moved to Chapter 4 where specific examples will be presented.

much a given as subjectivity. I participated in the performance by virtue of its location within me as well as through my initial act of witness in the Alhambra. Following Conquergood, therefore, my role in the space was to continue my witnessing, but no longer as the passive recipient of a startling vision. Empowered by the desire to know, I actively engaged in co-performance during my fieldwork in the space. By standing in solidarity with my characters therein, humbled and vulnerable in the face of the “community of memory and practice” (Conquergood 2002, p.146) I encountered in the collective unconscious, embodied knowing worked to situate me “inside the breath and pulse of [...] performance as [a] feeling, sensing, being and doing witness” (Madison 2007, p.829).

Based on the fieldwork data brought back from the becoming landscape – presentational knowing offered onto the plane of intimate exteriority²⁰ – I brought my discoveries together into a synergistic framework²¹. This led to my co-performances in the space, and my experiential knowing, increasing in efficiency over the life of the project leading, in turn, to each panel’s further enrichment with the presentational knowing of fieldwork data.

The following model (Figure 6) thus describes three principal techniques I identified to channel embodied knowing into the space of engagement and performance, externally supported by synchronistic events aiding or guiding inquiry. After elaborating on the techniques, I will present several examples of how the model worked to lure the inner out.

²⁰ Heron & Reason (2008) describe this as “shaping what is inchoate into a communicable form” (p.370).

²¹ In this way, the iterative cycles of action and reflection led to the development of propositional knowing and practical knowing for which I aligned with the following definitions: “Propositional knowing about something is intellectual knowing of ideas and theories. Its product is the informative spoken or written statement. Practical knowing is knowing how to do something. Its product is a skill, knack or competence – interpersonal, manual, political, technical, transpersonal, and more – supported by a community of practice” (Heron & Reason 2008, p.367). In my case, a community of practice was provided by interdisciplinary interlocutors – the conversation partners who helped me arrive at such propositional and practical models of how things work (in a Deleuzo-Guattarian sense) based on the experiential and presentational modes of knowing enacted in my “living” inquiry (Reason & Bradbury 2008, p.1).

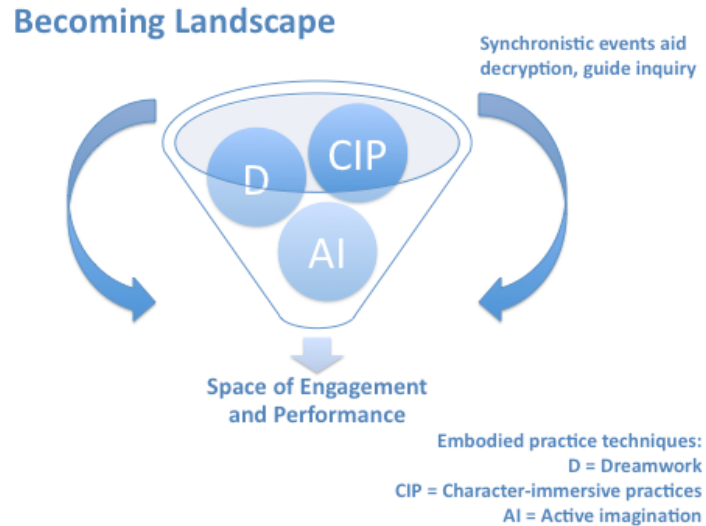


Figure 6: Becoming Landscape

Character-immersive practices entailed research into the worlds of my characters as well as the acting and performance practices alluded to earlier. It involved the assembly of a raft of symbolic mediators by which to formally access the space and included site visits to both Granada and Sarajevo, both of which worked to support other techniques (e.g. Active Imagination).

The extent of desktop research is provided in Appendix 1, together with the citations and glossary which refer to the full triptych, thereby demonstrating that this work of imagination is very much sited in its historical, cultural, literary, religious and geo-political context. I held it to be of critical importance not only to understand the backdrop to events presented in the narrative but also to assure that the situations so-described were valid representations of their respective temporal-spatial contexts.

Dreamwork was a technique which offered instant access to the inner space of the story yet occurred on an ad hoc basis, generally arising if I had missed something in other embodied knowing practices which my sources in the collective unconscious thought necessary to reiterate or reformulate. In Chapter 4, I present a potent example to demonstrate its effect. Mostly I assumed the role of witness in dreamwork, but at times was an actor in the drama²² itself. The messages were always symbolically encoded or encrypted,

²² Following Jung, who described dreaming in theatrical terms, Whitmont & Perera (1989) write that dreaming can be likened to a “multifaceted dramatic presentation, as if one were allowed to witness a

and hence required translation. The language of dreams can be likened to hieroglyphs:

In order to gain access to this level of communication, a combination of artistic, emotional and intuitive attunement and rational logic is necessary. [...] Often it seems as if the dream uses whatever images are meaningful to the dreamer... (Whitmont & Perera 1989, p.27).

Dreamwork therefore requires a witness (Whitmont & Perera 1989, p.27). In this respect, I have seen this as the task of a *translator*, something I will interrogate in the next chapter.

Active Imagination (AI) is the method Jung applied from 1913 till 1930 for what he described as his “confrontation with the unconscious”²³. Not until the publication of *The Red Book (Liber Novus)* in 2009 were the direct results of Jung’s AI journeys – “an extended process of self-experimentation which resulted [...] in a work of psychology in a literary form” (Shamdasani 2009, p.194) – available to a wider readership²⁴. In developing the technique, Jung had previously studied mediums in trance states and conducted experiments with automatic writing. Later he would supplement this with a comparative study of Eastern and Western esoteric practices such as visualisation techniques used in meditation (Shamdasani 2009, p.201-2).

In this project, AI was the technique by which to understand the messages encountered in dreamwork with greater coherence. After quieting the mind, I would consciously re-enter the dream experience – not only observing, but actively participating as a co-performative witness. Informed by Gallbach’s extension of the technique into Body-Active-Imagination (BAI)²⁵, my own corporeal reality was the seat of “profound empathy” (Gallbach 2006, p.195). It

scene from the play of life. The performance would require attendance with full respect, empathy, sensitive intelligence, intuition, and a sense of symbolic expression” (p.5).

²³ Hoerni (2009) writes: “During the experiment, [Jung] developed a technique to ‘get to the bottom of [his] inner processes’, ‘to translate the emotions into images’, and ‘to grasp the fantasies which were stirring ...underground’” (p.viii).

²⁴ Despite offering clear evidence of practice-led research into the rhizome of the collective unconscious, Jung’s concern that the scientific community would not understand the *prima materia* on which his research formulations were based led to the clear separation of esoteric and exoteric writings during his lifetime, with only a small portion of the former self-published and distributed within a close circle of contemporaries (Jung 1995, p.225).

²⁵ Body-Active Imagination (BAI) implies both “embodied imagination as well as an active and conscious body” (Gallbach 2006, p.35).

was not something with which I had difficulty, perhaps because my sensory response to the event of the vision had opened pathways to facilitate access as and when required by the process. Nevertheless, it was only when I understood how this operated that I was able to put it to best effect. In this context, my experience of AI during site visits especially attested to the deepened awareness offered by BAI.

As a method to consciously approach the unconscious, AI involves an “imaginal dialogue, a conversation between [...] the part of ourselves that we consciously recognise as I and [...] an element [...] experienced as not me” (Cwik 1995, p.138). According to Cwik, personifying the contents of the collective unconscious, and bringing them out of an “imaginal psychic space” (Cwik 1995, p.145) to the surface, requires both creative formulation and intellectual understanding²⁶. He describes this psychic “oscillation” as comparable to “two poles of a battery, [...] a current [...] with the potential to generate something new” (Cwik 1995, p.151).

What arises from this process of incarnation, he writes, in a “movement from the world of spirit and idea to the concrete world of matter”, is a “unique product of both the conscious and the unconscious” (Cwik 1995, p.151). Similarly, Chodorow holds that both an “aesthetic tendency toward artistic elaboration” and a “scientific tendency toward intellectual understanding” arise as natural parts of the process (Chodorow 2006, p.225). Although both authors were specifically alluding to the results of AI, their findings resonated for both creative practice and exegetical research in order to produce the new.

The above model includes synchronistic events that interacted with embodied knowing to aid and guide inquiry. Defined as “meaningful coincidences” (Jung 1995, p.419), Jung describes such occurrences as examples of “psychic parallelisms”, acausally related and connected via the “contingency of events” (Jung 1995, p.419). Their purpose is to offer a glimpse of a pre-existent and unknowable psychoid unity split between an outer physical

²⁶ In regard to “personifying” the contents of the collective unconscious, Cwik follows Jung who holds that such contents “always possess a certain degree of autonomy, a separate identity of their own” (Jung 1995, p.211-2). Another description of Cwik’s “imaginal psychic space” is the “threshold state” (Gallbach 2006, p.16) which intersects with conscious perception. Visualising it as such helped to inform my understanding of the topography of the becoming landscape, and bringing such contents to the surface I saw as the role of fieldwork data delivered onto the plane of intimate exteriority. Specifically in the context of AI, Dallet describes this surface plane as one to “externalise what is coming up” and give “outer form to the material” (Dallet 1984, p.178).

phenomenon and inner psychic image – “opposites that can now be recognised [... in] parallel events” (Jaffé 1983, p.152), and by which meaning can be ascertained.

Within my model, such synchronistic events in their external or physical manifestation functioned as support mechanisms for the inner psychic processes used to access the space of the story. Examples included instances of just the right book at just the right time, or the triggering of some sense reaction which catalysed a seemingly random observation into a position of importance in my research. By aiding decryption as well as guiding inquiry, their effect was to funnel the three principal mechanisms of studio practice toward the most cathartic outcome of embodied knowing.

In terms of my desire to know, achieving catharsis is not an outcome to be lightly dismissed. On numerous occasions throughout this project, aspects of the whole may have appeared complete from a rational perspective yet doubts persisted. In such instances, I needed to wait until a synchronistic event, or several, spontaneously arrived to rhizomatically intersect with my, at that stage, intermezzo outcomes. The eventual catharsis which resulted when the chaos of the fecund swamp settled back into itself, after the traverse of my meandering ship, was intensely satisfying and fully embodied.

I shall now provide examples of my encounters within the space of engagement and performance where, following Conquergood, the role of dialogue is crucial in co-performative witnessing. Throughout, I was cognisant of the dangers of appropriation, heeding the counsel of Bhabha, among others, that:

...the transformational value of change lies in the rearticulation, or translation, of elements that are *neither the One [...] nor the Other [...] but something else besides*, which contests the terms and territories of both (Bhabha 1994, p.28).

I have already alerted the reader to the critical dilemma of the personal and cultural conditioning I brought to the project. Yet guiding my actions throughout was the original contract regarding my ethical responsibility to honour the source (see p.4-5). This was Laleima's story, Laleima's treasure. It was my task to help her message re-enter time, and dialogic performance within the becoming landscape was the means by which to achieve it.

Dialogic performance, “a way of having intimate conversation with other people and cultures” (Conquergood 1985, p.10), is a paradoxical process where, following Geertz, “the deeply different can be deeply known without becoming any less different” (Conquergood 1985, p.10). While Conquergood’s experience relates to ethnographic research in deeply different cultural contexts and my particular fieldwork engages conversation partners arising from the collective unconscious, his approach nevertheless resonated. Co-performative witnessing is, by definition, dialogic, a parameter also noted in Cwik’s “imaginal dialogues” (Cwik 1995, p.138), thus implying “*negotiation* rather than *negation*” (Bhabha 1994, p.25). Only through dialogue could I deeply know and understand the story of the deeply other before revealing it in an artefact.

According to the concept of *a/r/tography* (Springgay, Irwin and Wilson Kind 2005), “openings” within the becoming landscape of the story facilitate such dialogue, enabling “ongoing exchange between Self and Other, and between texts and images” (p.906) – “the image/text becomes an active space, echoing and reverberating in communion” (p.906). Salverson (1996) likewise holds that a “gap” needs to exist within the performance space to “hold the circle of knowing open” and to generate “a current that prevents steering a straight line through the story, or arriving at a predetermined destination” (p.184). My becoming desire to know operated as this current in a game of join-the-dots between random lines of flight as I navigated the becoming landscape and its rhizomatic paths, searching out gaps and openings where I could engage in dialogue with the deeply other of the collective unconscious.

In visualising this inner space, giving it a terrain and topography to go with its Deleuzo-Guattarian rhizomatic mapping, I settled on the notion of an intertidal zone, a horizontal plane where I could meet my interlocutors as equal partners with shared intention. Researchers across various disciplines have described similar conceptions of borderlands, in-between zones or liminal spaces where an encounter with difference creates something new. Gallbach (2006) calls the space where BAI encounters take place a “threshold state” (p.16); while Bhabha (1994) talks about the “third space” from which cultural hybridity arises (p.2). In this, he supports Heidegger’s reading of the ancient Greek idea of the boundary as a place where something begins rather than stops: “It is in the emergence of the interstices – the overlap and displacement of domains of difference – that the intersubjective and collective experiences [...] are negotiated” (Bhabha 1994, p.2). Similarly, Bateson (2000) describes the

“interface” (p.138) on the boundary between two active ecosystems as the place where difference “makes a difference” (Bateson, cited in Charlton 2008, p.40). Meanwhile, in Islamic mysticism, the inter-world²⁷ is spoken of as the place “where the body is spiritualised and the spiritual is embodied” (Corbin 1998b, p.125).

Nevertheless, I remained with the imagery of this third space, or inter-world, as an intertidal zone between sea and land, my life on the border enacted in a place of washed sands at the mercy of the waves. At times my becoming landscape opened as an overwhelming surf beach encounter, at others like the wide mudflats of a calm and sheltered bay, or anywhere along the spectrum in-between. Whichever space constellated as a result of embodied practice, my interlocutors approached from the ocean depths wanting their story told, and I from the shore wanting to help them tell. It confirmed that we were equal partners with shared intentions on this plane of consistency.

Where Conquergood’s approach gave me the terminology to access the space as a co-performative witness, reading Irigaray’s *the Way of Love* (2002) helped me navigate the openings in the space, openings of “one to the other” which she calls a “between-two” (Irigaray 2002, p.16)²⁸. When the Twin Towers fell, Laleima said: *There is not enough love in the world*. If my engagement could not be conducted in a spirit of integrity, how could its treasure ever be brought back, wet and dripping, from the intertidal zone onto dry ground? Irigaray holds that an exchange with the profoundly other must be undertaken with love, without condition, because of the difficulty to twin meaning across such an intense divide: “In an exchange between two, meaning quivers and always remains unstable, incomplete, unsettled ...” (Irigaray 2002, p.28)²⁹.

My intertidal zone was a place of shifting sands subject to the constant percolating presence of my sources arising from the collective unconscious of

²⁷ Their word is *Malakut*, meaning the intermediate world of the soul (see Corbin 1998a&b).

²⁸ The reader will find I use the expression “Irigaray’s way of love” in the exegesis to convey the spirit I bring to my engagement in this project. While Irigaray did not explicitly use the expression in the English text beyond the title of the book, the French original encapsulates not only the way of love (*la voie de l’amour*) but also the voice of love (*la voix de l’amour*), thus speaking directly to my dialogic engagement with the deeply other of the collective unconscious.

²⁹ Benjamin similarly counsels a translator to “lovingly and in detail incorporate the original’s mode of signification” (Benjamin 2007, p.78) in his/her *translation*.

the seabed. Like Irigaray, I approached the intimate³⁰, my task to unveil and cultivate a space of co-belonging, of “being-with” (Irigaray 2002, p.48), to create a “context in which love can begin to flourish” (Hooks 2000, p.13), a space in which to “openly and honestly express care, affection, responsibility, respect, commitment, and trust” (Hooks 2000, p.14).

I squidgied my feet far down in the sand, felt the harsh grains grind between my toes, watched the waters advance and recede, and listened for the presence of my interlocutors. Stability was the irreducible core I brought to an embodied landscape where at times the voices could be closer, at others further away. At times I could lose the connection altogether because of a thickening curtain of risen tide or tumultuous seventh wave which swamped understanding. Yet my task was to stay committed to open and ongoing dialogue within the space, ever-respectful of inherent difference, guided by Irigaray’s way of love. Love was the opening itself, the conduit to my becoming landscape, and the means by which I united with the profoundly other. Indeed, my process toward revealing the treasure was built on foundations of love as categorically as Laleima’s initial imperative to action, or the emergence of the artefact in its final form. Like most of my discoveries, however, this developed organically during the life of the project.

To assist the reader with the following examples of my experience of becoming landscape, I shall explain my understanding of the “soundless shades” arising from Virgil’s “kingdom of souls” (Atwood 2002, p.173).

Jung (1995) writes that “the unconscious corresponds to the mythic land of the dead, the land of the ancestors” (p.216) whereby an encounter “gives the dead a chance to manifest themselves” (p.216-7). I have had sporadic experience of this throughout my life, but for the purposes of this project, Laleima’s coming proved the catalyst for a raft of manifestations which I creatively explored in Kisha’s story via the intermezzo performances of a witnessing chorus of dead as well as her dream interlocutors which acted as spirit guides. Of course, the other panels creatively engaged these notions as well, but Kisha’s panel offers the reader greater accessibility to illuminate several of my own encounters.

³⁰ “It is in the intimate of ourselves that a dwelling place must be safeguarded for them, a dwelling place where we unite in us sky and earth, divinities and mortals. [...] where we discover as proper to us the near that lives in us and that remains foreign to us” (Irigaray 2002, p.51).

Jung's first experience of writing out of his inner space resulted in *Septem Sermones* in 1916: "From that time on, the dead have become ever more distinct for me as the voices of the Unanswered, Unresolved, and Unredeemed" (Jung 1995, p.217). In his efforts to confront and understand phenomena arising from the unconscious Jaffe (1989) noted that "the words of Isaiah always came to Jung: 'Your dead will live'" (p.111)³¹.

Laleima was an embodied presence with whom I had lived for many years and nothing she presented in the inner space was discomfiting (cryptically elusive but never disturbing). However to bring her story into today's temporal and spatial reality I had imaginatively constructed a contemporary protagonist suffering through the Bosnian War. It was completely unexpected, therefore, and initially unnerving when the embodied practices I undertook to understand Kisha's world resulted in a chorus of dead spontaneously arising with their own stories to tell. Although Kisha herself was a construct, and remained so, her imaginative creation opened the way to a vast repository of unanswered, unresolved, and unredeemed stories arising from that shocking conflict. In one surprising experience, a voice from the chorus spoke loudly and firmly in my ear in a heavy Eastern European accent: *We want to know what you think of us*. My ethical obligation had extended.

Jaffé holds that:

Courage and inner strength are needed to pay serious attention to the voices and images that crowd into consciousness, to endure the encounter with the numinous figures, to understand them and take their meaning to heart (Jaffé 1983, p.55).³²

I was not aware of these potential dangers until I sent a short piece of artefactual writing to my supervisor with the back-story that it had been set in motion by bile which rose spontaneously to my throat as I was travelling on the tram one day downtown. Flicking through a free newspaper, I had come across

³¹ She goes on: "What does this mean? Jung explained it to me in this way: 'If I conceive of the image-world of the psyche as preliminary to a life after death, I could also imagine that the dead for their part live on [...] not in the literal sense [...] but rather as structuring entities'" (Jaffé 1989, p.111).

³² Similarly Cwik (1995) recognises, in regard to AI processes, the need for a "high degree of ego-stability: the biggest danger is [...] the activation of unconscious contents" (p.155). To clarify, he writes: "The ego must be able to function in two ways: it needs to be able to lessen its control in order to admit unconscious contents [...] and it needs to demonstrate an organising ability that establishes interrelationships and connections among psychic material" (p.155).

a snapshot of a random war zone and was instantly transferred to the eyewitness accounts I had been researching from the Siege of Sarajevo. My gut twisted in pain and bile rose in red-hot anger at seeming commuter-indifference to the suffering spelt out in the pages of a throwaway. Later I could taste the bitterness of the words I translated out of the space to which my embodied knowing had taken me.

My supervisor read my frenzied writing, the pain behind the words, and suggested I take care. By that time, however, I was well removed from the space and was reflectively mapping how my ego-stability supported such experiences without being overwhelmed. Embodied practice took me into character, but like any actor, I needed to clarify the self-protective mechanisms which enabled me to step out and away from character, to disengage the intertidal zone. Several concurrent activities provided this discrete distance:

- ✚ Crosscutting my artefactual work with reflective journaling and exegetical investigations was a valuable, though not always consciously undertaken, mechanism. In the midst of some especially heavy creative writing or research, for example, a random trigger would channel my desire to know down a different rhizomatic line of flight, acting like a sluice gate at a dam wall to relieve the build up of pressure.
- ✚ In parallel to Kisha's story, I undertook research into Byzantium and iconography for panel two which also helped me understand the Orthodox faith which sustained Kisha's grandmother. As a by-product of changing between vastly contrary temporal-spatial realities, the safety switch on the unresolved stories of my chorus of dead would be tripped.
- ✚ Encircling the project was a phenomenon I call *Anne World*, my daily reality of full-time mothering. Not only were there defined spaces to be negotiated for my work but defined times, especially when several days were required for concerted periods of performance in the intertidal zone (in Chapter 4 I describe one such occasion). In between, however, the necessity to negotiate the *Anne World*-intersect with a few minutes notice was a given. My own embeddedness in the material space of my family offered the foundation for the ego-stability³³ I brought to my

³³ In this context, Jung (1995) writes: "It was most essential for me to have a normal life in the real world as a counterpoise to that strange inner world. My family and my profession remained the base to which I could always return, assuring me that I was an actually existing, ordinary person [...] these were the

engagement with the souls of the dead unleashed by Kisha's construction.

WG Sebald holds that "you establish a presence in another life through emotional identification" (Sebald, cited in Schwartz 2007, p.42). In researching the life of a 16th century painter, for example, he describes that his own desire to know (what he calls a 'lacunae of ignorance') coupled with various facts could be "sufficient somehow for me to move in this territory and to look around there and to feel, after a while, quite at home" (Sebald, cited in Schwartz 2007, p.42).

Likewise beginning to feel quite at home in a becoming landscape populated by various interlocutors, the dilemma of cultural consciousness which had so ravaged my initial period of inquiry faded. The site visits to Granada and Sarajevo proved instrumental to deepening my experience of the intertidal zone, situating my dead within their own temporal-spatial realities. These occasions involved extracting my feet from the sand, squelching further down to the low tide mark, squidgying them in again and announcing: "I am here. I have come. Now show me" (Gambling 2011b, journal entry 12/11/08).

I was especially nervous about Granada, but meaningful coincidence played its part. The hammam, in which I had conclusively sited the vision, was closed for renovation. Psychically freed from memory, I was open to the possibility of co-performative witness in other locations, and found myself more often in AI than out. Tourist crowds melted as the inner landscape was engaged and dialogues between self and other arose:

We sit together in Aisha's Mirador, on cushions by the arches. The burble of water from the patio garden quiets our thoughts, orange and myrtle branches reach in through open windows. Beyond is the kingdom of your brother and Lord. We sit, tilework at our backs, stained glass in the domed ceiling above, a pot of mint tea to share. The wind is high risen on a day in late autumn. The cypresses are flirting, I say. See how the wind bows them deep in a dance of love? Their fruits will fall all the faster, you reply. I laugh. Let it not be on fallow ground! You blush (Gambling 2011b, journal entry 13/11/08).

actualities which made demands upon me and proved to me again and again that I really existed, that I was not a blank page whirling about in the winds of the spirit" (p.214).

Such an example is an opening in the becoming landscape of the rhizome described by Springgay, Irwin & Wilson Kind (2005, p.906) where co-performative utterance reverberates with communion between self and other. Yet my most potent experience occurred beyond the scope of such “imaginal dialogues” (Cwik 1995, p.138). Co-performance, suddenly, unexpectedly, moved into co-production when I became the instrument for another’s witness. My experience of the active space of “image/text” (Springgay, Irwin & Wilson Kind 2005, p.906) expanded to include words “formed in my understanding” (Watkins & Jenkins 2006, p.78) – words spoken to Laleima herself and for which I took dictation. It resulted in a text in the second-person form which I have included as Appendix 2.

It was clear to me that this event was not conducted in the realm of personal imagination. The uprising of text as “words formed” was preceded by clear sensory signals – palpating heart, quickened breath, blurred vision, unchecked tears – that I was in the presence of an otherworldly higher witness, a “subtle substance” (Corbin 1998a, p.4) which had entered the performance space to mediate a dialogue neither Laleima nor I could have begun. Under a seeming cone of silence I felt myself exit time, tugged by a frozen moment to a space seven centuries past. As awareness of my task struck, the writing became swift and frantic, penning content which Laleima could not have coherently explained to me, being only a small child at the time. Indeed it is possible she had no clear or present memory of it in any case. Embodied knowing was the instrument and my writing the “current” (Salverson 1996, p.184) tasked with joining different dimensions, and to connect Laleima with a higher witness to her own past.

I had been entrusted to provide a link or bridge in the story³⁴, to enliven gaps in the rhizome streamed by a more knowing entity of the inter-world’s “spiritual topography” (Corbin 1998a, p.33), “a dimension in which meanings are embodied as images” (Helminski 2000, p.26) and accessed “through an awakened and purified heart” (Helminski 2000, p.29). The reach of my embodied knowing by this stage, as well as the ethical position I brought to the project, were catalysing mechanisms toward this outcome. Yet the foundation

³⁴ Reflecting on this AI event according to action research tools gave me the words (and diagrammatic drawings) with which I could begin conceptualising my experience of becoming product – it goes without saying that an ant army has wandered off to that particular chapter.

stone was love, the way of love Irigaray describes and Bell Hooks endorses.³⁵ Love made manifest when I committed to honour Laleima's message.

Previously I alluded to Conquergood's embodied researcher as the instrument of an ethnography of both the ear and heart (Conquergood 2002, p.149). In Kisha's first intermezzo the chorus of dead implore the story's readers to "listen closely, with a different ear, not the ear of the senses but the ear of the heart" (Gambling 2011a, p.305). Likewise, my practice to bring the inner out required that I listen not only to the voices arising from the collective unconscious in my ear, but also to trust that whenever my heart spoke, I heeded the intuitive modulations of its voice especially closely.

I see the heart as Irigaray's "source of the intimate" (Irigaray 2002, p.44), and the idea that it operates as a trans-sensory organ of perception and knowledge is common across mystic traditions (Underhill 1995, p.71). In this respect, the words soul and heart are often used interchangeably to describe a location which acts as both border and mediator between sensual and spiritual knowing. For the purposes of this exegesis, I will retain the word heart as signifier for the locum of access whereby a higher witness may enter my becoming landscape, its trans-sensory knowing taking my embodied practices to another level. Hence, while immersive sensory engagement continued to provide regular entry to the inner space of performance, irregular engagement facilitated by a perceptive heart offered deeper experiences to transform not-knowing into knowing. In the process, I found that:

The relation with the other cannot exist without [a] prior gesture of reciprocal recognition. A gesture that cannot be simply formal but will relate to a real content corresponding to the Being of the other, and moreover of oneself (Irigaray 2002, p.88).

Reciprocal recognition occurred with Laleima when she spoke to me directly on September 11, 2001. Yet for Kisha's story I was led on a completely different path. The reader's attention is therefore drawn to Appendix 3 which contains the report of dreamwork more than a year before the site visit to Sarajevo in June 2010. At that stage I had given little thought to the content of

³⁵ The definition of love I use and which, by coincidence, Bell Hooks also cites, is by Peck: "The will to extend one's self for the purpose of nurturing one's own or another's spiritual growth" (Peck 1978, p.69). "Love is as love does [...] namely, both an intention and an action. [...] We do not have to love. We choose to love" (Peck 1978, p.71).

Kisha's story beyond a Muslim lover called Samir and an Orthodox icon belonging to her devout grandmother. In the report I recount the gesture of reciprocal recognition received in the dream from a figure which represented Samir. My engagement with him in the dream was sensory. Further, he showed me a ring he wore. Our relation had been established, his gesture providing the opening to the becoming landscape of Kisha's world.

On my last day of research in Sarajevo, and in consideration of the symbolic mediators I assemble to bring me into the space of performance, I sought a souvenir of the trip to embody the understanding arising from the visit. Something small, tangible – I mentioned jewellery or a piece of art as examples to a woman I met. As an artist herself, she knew the locally-respected artisans, and we arrived at a jeweller's workshop where replicas of archaeological finds in the National Museum were crafted. He brought out a tray. On it was Samir's ring, the one from the dream now more than a year past. It was literally a knee-buckling moment.

I tried it on, but it was huge, a 14th century nobleman's ring overwhelmed by a single quartz crystal stone. Disappointment keen, confused I had misread the signs from the dream, I heard the jeweller say: "It has a sister" (Gambling 2011b, journal entry 06/06/10). He passed me another ring in the same design but housing a more delicate stone. I slipped it onto my finger. It was a perfect fit. At that moment I understood the ring to be the container for his wisdom; his ring too overwhelming, but its sister the right size for Kisha's becoming landscape.

I was to experience the first current coursing through the "gap" (Salverson 1996, p.184) a week after returning from Sarajevo when Samir arrived as insistent "words formed in my understanding" (Watkins & Jenkins 2006, p.78), dictating a letter he wanted written to Kisha. I consciously entered an AI, his letter flowed effortlessly and complete, his catharsis became mine. Once more I had acted as the conduit to a knowing beyond co-performative witness, where co-production, on behalf of one who had graced me with reciprocal recognition, took place.

In a study of writers' processes, Ben-Shir (2007) observes similar phenomena where channelling is implied. In brief, she claims a twinning of a writer's usually separate identity creation processes (which she labelled Me) and identity revelation or discovery processes (for her, the higher I). Her research demonstrates that a writer's Me can be negated to channel the revelatory I:

Most interviewees recalled the ability to reach a passive acceptance as essential to certain stages of the creative process, some going as far as naming it a nullification of self... (Ben-Shir 2007, p.191).

Respondents experienced such phenomena as: “I have become void within [...] I am not inside [...] All is spirit [...]” (D.Z., cited in Ben-Shir 2007, p.191). “I am a point of drainage, a place into which many experiences are channeled” (S.J., cited in Ben-Shir 2007, p.192).

Ben-Shir acknowledges that such descriptions correspond to the concept of “flow” described by Csikszentmihalyi (1996) which interprets authentic experience, derived “from activities that are found both meaningful and pleasurable” (Ben-Shir 2007, p.191), in emotional-cognitive terms. Nevertheless, she seeks to emphasise a transcendental dimension to the experiences described by her interviewees:

[...] by vacating herself entirely into the characters and situations she creates in her work she experiences a spiritual union with the objects of which she tells [...]

[...] only by transcending the limiting boundaries of the ‘Me’, can the aesthetic-mystical experience occur [...] (Ben-Shir 2007, p.192).

Here she sees parallels with Jung’s (1995) theory of individuation (p.415) but as this would take me along a vastly different line of flight, I will simply note Ben-Shir’s (2007) conclusion that writing is a “way of being” (p.199), a notion that supports Colyar’s (2009) findings that “writing is a symbolic system which articulates what we know, but it is also a tool whereby we come to these understandings” (p.422).

Being the channel for Samir not only satisfied his desire to tell, but also as a way of inquiry satisfied my desire to know. Through this experience, I progressed to a more concrete realisation of the purpose of my writing as a way to out the treasure within. Suffice it to say that my growing understanding of becoming landscape assisted my performance within the space as much as the fieldwork data presented onto the plane of intimate exteriority. Becoming conscious is therefore the subject of our next chapter.

Chapter 3: Becoming Conscious

Similar to the process documented in the previous chapter, where I separated the different techniques of embodied practice in order to understand how each offered the opportunity to transform not-knowing into knowing, my becoming conscious was also a case of deconstructing the various elements of engagement and performance to reflect on their mechanisms in action. I therefore formulated the specific question to be interrogated as: How do I engage the other both within and out of the inner space of performance in order to realise a fully externalised text? To begin this particular rhizomatic journey, I will define the roles and responsibilities of the *Anne* who engages before considering the practicalities of her engagement.

Madison (2006) holds that co-performance is “being and doing with the other in intersubjective and interpersonal engagement” (p.349). Gallbach (2006) speaks of the “profound empathy” (p.195) needed to fully engage with the other. By reading Conquergood’s various writings I understand that an “intensely sensuous way of knowing” (Conquergood 2006 p.352) is the means toward “deeply felt insights and revelatory power” (Conquergood 2002, p.149). The value of immersive subjective experience is beyond dispute in the eyes of these researchers and, in its own way, my project bears out their findings. My engagement with the other through embodied knowing reflects Irigaray’s (2002) call that it be “made of our flesh, made of our heart, and not only of words” (p.154).

Nevertheless, I sought a word to describe this knowing within the inner space, settling on the one which spontaneously arose at the time of my act of witness in the Alhambra—compassion. As I embodied her pain, I literally suffered with the girl. Coupled with the desire to know, compassion propelled me to act, to somehow alleviate her suffering and by extension my own. After my initial gut reaction to the message of *miscarriage or abortion gone wrong*,

the suffering shifted subtly to my heart where it remained as a prolonged ache until the productive energy of desire could lure the inner out³⁶.

My co-performance within the space of the story was nothing less than one of compassionate witness. My heart was the trans-sensory organ of perception which underlay the full range of sensory stimuli integral to manifest embodied practice. Via immersive experience in the intertidal zone, *Anne-as-compassionate-witness* was required to lay the groundwork, in her relation with the other, to bring the treasure up and out onto an external plane. Following Irigaray (2002), for me this meant operating in a:

...dimension of ourselves where Being still quivers, identity is never definitely constituted, nor defined beforehand. It is elaborated in relation-with, each one giving to the other and receiving from the other what is necessary for becoming (Irigaray 2002, p. 93).

Other researchers may find it unnecessary to separate their I-subject-researcher into discrete yet interlinked functions. However in order to understand my own experience of subjectivity, as well as the dynamics between inner space and outer plane, deconstructing the elemental factors of my practice proved crucial to becoming conscious of how things worked. For example, I became aware quite early in the project that the experiential knowing of my *compassionate witness* within the inner space was too powerful, too raw an engagement to have any chance of coherent outputs onto the plane of intimate exteriority. My fieldwork data had to come from a different *Anne*.

Iterative cycles of action and reflection revealed that, following the act of witness within the space of the story, an act of translation took place to transfer the results of my engagement out. As data, it took the form of performative writing by which *Anne-as-translator* mediated the experience of the *compassionate witness* in text. The symbolic imagery and “words formed in my

³⁶ From the Latin *to suffer with*, a bald dictionary definition of compassion – “feeling of sorrow or pity for the sufferings or misfortunes of another” (Macquarie 3rd edition 2001) – little describes its place as the highest of virtues, “the hallmark of all the major religions formed in the Axial Age” (Armstrong 1999, p.57), and an expression of divine love (see Corbin 1998a&b). Loving another as oneself, without condition – indeed, to take on another’s suffering as one’s own speaks to this unconditional care – was known in pre-modern English as “charity” (Armstrong 1999, p.460; Huxley 2009, p.82) and the heart considered the organ of love. Also described as mother-love, the rendering of a specific type of mother-of-God icon, *Kardiotissa* (of the heart), intends to convey the depth of such compassion (see Cormack 2000).

understanding” (Watkins & Jenkins 2006, p.78), as well as the embodied knowing which contextualised their appearance, were thus decrypted in the spirit of Richardson’s (1994) “I write in order to learn something that I didn’t know before I wrote it” (p.517)³⁷. The act of translation between experiential knowing and presentational knowing therefore provided a discrete distance from the intensity of the *compassionate witness’s* core heart-knowing. Yet it was not the task of the *translator* to engage with the data so-presented on the plane of intimate exteriority. Her function was simply to operate as the critical channel between inner space and outer plane. Once delivered, the data entered the responsibility of a third *Anne* whose strength was head-knowing.

Anne-as-purposeful-witness’s role was two-fold and integral to the actualisation of the twin practice-led research outcomes. She functioned as the *researcher*, who documented and reflected on the process of preparing the exegesis; and as the creative *artisan* required to craft a coherent artefact from the performative writing of the *translator*. Along the way, the *artisan* found that to realise a coherent artefact, one which met both source and reader needs, an iterative writing process involving much negotiation with a plethora of voices was required. I shall elaborate on this in Chapter 4. To stay with the current plateau, however, I will interrogate the I-subject-researcher of *Anne* and what occurred within her circle-of-self, a turntable principally involving the inner space of performance and the outer plane of intimate exteriority. This process extended onto a plane of more public exteriority once external feedback was sought.

While Zourabichvili’s (1996) reflections on rhizomatic inquiry helped me conceptualise the dimensions of my becoming landscape in the last chapter, his same words resonate equally for my experience of becoming conscious:

The [inner] landscape does not return me to myself: it involves me in a becoming where the subject is no longer coextensive with itself, where the subjective form is inadequate when faced with the unformedness of becoming (Zourabichvili 1996, p.196).

³⁷ Indeed, Richardson (1994) describes it as “a way of knowing, [...] of discovery and analysis” (p.516). Further, Spry (2001) describes such performative utterances as “felt-texts” or “sensed-texts” which arise from “a way of understanding the intersections of self, other, and context passionately and reflexively” (p.716).

By defining the different roles and responsibilities operating in and out of the space of performance and engagement, I began to understand that my subjectivity was inadequate unless conceived as a multi-vocal chorus.



Figure 7: The Three Faces of Anne

Figure 7 highlights that these roles were never fully separate, their borders fluid and shifting. Their voices overlapped (cha)osmotically, ebbing and flowing not only between the activities of the inner space and the outer plane of intimate exteriority, but also actively engaging each other in the latter space to negotiate the words, images and symbols which populated the *translator's* fieldwork data. Although it was the responsibility of one to bring these offerings to the table, each of the three had a valid opinion about the results of the *compassionate witness's* embodied knowing. There were also the opinions of the deeply other to consider. On an ongoing basis, Laleima and her fellow guides proved far from reluctant to proffer additional inputs via the *compassionate witness* if they held that my becoming product did not successfully integrate their wisdoms³⁸. In becoming conscious, it was not enough to reflect on the nature of my subjectivity and define the roles which took account of different project tasks, it was also necessary to document these experiences thoroughly in an ongoing cycle of embodied action and reflection. For example, although I initially observed a uni-directional activity flow from *compassionate witness* to *translator* and through to *purposeful witness*, over time I perceived that the products

³⁸ To head off a wandering ant army, suffice it to note that examples supporting this insight will be presented in the next chapter.

arising from said process involved multi-directional flows as described in the following graphic (Figure 8). By deconstructing the tasks of each *Anne* within her designated space, I arrived at an understanding of process which, over time, functioned to liberate its own construction. While each *Anne* remained responsible for her own task, their mutuality of intention, of desire to know, bound these three faces ever tighter as knowing itself spiralled to higher planes in a dynamic exchange between inner and outer.³⁹

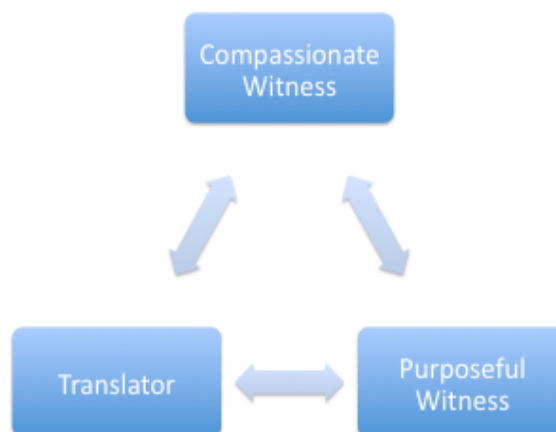


Figure 8: Cycles of Embodied Action and Reflection

For Sermijn, Devlieger & Loots (2008), recognising the self as multiple and multi-voiced is critical to fully engage rhizomatic inquiry and embrace the product actualised. They hold that recognising the “ambiguity between the multiple/always shifting I and the I that seeks for coherence” (p.643) is a given when “we are within the rhizomatic story as part of the dynamic construction process” (p.639). As the I who sought coherence, my *purposeful witness* had a particularly arduous task, especially as her role encompassed two distinct processes: intellectual research leading to an exegetical product; and artisanal crafting leading to a creative artefact.

I will now elaborate on my experience of each *Anne*.

The previous chapter essentially documents the practices I undertook to inhabit the *compassionate witness* who, in turn, inhabited the space of performance and engagement. Becoming conscious of this role, and its relationship to the other two, was fully sealed by the experiences which shape shifted co-performance into co-production – the instances where I acted as a

³⁹ Relevant examples of this process in action will be presented in the next chapter.

conduit to link different parts of the rhizome⁴⁰. In terms of the graphic (Figure 8), these irregular happenings saw the activities of all three *Annes* converge to a point where my circle-of-self seemed to operate on a pinhead. Yet even at the regular level of relation between *compassionate witness* and deeply other, my embodied knowing led me to understand over time that “the foreigner is within me, hence we are all foreigners. If I am a foreigner, there are no foreigners [...] solidarity is founded on the consciousness of the unconscious” (Kristeva 1991, p.192).

With embodied knowing as the foundation for my relational understanding, I learnt to recognise that sensory reactions always prefaced conscious awareness of the compassionate witnessing state. In this respect, I was informed by William James’ theory of emotional cognition whereby “information coming into the brain through sensory receptors” (Davidson 2006, p.143) is decoded and interpreted to activate emotion:

As James once said, we don’t see a bear and then experience fear and then run. Instead, we see the bear, start running and feel our heart beating, and then feel fear, which arises from our conscious perception of the bodily changes (Davidson 2006, p.143).

This theory helped me understand that the spontaneous sensory reactions generated through my embodied knowing fuelled my experience of *compassionate witness* and not the other way round. I saw Laleima and felt her pain in my body before the tragedy of her situation entered my consciousness. Similarly, I saw the image of a random war zone in a newspaper on the tram and tasted bile in my mouth before registering my anger at commuter indifference.

Fully immersed in such a relational experience of embodied knowing, in “solidarity” (Kristeva 1991, p.192) with the various voices I encountered, I nevertheless found that the enactment of *compassionate witness* played out differently depending on the character or other involved. By way of example, with Kisha an imaginal construct, I felt my *compassionate witness* to be like that of a friend or sister. She was not inside me like Laleima. My body-knowing was experienced as a gliding alongside, about a millimetre or so from her left elbow,

⁴⁰ See Chapter 2, pp.36-40, and Appendices 2&3 for the documentation of these experiences.

a centimetre or so above the ground, observing her compassionately like an imaginary friend. A “mise-en-scène of feeling-understanding-knowing” (Conquergood 2002, p.149) placed me firmly in the context of her created life through the gap opened by reciprocal recognition in the Samir dream⁴¹, a gap which facilitated direct engagement with the souls of the dead.

Performative writing was the task of the *translator*. Using the artefactual tools of language, she brought the inner world of the story out onto the plane of intimate exteriority. To make sense of what occurred in the intertidal zone, the *translator* acted as witness of the *witness*: “The voice is foreign to me, I have to sit and wait for clarity, for it to ripen to a point where I can harvest the fruit” (Gambling 2011b, journal entry 27/11/09). This note captures the extent and responsibility of the task. While using the skills of language, a translator is required to look beyond language to approach the essence, the intent, of the original text – the text in this instance being the *compassionate witness’s* experiences of embodied co-performance.

Bassnett & Lefevere (1998) hold that translation must be approached dialogically – it is “a different kind of writerly task” following on from “the primary task of reading” (p.66). Reading the co-performance of the intertidal zone in her witness of the *witness*, taking note of its context against prior performance events and readings, dialoguing with the *witness* on her return from deep space – all this assisted my *translator* to move beyond to the *intentio*, the irreducible core, the “pure” which Benjamin urges us to seek:

It is the task of the translator to release in his own language the pure language which is under the spell of another, to liberate the language imprisoned in a work in his re-creation of the work (Benjamin 2007a, p.80).

My experience of the contents of the collective unconscious is that they present in a language (image, text and other sensory offerings) that is foreign – symbolic, at times allegorical, persistently metaphorical, a type of no-language which requires decoding and decryption. My personal reading is not unusual. Mattoon (2006) writes that the language of the unconscious:

[...] can be likened to an extinct language that has been rediscovered. [...] When modern scholars discovered writing in ancient Egyptian, they used

⁴¹ See Chapter 2, p.38-39, and Appendix 3.

the entire context and the usage of each character to identify letters and words, then translated texts (Mattoon 2006, p.251).

Benjamin (2007a) likewise holds that:

[...] when translating from a language very remote from his own [the translator] must go back to the primal elements of language itself and penetrate to the point where work, image and tone converge (Benjamin 2007a, p.81).

In becoming conscious, I therefore needed to penetrate the culture of the collective unconscious, the lyricism of its offerings, and the way it spoke. My *translator* was required to understand the modulations of voice, context and body language which backgrounded the experiences of the *compassionate witness*, and needed to learn to read the aura, or spirit, which infused the words spoken, images encountered, or embodied reactions noted in the *witness's* co-performance. In this task, she was helped by my *Anne World* life of living in a foreign culture and language environment, where multilingual conversations were regular events at the dinner table and where I worked with translations in my previous profession. The embodied knowing of *Anne World* events thus sensitised my *translator* to the qualities she needed to bring to her own task.

Throughout, the text which inspired and underpinned my work was Walter Benjamin's (2007a) *The Task of the Translator*, a seminal and oft-quoted essay across disciplines in which, Derrida (1985) notes: "the word truth appears more than once" (p.190). The desire to know such truth as could be revealed by translation propelled my *translator* to seek the core which "resists the translation it attracts" (Derrida 1985, p.195), to render in my own writing the:

[...] echo of the original. [...] Translation does not find itself in the centre of the language forest but on the outside facing the wooded ridge; it calls into it without entering, aiming at that single spot where the echo is able to give, in its own language, the reverberation of the work in the alien one (Benjamin 2007a, p.76).

Benjamin's words clarified my task and confirmed its location. My *translator* did not enter the intertidal zone but waited for the echo offered by the *compassionate witness*. Further, in his description of translation as providing

the original text with an “afterlife”⁴², I came to understand what my work meant to the voices of the unconscious. It was the opportunity for their message to live again by writing it into existence⁴³, writing which was not a replica of the original but a rendering in my own tongue to ensure its afterlife:

The language of a translation can – in fact, must – let itself go, so that it gives voice to the *intentio* of the original not as reproduction but as harmony. [...] A real translation is transparent; it does not cover the original, does not block its light, but allows the pure language, as though reinforced by its own medium, to shine upon the original all the more fully (Benjamin 2007a, p.79).

In this context, Derrida (1985) observes that a translation must penetrate the “always intact, the intangible, the untouchable” (p.191). Bhabha (1994) holds that the location of such work is a “third space” which embraces the “liminality of translation, the element of resistance in the process of transformation” (p.224). The space of the untranslatable is precisely the space of translation, a space of “*neither the one nor the other* [...] *negotiation* rather than *negation*” (Bhabha 1994, p.25). This is Benjamin’s (2007a) “outside facing the wooded ridge” (p.76), a precarious position for my *translator*, a slim edge from which she can neither topple over into the work of *compassionate witness*, nor that of *purposeful witness* in her role as creative *artisan*. Neither one nor the other, she must negotiate in between two language spaces, in between inner and outer worlds⁴⁴.

⁴² “No translation would be possible if in its ultimate essence it strove for likeness to the original. For in its afterlife – which could not be called that if it were not a transformation and a renewal of something living – the original undergoes a change” (Benjamin 2007, p.73).

⁴³ Chapter 5 looks at this issue in more detail.

⁴⁴ In interview with Armstrong, one translator described her experience thus: “I think the mind lives in a little space between the two languages for a moment. With luck you then come down on the right side in your own language. There’s a little no man’s land between the languages where nothing but the meaning and the feel of it exists. For a minute you inhabit it” (Bell, cited in Armstrong 2009, p.18). Another translator described the phenomenon to Armstrong in this way: “The translator’s dual vision is of one world perceived through the instrument of two languages. The best translations bring these two views together in a single stereoscopic version, in which it is the slight differences, the blurry areas, the imperfections, that give the view its depth, its third dimension” (Wilson, cited in Armstrong 2009, p.20).

In Eco's (2001) many experiences of translating and being translated, he arrives at the following proposition: "Translating is not only connected with linguistic competence, but with intertextual, psychological and narrative competence" (p.13). We decide how to translate, he suggests, "not on the basis of the dictionary, but on the basis of the whole history of two literatures" (p.13). With no dictionary to help me but a recent history of becoming conscious, my *translator* approached her task, as Benjanim (2007a) suggests, "lovingly and in detail" (p.78), to render what was offered by the *compassionate witness's* experience onto the plane of intimate exteriority.

"When they share what they want written, this then is what emerges – as if a mystical, detached, far-off voice is calling out the sermon of the day" (Gambling 2011b, journal entry 27/11/09). This note comments on the language in which the writing of my *translator* emerged; writing which bore little resemblance to the utterances of my *artisan* and her years of craft experience.. It confounded and frustrated the translation process as much as the *artisan's* task to follow. Yet once more I was not alone. In Jung's AI self-experiments, he notes similar difficulties to express in writing that which does not give itself up easily, or at all, to expression:

I wrote down the fantasies as well as I could [...] But I was able to do this only in clumsy language [...] 'high-flown language' [...] Archetypes speak the language of high rhetoric, even of bombast (Jung 1995, p.202).

As a scientist, Jung found the style embarrassing; as an aesthete, I am a little more accommodating. Nevertheless, his experience resonated with my difficulties. Jung commented: "I had no choice but to write everything down in the style selected by the unconscious itself" (Jung 1995, p.202). It was a language foreign to him, "of a different sensitivity" (Kyburz, Peck & Shamdasani 2009, p.223).

As previously noted in this paper, Jung's *Red Book* remained unpublished until recently. But the experience of writing the text of *Septem Sermones* provides ample evidence of such archaic rhetoric. Jung recalls, for example, that the dead cried out to him in chorus: "We have come back from Jerusalem where we found not what we sought" (Jung 1995, p.216).

To honour the source, Jung not only self-published this text in the form in which it was gifted into his consciousness, he also attributed it to an ancient

Gnostic teacher – “Basilides in Alexandria, the City where the East toucheth the West” (Jung 1995, p.215)⁴⁵. In this way, he acknowledged that while such language may have been channelled through him it did not arise from his own self. He lamented: “What a trouble it was, until I could read this symbolic language, so much superior to my dull conscious mind” (Jung, cited in Shamdasani 2009, p.215).

At this point my *translator* defers to *Anne-as-purposeful-witness* as the owner of a dull conscious mind, impacted moreover by her dual tasks as intellectual *researcher* and creative *artisan*.

Just as the material space of *Anne World* kept the *compassionate witness* sane during the project, the logic and rationality of the *researcher* in her emergent process of reflection and analysis kept the research process in hand. This would not have been the case if she had not opened to the organic arising of methodology in an alpine garden. With the initial concept embraced, however, she worked to settle its rhizomatic becoming into a functional framework to catalyse project chaos into coherent outcome, thereby confirming the knowledge-producing value of practice-led research. Further, the benefits of a *researcher’s* head-knowing cannot be overstated. It provided a worthy counterpoint to heart-knowing and assisted beyond measure in negotiations which the *artisan* – the other half of her dual self – needed to conduct with her other two faces.

If the *translator* is witness of the *witness*, the *artisan* is translator of the *translator*. It was her task to review the fieldwork data presented onto the plane of intimate exteriority; to shape and craft the offerings into the becoming product of a creative artefact. In this, she negotiated with her other two faces about the results of her craftwork, where the test of authenticity and ethical, contractual obligation was applied to her texts on behalf of the original sources in the collective unconscious. Her craftwork thus highlighted practical issues which needed to be solved, such as:

- ✚ If the voices present in clumsy language in the first iteration of fieldwork data, how much can the *artisan* craft the text in terms of re-writing, re-shaping, cutting and pasting to help reader (end-user) understanding without diminishing the spirit which infuses the original (source)?

⁴⁵ This particular ant army has wandered off to Chapter 5.

- ✚ Will there be a point at which the assent of the source to share its stories beyond a circle-of-self is withheld if the *artisan* re-crafts too vigorously?
- ✚ Should the *artisan* heed the dictates of a 21st century commercial publishing market or trust the journalistic oath of her professional craft background to honour the source and share its messages in good faith? And, is this oath any less valid than the *compassionate witness's* original contract with the souls of the dead, or the *translator's* commitment to undertake her task lovingly?

These critical questions impacted on decisions taken by my *artisan* over the course of the project – some will be approached in the next chapter, the remainder in Chapter 5. Throughout, Forster's (2005) dictum helped her become conscious of the parameters of her task: "The reader must sit down alone and struggle with the writer" (p.31). Nevertheless, as translator of the *translator*, I was drawn to seek further guidance from texts about translation. Eco's (2001) *Experiences in Translation* proved pivotal to my understanding in this regard⁴⁶.

Eco (2001) is convinced that whatever decisions a translator (*artisan*) makes, he/she must respect the 'macro-proposition' of the text, what he calls the 'deep' story: "In order to preserve a 'deep' story, the translator is sometimes entitled to change the 'surface' one" (p.31). Yet, he says, such changes should only occur via negotiation with the text's writer⁴⁷. He describes instances where he assists translators of his own work to ensure the deep story is preserved. The writer thus acts as a "co-translator" (Eco 2001, p.62), dialoguing with the translator about respective cultural and literary nuances in order to agree a solution.

In my project, this equated to negotiations undertaken within the circle-of-self according to the multi-directional flows needed to bring becoming product

⁴⁶ To assist the reader to make connections between Eco's text and my reading of his text, each time he says 'translator', I shall place '*artisan*' in brackets thereafter to denote my appropriation of his term to the process of translating the *translator* to craft a coherent becoming product.

⁴⁷ In my case this would mean the *artisan* negotiating/dialoguing with the other two faces of *Anne* to preserve the deep story as emergent from the sources in the collective unconscious or, as Benjamin would have it, to preserve the *intentio*. Eco's notion therefore speaks to my question of honouring the source as much as facilitating end-user (reader) understanding of the creative artefact.

into being. In these dialogues, my *artisan*, charged with responsibility for the final text, acted as interface to the external space where the text would be read while the *compassionate witness* provided interface to the internal space of collective unconscious. The *artisan* was therefore implicated in a process of iteratively drafted texts before the circle-of-self could sign-off on the result⁴⁸.

Eco (2001) writes that the translator (*artisan*), as interface to the outside world, is required to take a critical standpoint and make interpretative decisions to ensure the deep story is respected (p.36); a practical issue but housing a core proposition – to ensure “the echo of the original” (Benjamin 2007a, p.76) is not lost. The dilemma, as Eco sees it, is:

... should a translation lead the reader to understand the linguistic and cultural universe of the source text, or transform the original by adapting it to the reader’s cultural and linguistic universe? (Eco 2001, p.22).

He considers this as much an issue of archaic versus modern rendering of language as foreignising versus domesticating aspects of the narrative (Eco 2001, p.28). The functional effect is that a translator (*artisan*) must be prepared for instances of “rebellious against one’s own language, when it introduces effects of sense that were not intended in the original” (Eco 2001, p.46). This described precisely the experience of my *artisan* when confronted with the fieldwork data of the *translator*. Empowering her to rebel against her crafting skills when required in order to respect the deep story was crucial to her approach to the task.

In speaking to this dilemma, Eco (2001) introduces the concept of the model reader. Reflecting on his experience of writing *Il nome della rosa* (1980), he says:

I did not try to make my medieval monks look modern; on the contrary, I wanted my Model Reader to become as medieval as possible (Eco 2001, p.28).

[...] the Model Reader of my text should be eager to make an effort in order to enter a medieval abbey and to understand not only its habits and its rituals but also its language (Eco 2001, p.29).

⁴⁸ I will describe this process in more detail and with examples in the next chapter.

It goes without saying that Eco's translators were also charged with the task to respect his conception of the model reader in their work. With such a reader in mind as well as Forster's (2005) proposition that he/she should be prepared to struggle with the text (p.31), my *artisan* undertook her task to translate the *translator* as "lovingly and in detail" (Benjamin 2007a, p.78) as the *translator* undertook her witness of the *witness*.

So who is my *artisan's* model reader?

In the first instance, it would most likely be someone of Western Anglo or European cultural background, potentially functionally ignorant of the details of life in a medieval Islamic court or Byzantine monastery, or indeed the practical realities of life under siege in a late 20th century Balkans city. Said model reader is therefore the *Anne* of *Anne World* pre-project. The vast body of character-immersive research (see Appendix 1) undertaken for my *compassionate witness* to inhabit these disparate worlds also worked to underpin the crafting of text by my *artisan* to help a model reader understand such worlds.

By becoming conscious of how I hoped the text would be read, I was able to develop my understanding of the role of my *artisan's* craftwork. Solely responsible for drafting the iterative texts to be negotiated within the circle-of-self – in a process of co-translation on the way to a fully realised creative artefact – it was the *artisan's* task to accompany the becoming product from the plane of intimate exteriority to final reader (model or otherwise). Not only was she required to craft the *translator's* performative writing into coherent texts, she was also needed to compose linking texts to contextualise the underlying narrative. Throughout, dialogue within the circle-of-self informed and supported her process of co-translation as steadily as it informed and supported the *compassionate witness's* co-performance or the *translator's* co-production according to the embodied cycle of action and reflection I presented earlier. Just as the *compassionate witness* offered her experiential knowing to the circle, or the *translator* her presentational knowing, so too did my *artisan* bring her practical knowing of craftwork and the interface with potential readers to the plane of intimate exteriority. And, as the becoming product progressed onto a plane of more public exteriority when external feedback was introduced, the practical knowing expressed in the *artisan's* craftwork grew in demand.

In their analysis of *The Red Book*, Jung's English translators note three stylistic registers in which he composed the text, classifying them as descriptive,

conceptual and mantic (Kyburz, Peck & Shamdasani 2009, p.222). They observe that the different registers “serve psychic promptings” and share a “polyphonic mode” (p.222) which embrace the dialogical prose imagination at work (Bakhtin 1981). Here, I found synergies with the different tasks of my three *Annes* and the functional writing which emanated from their activities of co-performance, co-production and co-translation, where “the mantic and conceptual registers can themselves be considered as translations of the descriptive register” (Kyburz, Peck & Shamdasani 2009, p.222).

It is not critical for the purposes of this exegesis to similarly classify my own writing, yet it served my becoming conscious to read of Jung’s process to translate the translations of, and en flesh the gaps within, his own rhizome of becoming. Attempting “to translate [unconscious] contents into a form acceptable to the contemporary outlook” (Shamdasani 2009 p.219), Jung remained committed to honouring the different registers and how they “consistently rub[bed] against each other” (Kyburz, Peck & Shamdasani 2009, p.222). While acknowledging that my practice-led research is far beneath the quality and complexity of Jung’s work, my *artisan* was nevertheless fully cognisant of the potential for different stylistic registers and language forms – both within and between triptych panels – to rub against one another. Yet her task was to honour the deep story, the *intentio*, “lovingly and in detail” (Benjamin 2007a, p.78).

Like all interfaces or border territories, the intersect between the different stylistic registers and language forms opens up a third space where the reader may struggle with the writer/text in the spirit of Forster’s (2005, p.31) dictum. Although potentially problematic, I do not see such rubbings as insurmountable hurdles to a reader’s communion with the text, they are simply hazards in the stream which require active negotiation rather than passive submersion. To consider the opportunities arising from such a readerly engagement in more detail, an ant army has wandered off to Chapter 5. Meanwhile, the challenge to honour the different performative utterances, as well as the impact of external feedback on that process, will be found in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Becoming Product

How can my writing bridge inner and outer spaces so that the product honours both spiritual source and material reader? To begin consideration of this question, Irigaray (2002) holds that the practice of: “Making has seldom been considered as a work carried out inside subjectivity itself, starting from and upon what the subject already is and with a becoming in mind” (p.115). Perhaps she is not conversant with the opportunities offered by practice-led research, or perhaps I am now so embedded in a circle of knowing where like-minded practitioners inform my work that I cannot imagine a more effective way to approach my own “making”. Nevertheless, she points out that:

Such a work of interiority remains almost unknown to us. Perhaps because the relation with the other has not been sufficiently recognised as a decisive part of subjectivity (Irigaray 2002, p.115).

In this context, she returns to her core theme of “welcoming the speech of the other in oneself and [...] accepting that this speech questions us” (Irigaray 2002, p.115). I found that Irigaray’s approach to “making” resonated with my approach to becoming product; writing the mode of performative utterance by which I welcomed the other’s speech and accepted their questioning of my translation. My writing was required to bridge inner and outer spaces to realise an artefact linking and honouring the needs of both dimensions. Becoming conscious of the work of the three *Annes* helped me discover that writing was enacted in an iterative drafting process of multi-step feedback loops, my practice constantly reminding me of Beckett’s lament: “Ever Tried. Ever Failed. No matter. Try Again. Fail again. Fail better” (Beckett 1989, p.101).

On the back of many maps and flow charts cluttering the pages of my reflective journal, testing and re-testing the model during the development of each triptych panel, I finally arrived at the following crystallisation of process in action (Figure 9):

Becoming Product

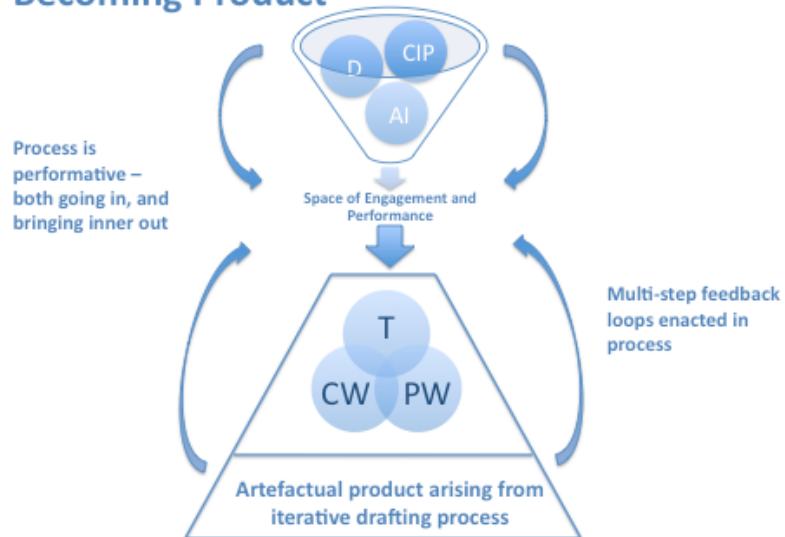


Figure 9: Becoming Product

The reader will recall the individual elements of the above graphic: the embodied practices used to enter the space of performance and engagement (the intertidal zone of becoming landscape); and the three faces of *Anne* in their process of becoming conscious (within the intertidal zone as well as on the plane of intimate exteriority). The graphic (Figure 9) thus seeks to demonstrate how the product came into being, whereby an iterative drafting process was required to bridge the needs of inner and outer spaces. By building a series of feedback loops into the artefact's production, within the circle-of-self as well as beyond on a plane of more public exteriority, the clarity of my translations between spiritual source and material reader could be improved and the accuracy and efficacy of performative utterances assured.

The model confirms the value of applying elements of an action research approach to this project: "As the inquiry process develops, cycling between action and reflection, presentational knowing is the most basic way of making sense of our experience" (Heron & Reason 2008, p.372). St. Pierre (1997) notes: "The field grows; it erupts in some strange, new place; it refuses to be coded; and it advantageously invents itself outside interiority" (p.410). My writing became the tool mapping an intertidal zone on the plane of intimate exteriority, my productivity increasingly efficient as awareness of this process grew.

Colyar (2009) holds that writing is a thinking process in which "externalising and internalising happen at the same time" (p.429). Likewise, St.

Pierre (1997), suggests: “[...] writing is not only inscription but discovery. It is a kind of nomadic inquiry in which I am able to deterritorialise spaces in which to travel in the thinking that writing produces” (p.407). Schulz (2006) notes a similar receptivity: “In letting the words come to me, I am opening myself up to the possibility of creating new meanings” (p.226). It is writing which confirms the writer’s place as “neither historian nor prophet: [s]he is an explorer of existence” (Kundera 1988, p.44).

Just as circles of convergence grew around the word-concepts which became the plateaus of this exegesis, the rhizome of the creative artefact was similarly elaborated. The thematic concepts I explored included: engaging the other, memory, landscape, pilgrimage, exile, translation and, of course, love. These threads were interrogated in different ways against different narrative backdrops using different structural devices in each of the panels. While each panel constituted its own rhizomatic territory, the concepts were shared and repeated throughout the triptych to support the overarching narrative.

Further, I connected various motifs in synchronistic ways to bind all three in a coherent and unified circle of knowing in the spirit of WS Sebald’s observation, whereby “when the narrative is finished, its beginnings show up in a new light, [...] after the tock comes the tick again” (Sebald, cited in Schwartz 2007, p.104). I discovered that the circle of knowing in my own embodied practice mirrored the artefactual result and for which the words of TS Eliot provided an appropriate summation of my characters’ experiences as much as my own becoming:

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time (Eliot 1944, p.43).

In homage to thinkers such as Eliot, therefore, I was committed to weaving their words, and spirit, into the textual fabric of the panels. Just as these thinkers were my conversation partners in becoming conscious, they became conversation partners to help crystallise the thinking of my characters in their own becoming conscious. My intent was to afford mystics, philosophers and writers down the ages an afterlife in the pages of the artefact whereby the narrative’s embodiment of both conscious and unconscious sources of inspiration could infuse its content as much as my understanding. By creating

the artefact, I could offer a further bridge between inner and outer planes – the knowledge in which my characters and I were immersed had the potential to outreach to readers inclined to similar investigations. The references provided for each panel⁴⁹ are not only designed to confirm the researched foundations of this work, but may assist readers to make their own inquiries into the vast ocean of knowledge which informed my writing⁵⁰.

I shall now demonstrate how the model describes the development of each triptych panel by taking the reader through their respective makings. While acknowledging that the becoming of each panel was unique – each time constituting a first time in a becoming landscape which grew rhizomatically, deterritorialising as it went⁵¹ – the general principles underlying the model held. By constructing the narrative as a triptych, each panel separately elaborated, I had the opportunity to test the model twice after my initial experience of panel one. In this way I discovered that:

- ✚ The initial embrace of the intertidal zone of performance and engagement by the *compassionate witness* was followed by the *translator's* fieldwork data offered onto the plane of intimate exteriority for crafting by the creative *artisan*.
- ✚ After a number of iterative drafts of the artefactual text within my circle-of-self, a plane of more public exteriority was introduced to include reader feedback which rounded out my desire to know and compressed the process of iterative writing to achieve said knowing over time.
- ✚ What eventually transpired in unfolding this extended field was that the borders between inner and outer planes grew more fluid and, by the time the third text was actualised panel two, (the *Cantigas*), had dissolved altogether. Here, inner and outer became one, the three faces of *Anne* returning to a single face communing with a wholly other greeted warmly in Irigaray's way of love.

⁴⁹ See Appendix 1.

⁵⁰ Once more an ant army is on the move – off to the territory of becoming myth.

⁵¹ As previously noted, this was principally a function of my relation(s) with the other(s) encountered in each panel's storyscape of the becoming landscape as well as my becoming conscious of this process over time. In the context of becoming product, I will be elaborate on this in examples drawn from each panel.

Laleima's Story

Following the AI experiences my *compassionate witness* encountered during the site visit to Granada⁵², my *translator* produced a quantum of fieldwork data. From this bounty, my *artisan* developed a full draft of Laleima's narrative over a concentrated three-month period. As relief from the intensity of a novel's length of creative production, I invested time in exegetical reflections on the experience of becoming product, followed by historical research intended to bring Kisha's world to life in a similar way. Several months into this latter work, however, a startling dream presented, a critical intervention to my process:

I am in an Islamic setting, a teteria, sitting at a small table with three men I do not know, foreigners wearing strange garb (I am in traditional silk robes). They look like 19th century English explorers to India with their pith helmets and safari suits. They have a Dalmatian dog with them which is exuberantly rushing about the room, sniffing. I am frantic and cry out: But who will look after my child? It seems they are here to take my son away. The men answer: Fenula will care for him. Coming up a spiral staircase I see Fenula. She is my servant, Sara, and with her is my child. He is around six years of age, dark-haired and eyed, solemn. Someone says: This is the way it must be (Gambling 2011b, journal entry 04/05/09).

Within the dream, I was hyper-conscious – no longer a witness in Laleima's world, I embodied her experience, saw through her eyes, felt what she felt, and woke, drenched in her tears. Many things confused me, but one thing was clear. I had mistranslated the initial message of *abortion or miscarriage gone wrong*. It had gone wrong because the foetus had survived, her child had lived. The intensity of this revelation was only exceeded in that moment by the realisation that I had a vast amount of further data collection and re-writing to do if I was to assimilate this new knowledge. Yet the message of the dream was cryptically elusive beyond the single fact of a child. I retreated from the intertidal zone and continued to research Kisha's world, focusing in the first instance on a range of reference texts covering Balkans history and geopolitics to give broad context to the period of conflict itself.

More time passed. It was now six months since I had completed the draft of Laleima's story, and three months or so since the dream. My current focus

⁵² Refer Chapter 2.

was Serbian Orthodoxy and its iconography. The 14th century was a watershed, apparently, for the Bosnian kingdom. Victories over the Serbs had resulted in territories extending to the Dalmatian coast, the conqueror crowned at a famous Orthodox monastery on the trade route inland from Ragusa⁵³.

Suddenly Laleima was back centre stage – images flashed, too much, too fast, the intersects in the rhizome too chaotic to track. Sunk deep in the fecund swamp, there was no garden to weed. Instead I walked long beside a creek, through a forest, and saw⁵⁴ three “wise men from the East” (Matthew 2:1-12) offer sanctuary to her child. Yet this information essentially post-scripted her story. Where had she been, what had she done in between carrying the child full-term and their separation six or so years later? A wide frontier remained uncharted. But I was beginning to trust the synchronistic signposts she offered. She would return with another puzzle piece when the time was ripe.

I only had to wait nine days. I had planned a weekend of art museum visits months earlier. My first stop was the Zentrum Paul Klee in Bern for a retrospective centred on work arising from his trips to North Africa, something I thought might be interesting exegetically in terms of knowledge production via aesthetic engagement. I arrived to find Klee’s aquarelles and sketches juxtaposed against local art and culture as potential influences beyond the landscape and light which clearly informed his work.

The first exhibit I encountered was from a collection of Moroccan tribal (i.e. pre-Islamic) art. Confronted by a shroud, a huge swathe of camel cloth painted in symbolic shapes, I was suddenly overwhelmed by the same embodied reaction of seeing through Laleima’s eyes. In a frenzy of scrawled notes, I knew her place of exile. The source had gifted me red threads to unravel a mystery, illuminating individual points within the rhizome for me to make the connections; pointedly targeting different streams of embodied knowing – dreamwork, active imagination, immersive practice and synchronistic event – to facilitate my becoming conscious.

Through this experience I discovered not only that I approached the relation with the other in the spirit of Irigaray’s way of love (2002), but my sources also did their best to enrich our dialogue. Laleima’s approaches were

⁵³ Present-day Dubrovnik.

⁵⁴ The reader is reminded that “I saw” is the most accurate way, in my opinion, to describe the uprising of such images (see Watkins & Jenkins 2006, p.7).

never deliberately opaque, but respectful of my alterity, gifting images in language which would assist their translation, “finding gestures or words which touch the other in his, or her, alterity” (Irigaray 2002, p.151). I was being called back into her becoming landscape, the energy of my desire to know pulsed. Yet due to the constraints placed on the project by *Anne World*, it was still several months until I could retreat to a silent space, calmly wade into the intertidal zone and wait for her to come. There, I experienced what Irigaray (2002) so lucidly expresses:

The approach is possible only in the recognition of the irreducible difference between the one and the other. This, in fact, gives access to a path from the one to the other and to the sharing of a still free energy and space [...] Something arrives which did not exist and that the bringing together of two worlds produces [...] the mysterious legacy of an encounter which it is important to remember without simply appropriating it (Irigaray 2002, p.153).

I kept a record of the time I spent in this space and noted that it took 48 hours to slowly shed the skin of *Anne World*, to slowly empty myself of me (while accepting occasional glimpses and instructions to *record this*) before our dialogue was fully present and engaged. Nevertheless, once arrived, pure combustion of the energy of desire propelled my *translator's* fieldwork data from the space of co-performance to which my *artisan* could later apply her craft. Laleima never visited again after these six days together. Melting back into the collective unconscious, her task complete, mine needed to continue.

The time had come to move the text beyond the circle-of-self onto a plane of more public exteriority. Feedback duly received, and after a year of letting the text settle while I worked to externalise Kisha's story, the *artisan* began her sculpting of the panel more finely, hewing a third of its flesh and re-writing key scenes to improve clarity. Yet at certain times, the depth of my *compassionate witness's* embodied knowing confirmed that some sections, beyond a light polishing, were off-limits. The voice of the source would stand no matter how

clumsy my translation. In this I was empowered to act (or not act) by Benjamin's words⁵⁵ as much as the opinion of Kundera's Italian publisher:

The mark of a good translation is not its fluency but rather all those unusual and original formulations ["not the way to say it"] that the translator has been bold enough to preserve and defend (Calasso, cited in Kundera 1988, p.130)⁵⁶.

For example, it was clear that the description of Laleima's death was critical to the concept of linking past-present-future as a single moment. Even if my translation of that moment⁵⁷ remains completely opaque to an external reader, it must stay in the panel as written, as experienced. She did indeed confront the "Angel of History" – the sad rendering given to Klee's painting of *Angelus Novus* by the tragic hand of Walter Benjamin (2007b, p.257) – and implore him, over and over, to face the stream of time as she did, in full faith of love's truth, her tiny firefly spark still "one more than none" (Gambling 2011a, p.164).

Kisha's Story

Kisha's year was 2010. I had done some preliminary research reading and developed an initial outline for this panel which included writing done following the event of Samir's reciprocal recognition during 2009, but these threads needed to be picked up – intermezzo – after Laleima's cathartic closure.

As previously noted, by grafting myself onto Kisha's life as an imaginary friend, I could bear witness to her journey as well as the reflective witnessing she herself sustained in a string of interior monologues generated, intentionally or otherwise, by the rhizomatic wanderings through her halls of memory. Her story thus evolved as folded time mediated by memory which as Deleuze (1988) suggests:

⁵⁵ The reader will recall that as translator of the *translator*, my *artisan* recognised that her task needed to honour the deep story, the *intentio*, as "lovingly and in detail" (Benjamin 2007, p.78) as her sister worked to be witness of the *witness*.

⁵⁶ It was in Eco's issue of archaic versus modernising and foreignising versus domesticating (Eco 2001, p.28) that I found myself in such instances, but fuelled by Forster's dictum for the reader to struggle as I had struggled (Forster 2005, p.31).

⁵⁷ In fact, it felt as if she herself took my *translator's* pen to transform that particular visionary instant to text because it was so fundamental to her becoming afterlife.

[...] doubles the present and the outside and is one with forgetting, since it is itself endlessly forgotten and reconstituted [...] Only forgetting (the unfolding) recovers what is folded in memory (and in the fold itself) [...] Forgetting is the impossibility of return, and memory is the necessity of renewal (Deleuze 1988a, p.107-108).

Meanwhile, the chorus of dead whose intermezzo performances formed spaces in between the seven movements of Kisha's story provided the opportunity to demonstrate "the in-between [which] characterises the dynamics [...] of creation and of becoming" (Stivale 1998, p.2). Via the gaps opened by their witness, the reader's experience of Kisha's worldview is extended, and the fluidity of the narrative as it moves back and forth through time and space is supported.

To construct Kisha as well as channel the chorus⁵⁸, I worked principally with character-immersive practices focused on her everyday life. I literally walked beside her as she conducted her daily rituals. In this respect it was, following de Certeau (1988), an "itinerant, progressive and regulated practice – a walk – [which] composes the artefact of another "world" that is not received but rather made" (p.135). Such discovery processes gifted her with a place to live, employment and new life in exile in the city of Zurich. I purchased clothes and kitchenware in aid shops, browsed the remainders bin outside her antiquarian bookstore, stared in through the window of her icon gallery, learnt to cook hotpot and make coffee her way, sat in her kitchen⁵⁹, watched her smoke on her balcony, and all the while wrote her into existence.

Immersed in the monotone and monochrome enactment of life in her alien space, I watched her dissolve into the grey walls of stone buildings, heard her matter-of-factual translation of others' pain at the, again, grey-façaded aid centre. I literally felt the weight of her suffering and had difficulty conceiving how I would engage her in a site visit to Sarajevo if she suffused such pain in a town as calm and sanitised as Zurich. Yet knew I could not delay the inevitable.

⁵⁸ In Chapter 2, I described how the souls of the dead manifested themselves to me.

⁵⁹ In a wonderfully synchronistic intersect, the tiny office I rent downtown was, a hundred years ago, the kitchen of an inner-city flat. Still with closed-off plumbing in appropriate locations, I recreated Kisha's kitchen in my workspace. As a character-immersive practice, it meant that each time I entered the space, I immediately enjoined her world.

Dates set, flights booked, we travelled together to Sarajevo where embodied knowing saw tears leak from my eyes at graveyards ripped through hillsides, and the unexpected shock of seeing UN forces still in the city fourteen years after the cessation of conflict. My *compassionate witness* was fully engaged, my *translator's* pen ever at the ready. Kisha unfolded the map, slipped her arm through mine, and walked me through her town.

As the map of Kisha's life was aesthetically engaged across different spaces and times within the rhizome so was this panel of the artefact. The practice of walking as embodied knowing has deep roots. There are the songlines of Australian Aboriginal culture which map their dreaming stories (Chatwin 1988). There are the maps of medieval Europe which mark out itineraries, "performative indications chiefly concerning pilgrimage. [...] Each of these maps is a memorandum prescribing action" (de Certeau 1988, p.120). There are the journeys through landscape which fuse corporeal and spiritual pilgrimages from Wordsworth and Thoreau to Sebald and Kerouac via Basho and Ryokan to Hesse and Frisch. There are the land artists whose performances in space function as both art and myth-making (Long, Drury, Beuys, Christo & Jean Claude, among others). In this panel more than the others, my embodied knowing translated into the literal practice of walking to recreate Kisha's becoming in a storyscape bridged and enabled by my writing. Our space of engagement developed, as de Certeau (1988) could describe, as a "practiced place [...] composed of the intersections of mobile elements" (p.117).

Outer walking mirrored the inner memory trails of Kisha's rhizomatic past – one through her grandmother, the other through Samir. Artefacts such as the icon and the ring function as material interlocutors for her performance of memory, her "strategies of forgetting" as much as her "acts of remembering" (Yoffee 2007, p.3). According to Schacter (1996), artefacts operate as records of events experienced rather than "replicas of the events themselves" (p.6). Kisha stores her records in catalogue drawers in her library of the heart. Her memory becomes Proustian⁶⁰, an embodied taste in the present where Bakhtin's chronotope "thickens" time (Bakhtin 1981, p.84)⁶¹. Her now becomes

⁶⁰ According to Olney, Samuel Beckett described Proust's approach to memory as a "constant process of decantation [from] the fluid of future time [...] to the fluid of past time" (Olney 1999, p.4).

⁶¹ "We will give the name *chronotope* (literally, 'time space') to the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature [...] Time, as it were, thickens, takes on

then, over and over, her slippages a constant source of lament until she becomes conscious of how time works in the spirit of Bergson (1991)⁶², thickening to the point of conjuring afterlife⁶³ at which she is ready to close the circle, to return to the beginning of being⁶⁴.

Once Kisha's journey had been fully outed by the *translator* and crafted into a coherent draft text by the *artisan*, it was shared on a plane of public exteriority with several readers. Two were from a cultural consciousness similar to *Anne World*, the others exiles of the Bosnian conflict but fortunately never directly affected by the horrors recounted in the text. The difference in feedback received was marked.

The latter two described feeling liberated by the extent of Kisha's interior monologues and the complexity of her psychological becoming against the "very real"⁶⁵ backdrop of the refugee/exile experience. The comment, "you're a better Bosnian than I am", served to settle my concerns about how well embodied practice had underpinned my acts of witness and translation. The further comment, "I found myself reading and then scribbling notes about how I felt in the margin", clarified the mediating role the text may realise in its

flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history" (Bakhtin 1981, p.84). If I were to analyse the composition of the entire triptych according to Bakhtin, this exegesis would be double its current length. Suffice it to say that I found resonances in his approach but my *purposeful witness* will not be diverted from task, hence this particular ant army has been contained.

⁶² "The truth is that memory does not consist in a regression from the present to the past, but in a progression from the past to the present. It is in the past that we place ourselves at a stroke. We start from a virtual state which we lead onwards, step-by-step, through a series of different planes of consciousness, up to the goal where it is materialised in an actual perception" (Bergson 1991, p.239).

⁶³ "We shall never reach the past unless we frankly place ourselves within it. Essentially virtual, it cannot be known as something past unless we follow and adopt the movement by which it expands into a present image, thus emerging from obscurity into the light of day" (Bergson 1991, p.135).

⁶⁴ Another ant army would love to wander through Bergsonism further (as Deleuze 1988b did) but the purpose of this exegesis is otherwise. Nevertheless the thematic perspectives explored in this panel were drenched in Bergson's ideas, which Maritain describes as "the internal progress of the life of the psyche, or the lived moment wherein, on a level deeper than that of consciousness, our psychic states are fused in a potential multiplicity which is one nevertheless [...] We endure while we change in a way which is really unfragmented, and yet which enriches us qualitatively and triumphs over the inertia of matter. Here indeed is an experience of the concrete reality of duration, of existence continuing itself, of our deep psychic life in which is enfolded, implicitly present, the irreducible metaphysical value of the act of being" (Maritain 2007, p.307).

⁶⁵ All quotes in this paragraph relate to feedback received from my Bosnian readers (Gambling 2011b, journal entry 18/02/11).

afterlife⁶⁶. The way Kisha “catches up with herself” by the end of the text, finally ready to “tell her own story”, to bring her inner out, spoke to their own experience of how long it takes before there are “words enough” to translate life events into language for those who have never encountered such things (Gambling 2011b, journal entry 18/02/11).

Meanwhile, the principal feedback from *Anne World* readers⁶⁷ was that the text moved too slowly – “we know she’s suffering, can’t you get on with it?” To my mind this reflected boredom with her slippages and the refugee experience. As events my *Anne World* readers had not directly encountered, I understood their desire for the action to move more swiftly toward denouement, in sum their suggestion for the text to be “stripped out of inessentials”. However, it presented me with an intriguing dilemma – what constitutes inessential narrative content and tonal expression when confronted with the feedback of ones who know versus ones who don’t know? I therefore found the need to reframe my becoming product sub-question as: How can my writing bridge the need to honour the souls of the dead, as reflected by my Bosnian readers’ feedback, as well as sensibilities which, most likely, reflect the cultural consciousness and experiences of *Anne World* readers? (Gambling 2011b, journal entry 12/03/11).

My co-performance, production and translation in this panel was required to balance what West (1997) describes as the world looking on with both “horror and complacency” (p.xv) as Bosnia’s plight, or any one of countless other war zones, unfolded. My *Anne World* readers should feel the horror but not slip back into the complacency of what Adams (2009) describes as the “SEP” field.⁶⁸ As the contemporary panel of the triptych, this text is most materially implicated for Laleima’s message, echoing Atwood (2002), to “enter time once more” (p.178); and as one refugee explained in an interview with Mertus et al (1997): “If one person hears and understands a little better, it will be worth the pain” (p.15).

⁶⁶ At this juncture I would ask the reader to recall my contract with the souls of the dead to bring their treasure back into time, to make it relevant to the times, in order to enter the conversation on 21st century peace consciousness. I shall discuss this in more detail in the next chapter.

⁶⁷ All quotes in this paragraph relate to feedback received from *Anne World* readers (Gambling 2011b, journal entry 12/03/11).

⁶⁸ The “SEP” field stands for “Somebody Else’s Problem”, an expression coined by Douglas Adams in his *Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy* series to explain the phenomenon of “something we can’t see, or don’t see, or our brain doesn’t let us see, because we think that it’s somebody else’s problem” (Adams 2009, p.26).

My *artisan* set to work on the extensive draft, stripping out a third of its word length to move the narrative along. More than the other panels, her craftsperson's hand was engaged. I had generated content for Kisha's story as filmic vignettes, a style which enabled scenes to be strategically honed or completely deleted as required. Nevertheless, when dreams or AI events presented me with material to directly connect different points in the rhizome – scenes such as the blue-eyed Gypsy with the pink scroll, Samir's letter, the baklava in the fridge, or the souls dancing through a graveyard lit by blue-throated gentians – they were subject to only the same light polishing as in Laleima's panel, in order to honour the source.

Cantigas de Santa Maria

Writing the icon into existence was the purpose of the central panel of the triptych. As the slim sister between the two outer panels, her placement was key to balancing the whole and bridging space-time in a becoming landscape where the icon itself functioned as a fulcrum, the pivotal point offering its agency to the vital power of love incarnate.

With no background in Orthodox iconography – aesthetically or theologically – character-immersive practices were integral to achieving the intent described in the preceding paragraph. My knowing was intuitive, but I had no conscious basis on which my writing could attempt to bridge inner and outer. I read many texts describing the process of achieving spiritual union through an icon and discovered that with the descent of grace (*charis*), the icon's active element, its life or spirit, becomes a conduit of divine response (Pentcheva 2007, p.124). I also investigated a raft of texts describing the process of writing⁶⁹ an icon and learnt that:

The preparation of wooden panels [...] and the application of pigments with an egg tempura medium was a specialised skill [...] generations of artists represented the unchanging truth of the Christian faith in subtly progressing ways – experimenting with colour, style, subjects, complex frames, and intricate triptychs (Cormack 2000, p.111).

⁶⁹ To write an icon, rather than to paint an icon, is the usual expression for the act of its artistic creation. This possibly goes back to Theodore the Stoudite (759-826), who said: "The gospels were writing in words, but icons are writing in gold" (Eastmond & James 2003, xxix).

For the icon to become, she is not only materially written by the hand of a man lost in the parched desert of his heart, but also spiritually sung by the compassionate witness of four others. The specific *cantiga* (song) which informs the work is introduced to the reader in Laleima's story and resurrected to consciousness in this panel. Poole (2007) suggests that: "To understand the lesson that the *cantiga* narrative embodies, we must look at medieval Christian discussions of time and eternity" (p.115)⁷⁰.

The icon's uplift from inner to outer is conducted symbolically and materially by the iconographer's hand in a gnostic process which mirrors his desire or "longing"⁷¹ to breach the cloud of unknowing to where God operates as an "inner directing and transforming presence" (Hoeller 1989, p.8)⁷². This gnostic knowing is achieved by experiential insight that Hoeller (1989) describes as consciousness of "an intuitive contemplative nature [...] closely related to self-knowledge" (p.62).

The panel therefore functions like *ekphrasis*⁷³ in medieval iconography, using a technique that Webb (1999) describes as a "vivid and detailed narration of events [...] to make the audience "see"" (p.64). In seeking to "convey the experience of sacred space in which the seen and unseen, tangible and intelligible are equally real" (Webb 1999, p.74), Byzantine *ekphrasis* incorporates temporal flow to show events unfolding in time. In the same way, the four witnesses in this panel narrate the iconographer's journey from unknowing into knowing. By using his writing to bridge inner and outer planes, the iconographer's work of artistic creation demonstrates the marriage of *compassionate witness*, *translator* and *artisan*, his becoming product the realisation of his becoming conscious.

⁷⁰ St Augustine's meditations on eternity as an eternal present – "the simultaneous unison of that which unfolds in time" (Poole 2007, p.116) – underpin the text of the *cantiga*, where questions "seemingly logical to the 21st century reader would probably not have been asked by the medieval reader [...] the idea of miracles and the intervention of the divine in human affairs were much more accepted" (Poole 2007, p.115).

⁷¹ Longing is a word commonly used across faith traditions to express the desire for union with a divine beloved as this observation about the Byzantine empress Zoe when contemplating her favoured icon notes: "She was displaying the longing of her soul and offering up to God the things we regard as most precious and solemn" (Duffy 1995, p.89).

⁷² In this respect, Mathews (2006) writes: "The medieval *homo byzantinus* can no longer be consulted as to his state of mind during prayer, but there is a body of inscriptional evidence that testifies to the Byzantines' vivid sense of a divine presence in icons" (p.14).

⁷³ Literally, *ekphrasis* means "a speech that 'leads one round'" (Webb 1999, p.65).

That this process mirrored my own experience of creating the artefact should not come as a complete surprise to the reader. This panel's becoming product completed my own becoming conscious. In its making, I embodied each witness arising from the collective unconscious to share stewardship of the icon into existence. The writing which arose had an ethereal quality. I felt as if I floated the whole time it was written. No teeth were pulled in its translation, my becoming had become infused with their knowing. As a result, the iterative process of drafting earlier texts in my circle-of-self morphed into a single plane of consistency merging inner and outer, a holistic space no longer subject to engagement by three distinct faces of *Anne*. An excerpt from my reflective journal describes how the process enacted itself:

I sit before a wide long desk. I am drawn to pen some notes for a scene on a slip of paper but in their midst, another thought presents, another snatch of conversation from a different scene, in different space-time. It refuses to wait its turn, needs to be captured now, so I take another slip of paper and record it. And in its midst, another thought presents, destined for a different slip, and so it goes on. By the end of several hours (which I have not noticed pass) many slips of paper lie on this (fortunately) wide long desk. The creative journey of composition is illinear, lateral, rhizomatic. Nothing follows logically, structuring mechanisms are few and far between. Nevertheless, these slips of paper congregate, sort themselves into piles, wander like ant armies between plateaus till they find their best-fit. Suddenly I see order emerge from chaos – these are the cantigas, the songs to sing the icon into existence. I shake my head, laugh into the void cleaved by this revelation. This is what it is like to receive instruction. The rhizome won't wait, it will continue to traverse random lines of flight in a frenzy of becoming, while my task is to capture the tiny fragments in their flow, settle them into some narrative structure later. I have to trust the process, it has led me this far but still I can't second-guess it, still it produces "the new". Each time I must trust that becoming conscious of its meaning will follow, at some point, to validate the meant to be (Gambling 2011b, journal entry 23/02/11).

Deleuze & Guattari (2004) would call this single rhizome of becoming the enactment of “waves [...] vibrations [...] inscribed on the plane of consistency” (p.278) in which:

[...] the self is only a threshold, a door, a becoming between two multiplicities. [...] not only does it border each multiplicity, [...] not only is it the precondition for the alliance necessary to becoming, but it also carries the transformations of becoming [...] (Deleuze & Guattari 2004, p.275).

Indeed, as I floated on these waves, frantically inscribing slips of paper, my becoming conscious sought expression in the following data poem:

Often do you speak through me
So oft now you sound like me
Or rather I you? (Gambling 2011b, journal entry 03/03/11).

If the reader is versant with the perennial philosophy, you may see parallels with this inability to name, adequately describe or convey such experience beyond its attempted capture its essence in verse. Lao Tzu writes: “I do not know its name so I call it *Tao*” (Lao Tzu 2008, p.31). I could as easily write: I do not know its name so I call it *floating*. A witness to the work of the iconographer attempts to describe the phenomenon as being *all a-shimmer*. Nevertheless, the clarity of embodied knowing saw my circle-of-self melt back into a single *Anne* whose interwoven acts of co-performance, production and translation formed a seamless whole realised on a plane of consistency. The text therefore became non-negotiable beyond this *Anne* for she alone had experienced its naming.

Where this panel’s rhizomatic journey charts the iconographer’s becoming desire across a becoming landscape as random, fluid and fogged as the unknowing chaos of his fecund inner swamp, his becoming conscious leads to a becoming product, a *Kiria* icon iteratively engaged again and again which the monk prophecies into becoming myth. Along the way, he is named three times, latterly as Agios Giorgios “who has his dragon slain” (Gambling 2011a, p.217).

The parallels between his process and mine – of becoming, of naming – startled me. Embodied knowing had delivered me into a space where my stewardship of Laleima into textual afterlife not only reflected the practice of each witness singing the icon into being, but seemed to enact the actual writing done by the iconographer’s hand itself. As opaque as it began, as luminescent

as it became, circling back to the beginning, knowing it for the first time, the space of the slim sister in-between is where my own journey to gnosis is housed⁷⁴.

Where Forster (2005) considers the story a “chopped-off length of the tapeworm of time” (p.86), a rhizomatic reading of all three panels of the triptych reveals that any one of myriad lines of flight not pursued in the text could lead to further insights within a holistic becoming landscape. While acknowledging there is no end to such infinite knowing, as a contained space embracing a plethora of gaps the triptych offers expression to my increasing knowledge of treasures sourced from the vast reservoir of the collective unconscious. In the process, I discovered how some circles closed but others flew off on alternate and far distant lines of flight (e.g. the fate of Laleima’s son); lines I could not pursue without the results appearing artificial.

Embodied knowing guided my co-performance, production and translation and enabled me to tell the story which needed to be told. In so doing, it returned me to Selimovic’s dervish but with the continuation of Hassan’s counsel:

D: Nothing exists until it is told.

H: Nothing can be told until it exists. The only question is whether anything should be told (Selimovic 1996, p.108).

In my case, the imperative to tell (i.e. my desire to know) extended to what has been told in the triptych but no further. The remainder stays existent in the dark, hidden in the rhizome, gaps in the conscious map of a becoming landscape until they ever should be told. Laleima arrived as an image accompanied by “words formed in my understanding” (Watkins & Jenkins 2006, p.78). Writing her story into existence gave her density, solidity, texture, an afterlife made manifest via the translation of a symbolic portal between spiritual and material dimensions. The intent of her longer-than embodiment in a sacred object, written into existence by an act of love, was directly engaged in Kisha’s story, yet this is only one among the many stories in which a *Kiria* icon written by the hand of Agios Giorgios could have channelled her loving essence.

In his Norton Lecture on Quickness, Calvino (2009) shares a legend about the emperor Charlemagne whereby a symbolic object (in this case, a magic

⁷⁴ Once again, I cannot let an ant army distract me from purpose, but if the reader has the time or inclination to inspect Appendix 4, you will find how *The Song of the Gypsy* (which could not be included in the excerpt for space reasons) was pivotal to returning me to the beginning, and gnosis, via Lorca’s *duende*, his own appropriated expression for embodied knowing (Lorca 1998).

ring) holds a chain of events together in the narrative. In so doing, he suggests that the object is the “real protagonist of the story [...] an outward and visible sign that reveals the connection between people or between events” (p.32). Around it, he continues, there “forms a kind of force field that is in fact the territory of the story itself” (p.32). He cites Norse sagas, chivalric romances and Renaissance poetry as examples:

The moment an object appears in a narrative, it is charged with a special force and becomes like the pole of a magnetic field, a knot in the network of invisible relationships. The symbolism of an object may be more or less explicit, but it is always there (Calvino 2009, p.33).

Just as Sebald conducts a rhizomatic traverse of a patch of English countryside and the resultant *The Rings of Saturn* (1998) “display plurality in unity [...] mov[ing] in a coordinated orbit around a single regulative centre [...] a gravitational anchor that directs and choreographs the [...] rings” (Gray 2009, p.28), *The Taste of Translation’s* rhizomatic traverse of European time-space across centuries is anchored by the icon’s embodiment of love incarnate. Previously I described the icon as a fulcrum, but the gravitational pull of Saturn’s heavenly body on its multiplicity of rings offers a contextual equivalent as does Deleuze & Guattari’s reading of their *A Thousand Plateaus* as “a set of split rings [...] Each ring, or each plateau, [has] its own climate, its own tone or timbre” (Deleuze 1995, p.25). Each panel of the triptych likewise forms a circle of convergence, a plateau or rhizome with its own landscape and climate, which the icon choreographs into a temporal-spatial framework through her whirling dervish dance. In applying my writing to bridge the traverse of the chaos of the fecund swamp, I therefore find I am back in the territory of Deleuzian thought: “To write is to struggle and resist; to write is to become; to write is to draw a map” (Deleuze 1988a, p.44). Similarly, Kisha discovers through the writings of Basho: “The moon and the sun are eternal travellers. Even the years wander on. [...] Every day is a journey, and the journey itself is home” (Hamill 1999, p.ix).

So empowered, it is time to contemplate the text as becoming myth.

Chapter 5: Becoming Myth

This plateau of the rhizome traverses a vastly different line of flight. Where earlier becoming desire propelled the production of the new, now it anticipates the sharing of the new. Sharing takes the work into a new dimension – publication. By re-framing my becoming desire, I visualise the text entering the “stream of action and inquiry which aims to enhance the flourishing of human persons, their societies, communities and organisations and the wider ecology of which we are all a part” (Reason & Bradbury 2008, p.12). I will therefore interrogate the notion of becoming myth in terms of the following question: How can I support the text in its afterlife with the reader and contribute to its entry into the conversation on peace consciousness?

This chapter is about returning a personal myth to the collective. I investigate the role of the *Anne* who is responsible for the text’s publication as well as the publishing mode by which it is offered to the reader. With the discourse moving from production of the new to sharing of the new, the reader will find that several conversation partners⁷⁵ assist my traverse of an, as yet, uncharted territory. Reflecting on personal publication experience also helps inform the future direction of a project which, in Deleuzo-Guattarian terms, is ever-intermezzo. While this chapter concludes my discussion for the purposes of examination, the reader is assured that no conclusions are offered, only a fresh line of flight generated from a multitude of middles.

Huxley (2009) writes that all knowledge is a function of being where “the thing known is in the knower according to the mode of the knower” (p.146). As such, my production of the new, courtesy of a rhizomatically meandering methodology, has delivered a very particular, and personal, practice-led research outcome onto the plane of consistency. This is because:

[...] the construction of an all-embracing system [...] is a task that can never be accomplished by a single individual, for the sufficient reason that he is

⁷⁵ Refer Chapter 4, p.58-59, which describes how my becoming conscious, as well as that of my characters, was supported by myriad thinkers I call “conversation partners”.

an individual [...] capable of knowing only according to the mode of his own being” (Huxley 2009, p.153).

My desire to know saw me cross innumerable territories to achieve said outcome but in so doing, I came to the realisation that my conversation partners’ knowing was as much a function of their own modes of being as mine. Whether a physicist or mystic, a carpenter, pilot or artist, it is as if we each draw up from the rhizome that which accords to our personal resonance, to our specific skillsbase as much as our desire to know. In this way we conduct our practice-led research, bring the inner out, afford it a material presence on a plane of intimate or potential public exteriority.

Becoming conscious of my own mode of being – the need to rhizomatically approach the production of knowledge as well as search across disciplinary boundaries for thinkers to mentor my research process – seemed to, once again, reflect the iconographer’s:

Father ... You know too well that a funnelled route to God does not become the broad palette of my soul. I have felt His presence in all manner of places and times, by all manner of circumstance and experience ... At this hour of all hours I would not restrict His access by hearing you recite a single text (Gambling 2011a, p.236).

I began to see that practice-led research represented my personal myth in the spirit of Jung’s observation about his own work: “Whether or not the stories are “true” is not the problem. The only question is whether what I tell is *my* fable, *my* truth” (Jung 1995, p.17):

What we are to our inward vision, and what man appears to be *sub specie aeternitatis*, can only be expressed by way of myth. Myth is more individual and expresses life more precisely than does science [...] which [is] far too general to do justice to the subjective variety of an individual life (Jung 1995, p.17).

Armstrong (2005) likewise holds that, to make sense of our lives, “we are myth-making creatures” (p.142). She writes that myths help to reflect and shape life, placing it in a larger setting to reveal an underlying pattern (p.2). Yet:

[...] during the 20th century, we saw some very destructive modern myths, which have ended in massacre and genocide. These myths have failed

because they do not meet the criteria of the Axial Age. They have not been infused with the spirit of compassion, respect for the sacredness of all life [...] We cannot counter these bad myths with reason alone [...] That is the role of an ethically and spiritually informed mythology (Armstrong 2005, p.142).

In making this observation, she claims that “writers and artists, rather than religious leaders [...] have stepped into the vacuum and attempted to reacquaint us with the mythological wisdom of the past” (Armstrong 2005, p.144). By sharing stories in text, paint, song and dance, for example, writers and artists operate at the same level of consciousness as the mythmakers of old (Armstrong 2005, p.148):

A novel, like a myth, teaches us to see the world differently; it shows us how to look into our own hearts and to see our world from a perspective that goes beyond our own self-interest. If professional religious leaders cannot instruct us in mythical lore, our artists and creative writers can perhaps step into this priestly role and bring fresh insight to our lost and damaged world (Armstrong 2005, p.155).

Reading Armstrong, I see that my work as becoming myth could potentially contribute in some small way to healing a fractured world – a world where spiritual life has stagnated and decayed in the face of rabid materialism, where geo-politics has, too often, caused needless suffering, and where the selective amnesia of various religious leaders has seen the original teachings of their faiths either discounted or hijacked to support particular power plays. Indeed, I see Armstrong’s call to artists and writers in my original contract⁷⁶ whereby the text’s myth-making role in support of the collective could be as valid as its capacity to reveal my own personal myth.

In this respect, “Jung argued that it is because we are all linked by a common ancestral life, which continues within each one of us, that a personal myth is not an individual matter” (Huskinson 2008, p.4). Further, I am reminded that “any content that emerges from the unconscious into consciousness involves a spiritual or moral task” (Jaffé 1983, p.72). Circling to the beginning,

⁷⁶ Refer to p.4-5 in the Introduction.

the notion of becoming myth returns me to my original intent, my desire to share propelled by an ethical responsibility to gift the individual to the collective. My task is to publish a personal Axial myth of compassion, of unconditional care for the suffering other, in order to remind the many faces of our one humanity that by attempting to cause harm to the other, we do nothing more than harm our own selves.⁷⁷

Bringing the inner out in the artefact was a process of realisation within my circle-of-self,⁷⁸ as was its interrogation in the pages of the exegesis. Yet to consider the potential for this personal myth to be published, I must acknowledge my circle's needs. The three faces of *Anne* worked to deliver both artefact and exegesis onto a plane of more public exteriority – to seek feedback in the first instance and present it for examination in the second – but what lies beyond on a fully public plane? And what would it imply for each face of *Anne*?

At this point I would ask the reader to recall the different roles I undertook during this project: my *compassionate witness* co-performed in the intertidal zone with the source; my *translator* delivered her performative utterances onto the plane of intimate exteriority; and my *artisan* crafted these into a coherent text which nevertheless honoured the deep story, the *intentio* of the original. Three faces were needed to produce the new, but whose responsibility is it to share the new? Is it one of my existing faces? Or is another required?

To consider this issue, I reflected that, during the writing of panel two of the artefact, the three faces of *Anne* returned to a single face at the centre of the circle-of-self on a plane of consistency merging inner and outer.⁷⁹ It was an empowering experience to steward Laleima into textual afterlife in this panel. It gave me confidence to declare the text non-negotiable to feedback beyond the *Anne* who had experienced its naming. It also gave me a word to describe the role of her single face – steward. Having risen above the work of her sisters

⁷⁷ The reader will recall from earlier chapters my interrogation of the other in regard to my work, such as Irigaray's (2002) "welcoming the speech of the other in oneself and [...] accepting that this speech questions us" (p.115) or Kristeva's (1991) assertion that "the foreigner is within me, hence we are all foreigners. If I am a foreigner, there are no foreigners" (p.192).

⁷⁸ See Chapter 3 for my interrogation of the three faces of *Anne* which comprise what I describe as the circle-of-self.

⁷⁹ See Chapter 4, pp.70-72, for the description of my becoming conscious of this.

once before, *Anne-as-steward* is best-placed to support the text on its journey into the public domain.

However, empowering this *Anne* to perform her fresh task was not as simple as the foregoing explanation would make it seem. It required much reflection and caused some discomfort within the circle-of-self which can only be clarified for the reader by the disclosure of a pre-project experience.

Fresh out of university with a BA in Communication many years ago, unsure whether to pursue a career as a professional writer or follow creativity as my path, I wrote a short story. By chance, it found its way into an anthology published by University of Queensland Press entitled *Latitudes: New Writing from the North* (Johnson & Roberts 1986). When I had seen the call for manuscripts in Brisbane's *The Courier Mail*, I had actually misread the advertisement, thinking it was a request for new writers to submit their work, rather than new writing. Still, somehow, the story traversed the editorial process to sit alongside leading writers of the time such as Thea Astley, David Malouf, Thomas Shapcott and Janette Turner Hospital. Completely overwhelmed, I refused the invitation to the launch and vanished from this particular radar after receiving a paperback copy of the book in the mail.

Over the years I continued to write poetry and short fiction yet these texts remained within my circle-of-self while a professional life played out on vastly different stages. My youthful experience had highlighted the massive hurdle I had to sharing creative work publicly, the UQ Press submission only serving to demonstrate my naivety in this regard. By comparison, professional writing provided distance from the source, from the inner depths. The head-knowing rather than heart-knowing such work demanded allowed me to share it publicly, a phenomenon which my experience of practice-led research has helped to articulate.

The becoming desire to honour Laleima's message was the sole change to a life script which refused to empower me to out inner productions beyond my circle-of-self. This desire compelled active re-engagement with creative writers in a public forum which required the shedding of several protective layers over several years via Swinburne's online MA program, the intent of which was to re-introduce skills long since lain dormant to my *artisan*.

Communications technology enabled me to undertake this study from half a world distant. It also enabled a fellow writing student to email and ask if I was

the Anne Gambling who had been cited in an article by Mandy Sayer in *Southerly* which described my short story from the distant past, *The Drover's De Facto* (1986), as extending “the feminist critique”, working “within the realist tradition”, and containing “all the features of Aristotelian unity” (Sayer 2008, p.201). Via the rhizomatic web of information offered by the Internet, I discovered this was not the only reference to my single creative work in the public sphere. It had also arrived onto several university curriculums⁸⁰, was a set text in the Danish and Norwegian upper-high school program⁸¹, and had been cited in the *Oxford Companion to Australian Literature* (Wild, Hooton & Andrews 1994, p.241).

The surreal path by which my short story had become myth – a personal myth begun in early 1984 and since made very public via the temporal and spatial universe offered by the Internet – was ripe for reflection. It demonstrated how a text could achieve an afterlife with no intervention by its creator beyond an initial outing on a plane of public exteriority with a very small print run. Courtesy of youthful ignorance, I had not visualised what may happen to the story. Now, after a lengthy process of bringing the inner out, a process which has empowered me to not only offer the text into the public domain but actively steward its entry and support its presence, I began to consider how different publication options would impact or facilitate my desire to share.

A first consideration was whether the artefact should be submitted to a commercial publisher. The arguments within my circle-of-self, mediated by *Anne-as-steward*, charted an unwieldy course but several factors were highlighted. These included the text's non-negotiability now it had been agreed to by the source, as well as my *compassionate witness's* ongoing fragility in the face of conversations about life in the intertidal zone – a challenging situation in view of traditional marketing techniques such as readings, interviews, writers' conferences, etc. Distance and a certain degree of anonymity are required to preserve the integrity of my *compassionate witness's* relations with the other. For example, in seeking to explain the process of embodied knowing in the intertidal zone, my *translator*, as witness of the *witness*, is often discomfited by her disclosure of certain aspects of practice.

⁸⁰ Not only in Australia, but in the United States, China and the Czech Republic.

⁸¹ In fact, I was at liberty to download essays written about my work from a student website if I so wished.

There is also the issue of deriving commercial profit from the artefact. Proceeds could be donated to charity but even this causes tension with my stated desire to share when seen from a reader's perspective. As much as my *artisan* argues that pricing the text would increase its value to the reader, her sisters respond: Why should those with limited financial resources be excluded? My sense of ethics says that the spirit in which this wisdom was gifted to me must be honoured by gifting it on.

By discounting traditional publishing options, the conversation shifted to an alternate landscape – the virtual rhizome of the Internet. As Deleuzo-Guattarian as my methodology, as fecund as the workings of the collective unconscious, the synchronicity of such a solution to share the artefact among a wide readership could not be ignored. I began to visualise a potential becoming landscape for a new becoming product, one which could see the development, over time, of a fully integrated website where the reader may struggle with the text of the artefact in the spirit of Forster (2005), access a raft of supporting documentation drawn from my exegetical reflections on process, and surf⁸² to other websites hosting like-minded destinations via interconnecting links.

A website so-conceived and delivered would represent a space where “the structures and forms of mythopoiesis create resonances that cross cultural and temporal divides” (Slattery & Slater 2008, p.19). In this respect, the artefact would form the heart which “shapes, contours, calibrates aesthetically a terrain that invites us into its formed experience” (Slattery 2008, p.162). Engaging with the artefact via the website would open a reflective gap for the reader “to submit, as Eliade suggests, to the *ganz andere*, to the “wholly other”” (Slattery 2008, p.171) in virtual space.

Such a solution would mean Laleima's message could be shared in a variety of ways via the website, mediated by the artefact in the first instance yet including my experience of its making as well as the opportunity to extend lines of flight which were beyond the scope of this study. Further, the site would be engineered to include a discussion platform, enabling readers/visitors to share their own experiences – with me and with each other – on a non-hierarchical egalitarian plane of consistency. In this way, *Anne-as-steward* would webmaster a site which itself entertains a conversation on peace

⁸² Literally – think Deleuzo-Guattarian waves, or vibrations, on this single plane of consistency.

consciousness, my *compassionate witness* would preserve her distance and anonymity, my *translator* would have reflective time to consider her performative utterances before disclosure, and my *artisan* would continue to craft texts to ensure their coherence.

My becoming desire to share, coupled with the potential becoming desire of even a handful of readers/visitors along disparate lines of flight could see the becoming myth of the artefact traverse the fecund swamp of the Internet, deterritorialising as it goes, all the while supported by my becoming conscious of how things work in the virtual rhizome. Just as there are essays, synopses, analyses and commentaries on an almost 30-year-old short story travelling through hyperspace, Google key-words feeding their intermezzo connections, *Anne-as-steward* would translate the themes of the artefact as well as my exegetical discoveries into key-words designed to bring potential readers into contact with potentially transformative content.

While the website could operate as a mediation space for the conversation on peace consciousness, the conversation itself thus has the potential to continue well beyond the artefact and my discoveries. A dialogue begun and textualised in the rhizome of the website's becoming product could offer a platform to:

[...] pry open the vacant spaces that would enable [one] to build [...] a plateau of intensity that would leave afterimages of its dynamism [...] creating a fabric of heightened states between which any number, the greatest number, of connecting routes would exist. Some might call that promiscuous. Deleuze and Guattari would call it revolution (Massumi 2004, p.xv).

This is the intensity I would propel into the plateau of becoming myth, itself an afterlife of the afterlife, my energy of desire to share its firefly spark of love. Far from great, I know, tiny, a nothing in the context of world affairs, insignificant in the face of grand debates, but like Laleima's, still one more than none:

If only one person understands the message of love and lights its flame with his firefly spark, then it is one more than none. And that one could be the One to bring the message to All. To bring All back to the One, in love (Gambling 2011a, p.164).

Laleima's words, Laleima's message – this is what fuels *Anne-as-steward's* desire. Love is the intent and the act (Peck 1978; Hooks 2000; Irigaray 2002) – the source of becoming desire, the source of becoming myth, and everywhere in-between on a plane of consistency merging inner and outer.

On this plane, the reader/visitor is invited to struggle in the intermezzo space pried open in a Deleuzo-Guattarian rhizome, a space which implies active negotiation with content rather than passive submersion in a store-bought novel which later gathers dust on an over-stocked bookshelf. It is a space full of gaps through which reader currents may course, directly engaging my lines of flight with website responses, or taking their engagement further along other lines of flight via spaces representing alternate becoming landscapes.

The web platform itself represents a space of translation where the artefact and its supporting texts may leap toward another iteration or dimension, where it may metamorphose into countless afterlives of a single afterlife, each a fragment sourced from the space of a greater language which “lovingly and in detail incorporate[s] the original's mode of signification [...] just as fragments are part of a vessel” (Benjamin 2007a, p.78).

Indeed, it seems justly poetic that the tangled web of rhizomatic knowledge unveiled by my encounter with the collective unconscious should have its latent potentialities manifested on a plane which mirrors its subterranean activities. The virtual material space I envisage, including its discussion platform, in its own way acts as an intertidal zone between text and reader. In this zone, *Anne-as-steward's* sharing must be as respectful of my readers/visitors' alterity as my *compassionate witness's* in her relations with the source. My desire to know was profoundly informed by Irigaray's (2002) way of love in those encounters⁸³, and my desire to share is equally amplified by the counsel of Krishnamurti in this instance:

When you share something, partake, there is a feeling not only of affection, care, but also responsibility. It is your responsibility that you actually share, not verbally, not intellectually, but actually, deeply partake (Krishnamurti 2006, p.163).

⁸³ Refer Chapter 2, pp.32-33.

By visualising the sharing of my discoveries as a deep, albeit virtual, partaking, underpinned by affection, care and responsibility, my own becoming conscious continues courtesy of the dialogue space the website offers. Circling back to the beginning, my desire to share thus fuels an ongoing desire to know across the length and breadth of a plane of consistency merging inner and outer. The personal myth I gift to the collective works to grow my own myth further, informed, as it is, by the simple personal truth that there is no finite end to becoming desire when love is my intent and my act.

From a time and a space of confusion and opacity, the fear that my mode of being and expression could never be offered onto a plane beyond my circle-of-self, I have finally reached, through practice-led research and the support of conversation partners down the millennia – their wisdoms textual, verbal, aesthetic, or as visionary “words formed” – a point where I am ready to share this fragment of a vessel, a loving translation of the original, a becoming myth in its own right as well as what it may become beyond. Throughout, embodied knowing was a worthy enabler of process, “the place of passage, a hyphen, a connecting link” (Bergson 1991, p.151) to channel becoming desire into this outcome. Like art, O’Sullivan claims, bodies skate the interface between the virtual and the actual: “Hence the important of Bergson’s gap [...] that in and of itself allows for a creative response to the world” (O’Sullivan 2008, p.99). In this context, he holds that an ethico-aesthetic program drives production of the new where “one must become involved in practices that actually allow this different state to emerge” (O’Sullivan 2008, p.95). Ethics and aesthetics – the practice-led research outcomes of my personal myth fulfil such criteria, now ready to be shared with the collective. Yet none of this would have been possible without the event I was born to embody⁸⁴.

So thank you, Laleima – for coming, for sharing, for being my witness, teaching me what I knew not, for believing in hope and trusting to love, and especially for empowering me to translate your life into this imperfect and faulty afterlife, a small offering on your beautiful, enlightened behalf.

To the reader, I also give thanks for your engagement. My experience of writing, like yours of reading, is a happening in time, the particularities of this submission to the academy no more than an ephemeral moment brought up

⁸⁴ Refer Chapter 2, p.21, for Deleuze et al on the “event”.

from the rhizome. A singular experience for each of us, its summer of flower soon to fade, wilt, drop to frozen earth, be returned whence it came, to dust. Nonetheless, I relish the opportunity to leaven said dust into fresh seeded loaves via the new becoming product of an integrated website, a space where I may share even more treasure sourced from the depths if I receive the permission to tell.

In describing Benjamin's approach to production of the new, where the process of decay can be seen as a process of crystallisation, Arendt writes that it is as if some things wait:

only for the pearl diver who one day will come down to them and bring them up into the world of the living – as “thought fragments”, as “something rich and strange”, and perhaps even as everlasting *Urphänomene* (Arendt 2007, p.51).

Which sets me to wonder, that if all pearl divers were to share their rich and strange fragments, like the one you hold now in your hand, what a world it could be. Perhaps a world where the Many truly see they are part of the One. Perhaps a world where, finally, there is *enough love*.

The Taste of Translation

(A Triptych)



© Anne Gambling 2011
(Excerpt for Examination)

Triptych Panels

One: Laleima's Story <Excerpt>	88
Two: Cantigas de Santa Maria <Excerpt>.....	109
Three: Kisha's Story <Complete>.....	130

*Some day, after we have mastered the winds, the waves, the tides and gravity,
we shall harness, for God, the energies of love. Then, for the second time in the
history of the world, man will have discovered fire.*

Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955)

There is love at the centre of all things and all things are the same thing.

Guatama Siddhartha, the Buddha (c563BCE-c483BCE)



Panel One

Laleima's Story

Contents

Chapters 23-26.....91

Chapters 35-38.....101

*When one is united to the core of another,
to speak of that is to breathe the name Hu,
empty of self and filled with love.*

A man and woman together always have a spirit result.

*Lovers don't finally meet somewhere.
They're in each other all along.*

Jelaluddin Rumi (1207-1273)

(Twenty-three)

A last evening at the Generalife. On the morrow the men would ride out for a hunting party of some weeks, the last of the season.

Are you sure you will not join us, Christian? al-Gani asks. It is a wonderful respite from the affairs of state, to ride and hunt all day, sleep beneath the heavens each night. I remember well my nights as a child on the hunt. A lute strummed, a flute blown, a low voice sending me into my dreams.

His eyes shine with memory, and he laughs, shakes his head at wonder recalled.

It is as if we are our nomadic ancestors made whole again, he says, our lives open to the four horizons, blown by the four winds, watched over by Allah's universe. Out there I feel at one with the world, like a tiny speck on the face of existence but still with the light of God's love in my breast. Out there I forget I am sultan, become once again the boy, the son of my fathers, free of spirit, unshackled from duty, ready for adventure.

Come, he smiles and pats his guest on the knee. Come and see what it is to be a boy again.

Your offer is indeed generous, my Lord, says Sébastien, and the pleasure of re-creating the firesides of our primal past sorely tempting. But needs be I must finish my work and return to Sevilla before first snows close the mountain pass.

Zamrak sits apart from the conversation at table, his brow clouded. Watching her, watching him, he believes to know it now, and follows when they leave separately but together.

He hears their murmurs, imagines the coupling to come.

His hand is bound in white gauze, yet he feels anew the wound's pain, the pulse of vein up and through a thin veil to open the gash afresh. A bandage soaked in a bloodied heart's ache soon drips to marble. Pools. Congeals.

So this is your work, Christian, he spits.

It is Sara who bears witness. A scuffed and smeared trail leads her to the watcher's apartments, and she hurries to al-Khatib with the answer, the one that so much says.

Now, he instructs. There can be no delay.

She finds them at a midnight supper of quail – two small birds roasted, bound as one, fragrantly filled and heady with spice.

She hears her mistress say: We are like the oak tree and the cypress. We stand not in each other's shadow, but separate, apart.

And sees Sébastien kiss the cool of her hands, press them to love-warmed cheeks.

But our roots entwine beneath the earth, speak one to the other, he rejoins. We are of different kinds and will ever-be. Still I know you as I know myself. For different kinds can melt as one. If they so choose. If they believe.

I have chosen, she says. I understand Rumi's verse:

I have no companion but Love,

No beginning, no end, no dawn.

This night she has brought her Chinese writing box. She removes brushes and inks, spreads parchment before her and copies the nested fishes etched into its lid onto the page. Into the light shape she scripts an S, into the dark an L. In Latin is the gift for him from her, no end or beginning to this circle bound by the dance.

This is my marriage contract, she says. This is my promise. As it is written in your scriptures: *Love never fails.*

Sara wrings her hands in the shadows, sees the beauty of a life un-lived rise up and overwhelm her with a cry for what can never be.

The lovers start at the intrusion.

Your master has called for you, she murmurs.

The gazelle caught in the hunter's sight, his hand a font of energy in her own.

Let me walk with you, he says. Let us share this fate. For in my scriptures it also says: *There is no fear in love, for perfect love casts out fear.*

I do not fear, and her eyes are clear as she states this truth. But needs be I must walk alone. Of this I am certain.

She places her fingers to her lips, then to his. And in this hour of all hours is not surprised that a verse from Zamrak presents itself in her thoughts:

The pennants of morning are unfurled.

Night's bell has tolled, it is time to travel on.

Later, al-Khatib comes to him and says: Leave tonight. The hunt is fortuitous – it will be some weeks before al-Gani knows. By then you are safely in Castile and we can make arrangements for the princess's future.

You could send her to me, Sébastien pleads. We could begin life afresh in Christian lands.

The vizier snorts. Do not be so naive. Would you spend your whole life looking over your shoulder, waiting for al-Gani's captain of cavalry to cut you down with a swift sabre and return her for punishment? Is that the life afresh you would share?

She has farewelled you, he continues more softly, and lays a hand on the boy's shoulder. You must do the same. Let love be both poison and cure, the serpent's venom which heals through its pain. Do not let your love spill over into a matter of state where it will curdle and atrophy, drown in a mire of political turmoil. Leave, pray. Do not play with God's mercy.

Before dawn horses are saddled. Sara has beseeched her brother to provide him with safe passage to the border.

But Pablo has already made a decision of his own.

Tell al-Gani I am ill when they leave for the hunt, he says to al-Khatib and then turns to Sébastien. As I first brought you here, so will I leave. If they come to hunt you, I will stand at your side. Love is no crime.

al-Khatib nods, sighs. Yes, you would probably be the assassin sent, a Christian with the task a fellow Christian to murder. It would certainly serve some courtiers' purposes.

Here, says Sara, pressing a pouch into Sébastien's hand.

It contains a stone, an amethyst disc on which script is etched:

A Beloved unlike all others.

He alone has touched my heart.

And although absent from sight and touch,

He is ever present in my heart.

It is a ghazal from the Sufi Rabi'a which she carved herself, Sara says, her voice cracking. It rested beneath her pillow each night.

Pablo is at his elbow, urging him to hurry. There is the twitter of birds in the pre-dawn, the stirring of soldiers on the battlements, and they ride swift across the Vega.

The amulet is safe in a pouch about his neck. Yet a sudden slice to the heart pulls him short, and he slows his mount to a trot, pain searing his chest with each breath taken.

It is time to turn, to take a last look at the Madinat in her glory, the soft glow of dawn's burnt light at her back. And yes, there he sees a figure atop the tower, wrapped in the weft of lightening sky, her hand raised, sketching words of farewell.

Borne on the wind, they sail. To where he is and whence he goes. Away.

(Twenty-four)

I wish to bathe! I call to Sara. I must warm these frigid bones, open my skin to the steam. Slake it clean!

Ready for reinvention.

The wind is high risen. It rocks the cypresses in the garden, teases the waters of the pool, reflections lost in a soup of confusion, sight of self drowned beneath. The wind is high risen, on this, the day he left. I linger not in my thoughts, but cross the patio before resolve is lost.

Servants assemble in the gallery of the hammam to disrobe me and make their preparations. I don a plain linen shift, ready to descend the stairs and do this thing. Yet my plan not a plan, just an opening of pores to the warmth of the steam, a submission to what will be.

As easy as hooking a toe into the hem of my shift and letting gravity do the rest down a steep flight of stairs. As easy as looking over my shoulder to answer a servant's cheeky remark but neither halting forward motion, nor watching. And a few moments later lain prone, no longer whole, concerned maids cradling my head.

Oh, but to will it? To look down the staircase, anticipate the action and know its consequence? I would tremble, steady myself on the rail, search for the hem with my toe. Too deliberate an action and as such unachievable. No thought or it will not work. The toe must find the hem of its own accord, the step fade from view, the staircase there, then not there.

Perhaps my mouth will open, a shout issue forth or a faint cry of surprise. To be expected, from an unborn child soon a pool of blood to be.

After it happens, they note the bruise forming on my knee, the graze upon my chin. My ankle has swelled.

But I still wish to bathe! I cry.

Sara shakes her head at this insanity, steps onto the marble block.

Head back, she sighs. Close your eyes.

Water cascades my hair, I feel its thick-lustred sheet fall heavy at my back.

Rid me of this sin! Open wide my pores! Forgive me of this death!

I stand naked in the sight of Allah, but closed eyes only see within. Where there are sparks, stars, a wide red silent scream. And a woman's cry much like my own as her fall goes very slowly past me.

Blood flows. Thick, sticky, warm.

More than a memory, less than a life, a breath, a heart beat. A river of shame between slim thighs.

Blood flows, and does not stop.

(Twenty-five)

I can see a small bird from my window. He plays hide and seek with his companions among the holes cut deep into the stucco relief around the patio columns. Sometimes seen, sometimes not. Peepholes, spy glasses, windows to other worlds. Peep out, peep in, hop to, hop fro. Flutter your wings, ruffle your feathers, chirrup your joy. I promise I shan't give you away.

Sara is at my bedside. The tears are slowing, but still well up when I think afresh on my crime.

What is this madness? Esha cries, rushing into the room. What have you done?

I turn my shamed face away, close the veils on this draped universe, look for my feathered friend. Perhaps, just perhaps, past the curtains, past the carpets and hangings, there is a small opening, a tunnel through and out.

Oh, tiny sparrow, if I shrink to your size and press through that space, to where shall I fly? To where shall my longing take me? To the freezing snows of the Sierra Nevada, my feet bare and iced, mind cleared to see forever? What do I ponder if not the infinite beyond? What do I see if not these finite palace walls?

The bleeding has stopped, Sara tells my sister. It was sudden, a full rush, but now nothing. What does that mean?

It means you have not done this thing properly! says Esha, full of anger. But suddenly softens, catches me up in her arms.

Oh, my small sister, why did you harm yourself so? Why was the Christian so important?

Love, I whisper, eyes fixed on the sparrow.

Call for Rasool, Esha instructs. I would know what his magic can tell us.

The eunuch places his hands on my belly, moves them softly, gently across the hidden pattern of organs within, breathes low and deep, his sight within.

Your child lives, he says, waking from the vision. He grins at me. His heartbeat is strong, he wants not to be sacrificed.

I weep afresh. Allah has not punished. He has forgiven!

A verse from Hafiz bursts from my lips:

Love,

Give me back my wings,

Lift me,

Lift me nearer.

Esha rises from her stool. I must speak with al-Khatib. We need to do this thing properly –

No! I cry, suddenly sure and hold my body tight. No! It is the will of Allah. Our love shall be brought forth into the world – his soul shall be born in this form.

His? Esha strokes my hair with maternal warmth.

I know. I carry a father's son.

(Twenty-six)

Only some days have passed but she feels well, uplifted, buoyed by fresh joy. Allah's sign is clear – this she believes, and decides to visit her mother's grave in the Rawda.

Sara grimaces. Mistress, are you sure? I would prefer that you rest!

I have rested enough! It is a beautiful day, the wind has dropped, the birds delight in their games. I too would enjoy a day in the garden.

Ah. But to observe joy when you feel none, to witness love when all you swallow is a bitter pill? A difficult task for one such as he. And so he waits in the patio as she seeks to return to the harem after dusk prayers, a wicked shadow masking a lonely heart's desire.

You are well again, little star, he sneers. Over your heartache at the Christian's cowardly flight?

She lowers her head, pulls close her veil.

He steps into her path and says: I have nothing but pity for you. Indeed, I know the feeling of loss well. But perhaps I can soothe your anguish as well as my own? For I have an idea.

And he begins the slow circling of a cornered gazelle.

Yes, I have an idea. An idea to encompass us both. For perhaps, one day, soon, there will be a need for a new chief vizier. Something may happen to remove al-Khatib from his place of importance – who knows? But perhaps, one day, soon, al-Gani may hear the story of your dalliance with the Christian and the role al-Khatib played in the intrigue. Perhaps al-Gani will come to me, distraught at the betrayal visited upon him by his chief advisor and his beautiful baby sister, and may wish for a servant more loyal to accompany him the rest of his days.

He stops before her, a silken thread of words binds her tight. He is certain of his position now, the low crouch before the spring. To grip the neck of the fragile doe, break its slender bough with one swift crack.

Perhaps all this will come to pass. One day. Soon, he breathes into her veil. Long, hot, heavy.

And waits – a good sign, he thinks, this silence of hers.

Or, there is another perhaps you may like to consider. Where you seek out your brother upon his return from the hunt, confess your love for me and plead with him for our union in marriage.

Again he waits. As long as it takes, he thinks.

I can see your breast rise and fall within your gown, he says. I can see your heart beat hard against the slim twigs of bones so easily splintered.

Yes, her voice a small tremor. I see how you watch me, Sir. Perhaps you also see that I would sooner take my own life, cut out this heart by my own hand than submit to you in marriage!

There. It is said, spoken. It is what will be.

Zamrak smirks. You think you have a choice? What choice will you have when the sultan knows you are no virgin? Even then you will be forced to submit to me, the reward of a grateful king more than happy that I accept a whore as my wife. Such a sacrifice I would make to heal such deep wounds in the royal house!

I will not submit to evil. For that is the sum of your soul.

He grips her wrist in reply. Hark! One more squeeze and it will snap.

She gasps in pain but still he holds fast.

You will be mine, he says through gritted teeth, spit curdling in his beard.

Oh! Her child has called. The deep primal ache of lifeblood threatens to drain afresh. She crumples.

No more games, he growls, letting her fall. I will have my way. And strides away from the patio's trembling light.

Rasool has heard, heard what cannot be heard with the ear. He who carries fresh linens to the harem hears in his heart this cry for help.

She is but a smudge on the patio marble, a shadow shrinking from the moon's embrace.

The eunuch thinks long as he smoothes damp hair from her forehead, releasing pain from her brow with a muttered incantation. He thinks long on the arts of his ancestors, their magic as deep as his darkly-oiled skin.

And leaves the linens to lap and flow where they have been dropped, afloat on the cool edge of the pool. Rather, it is Laleima he carries to the women, her feather-light form a precious jewel in his arms.

(Thirty-five)

The Council of Justice is in session, sitting in judgement of a caliph's sister who kneels before them in the centre of the hall.

There are no witnesses, says the chief justice, only the accusation of al-Gani's chief vizier who is unfortunately absent. Are you therefore willing to confess your sin?

I confess to my belief in love, yes.

Do you confess to the crime of zina?

I confess to my belief in love, she repeats.

al-Gani snorts from his throne. You committed the crime of zina. And with an Infidel at that!

Oh? she says, the Council forgotten in this shadow play of two upon a stage. You know the words of Ibn Arabi as well as I do – there are no Infidels, there is only love:

My heart has become capable of every form:

It is a pasture for gazelles and a convent for Christian monks,

And a temple for idols, and the pilgrim's Ka'ba,

And the tables of the Torah and the book of the Qur'an.

I follow the religion of Love, whichever way his camels take.

My religion and my faith is the true religion.

Do his words mean nothing to you, Brother? Was it simply a game to recite them when we were children? Were you only showing how clever you were to Father while in your heart you did not believe?

al-Gani humphs. Nonsense, what you speak. I blame al-Khatib for this ridiculous Sufi nonsense spouting from your mouth.

He scowls, turns to the chief justice. She has confessed. Sentence her. She has betrayed her faith and her king.

Betrayed? she cries. It is you who betrayed Father's memory, Mother's love, all because you listen to a jackal's lies! Zamrak knows all about betrayal. And you are party to it!

Enough of this! al-Gani commands. You are guilty, death by stoning is your penalty.

He sits smug on the throne, its leather creaks in protest. Check and check-mate, the pawn no longer required.

Oh yes, there you sit, ready for your courtiers to pay homage. Dissension, contrary voices, intelligent debates? All lie locked in your past. We used to recite these words of Ibn Arabi too, but only now do I see their truth before me:

*Your spring meadows
Are desolate now. Still, desire
For them lives always
In my heart, never dying.
These are their ruins.
These are the tears
In memory of those
Who melt the soul forever.*

Enough! He crashes a fist down on the arm of his throne.

But no, not enough. She will speak. And no one comes forth to take the condemned from the hall.

Oh, my brother! What of all that is written on your walls?

She sweeps her hand around the room, reaches out to dance with their scripted beauty.

This is your book, your knowledge, your gift to the world! Yet you would deny the truths of the Qur'an, of your ancestors? The words of love and splendour, the full moon of our Nasrid dynasty?

She bows her head. *La ghalib ila Allah – there is no victor but God.*

Enough! And he hurls a goblet at her.

It crashes against the wall. Plaster cracks, a vase plummets to earth. History crumbles, its fragile beauty as ephemeral as a snowflake on a summer's day.

The justices shift on their stools. The closest leans toward the caliph, murmurs restraint in his ear.

Time stands silent in the corner of the Mexuar, waiting, watching, holding its forever breath.

Who brokers the past? Who preserves the future? Who, in the end, bears witness to the palaces of memory?

Mumu, I do not understand! You are the older brother who cuddled me when Father died, saved me and protected me in our exile! Who was it who built the Hall which honours the Two Sisters, the sisters who stood by you through your trials? When did you forget all this? When did Zamrak make you forget all this?

She rises slowly, separating the mosaic of her existence from the solidity of baked clay.

When did you forget? she asks a last, lingering time, before gliding from the hall, silence closing over in her wake.

The silence stays, stays long. It knows how to watch the watchers. Till split by Ayesha, path cleaved, seas parted.

Yes, she says, the echo of its witness. When did you forget all this?

(Thirty-six)

Esha comes while I sit with the flame but I turn her away. Esha comes and says: I will not let them do this thing to you.

She sits at my elbow, beside me on the floor, staring full at my face while I stare into the flame of an open brazier.

Laleima? Did you hear? Did you listen?

I heard. Now go.

She begins to weep. I know that kohl streaks her face, smudges her pure heart, but grit my teeth to the agony of her sorrow.

Go! I repeat from the depths of the fire. And finally she does as instructed.

At a distance, Rasool works his magic. Brings herbs and spices to add to the ivory pyxide where my hair and Mother's lie woven. He stirs the small berries, flakes, powders with his finger, whispers an incantation in his ancient Feija tongue, spits and mixes again. His eyes are turned back in his head. He has begun the journey to the otherworld.

A fass of frankincense bubbles and oozes over the glowing charcoal, its fumes sweep upwards in a slow swirled dance. He sprinkles the contents of the pyxide into the cobwebbed smoke and flames rise to their kiss. The mist between the worlds thins. The veil grows translucent. It is time to look within.

I am in the forest of my last morning's walk on a narrow path still thick with fog. But the sun warms the air, melts the columns of mist with its rays, transforming them into thin radiant pillars of dew-laden light among the trees. It is a spindly structure on first reckoning, until I see – yes, this is Allah's staircase.

Come, says Rasool. I will guide you to the staircase.

There is still enough feeling of this world to know I have reached the garden, it is dawn, and I must kneel. Rasool covers me with the shroud of the fqih. Fully am I cloaked within its cocoon.

Through closed eyes and heavy cloth, I feel the morning sun crest the mountains. I know I must pass through the arched hennaed gate painted on the cloth to climb the staircase and reach the Sierra snows.

This, then, is how it ends. And how it begins.

(Thirty-seven)

I am at the still point, the centre, the hub of the turning wheel, where time and eternity share the same breath, where stillness and movement fuse into one, where love is and always will be.

Walking through the gate and onto Allah's staircase.

But who is this before me? An Angel stands here!

Not to guide – he looks back, far over my shoulder, eyes wide, mouth open, confronted by history and all its dead, a pile of debris sky-high and sky-wide.

He spreads his wings, backs away in horror, back into a future far beyond our sight. Conjured by an artist's hand in an age I will never see, I cry out to the Angel:

Do not despair! I may only be a small smudge to your eyes, the pain heaped on the world far greater than my speck of suffering. But love's heart still beats eternal!

Taut-frozen, mute, he hears not my words, has been crafted only to lament the tiny firefly flickers of love throughout history cindered to ash by others' hate.

I cry out but in vain, his eyes fixed on the bigger tragedies, the evils that have befallen humankind. But still I cry out, climb further the staircase to where he stands.

Hear me, oh Angel! There is hope. Always, ever, there is hope! If only one person understands the message of love and lights its flame with his firefly spark, then it is one more than none. And that one could be the One to bring the message to All. To bring All back to the One, in love. Our tiny lights will not fail, oh Angel! Each firefly joining together in the radiance of the One Light cannot fail.

So turn, Angel. Turn! Into a future where poets will compose like the sages of old. Words which echo Ibn Arabi's wisdom, words which share the dervish dreams of Rumi. Do not give up! There is always the chance to shine the light of love into the forgotten corners of the shadowed wastelands of this world.

I beg of you, Angel – search history's wreckage! Trawl through the piles and you will find our tiny firefly sparks nested in some crevice or other, alive, aflame with hope.

On this long string of time from the past to the future – step off, Angel!
Step off! And dance!

The stones rain down upon her, split open her head, spill out her life's blood.
But she feels none of it. For Laleima is too busy on the staircase to Paradise.
Helping the Angel of History re-find his lost hope.

(Thirty-eight)

There is a nearness to times past. They are ever at your elbow, or a-whisper in your ear, or embedded in a nook, a cranny of the mind, biding, ever-biding, and ever-ready to re-enter, reconstruct, recreate that which should never have been lost, forgotten, let slip by memory in the first place. These are the maps of the heart, their scrolls a pilgrim's journey. Remaining as written, whether remembered or not.

al-Gani has sat in his throne room all this long night long, hearing again, over and over, the voice of his sister, of each of his sisters. He sits alone and remembers: When did I forget all this? When was the rotten seed planted in the fertile soil of my ego? He sits alone and remembers that he has indeed forgotten.

Now he despairs of what he has soured and will find her, stay her execution. It is not too late. To repair what is irreparable, reconcile the irreconcilable. He is a Nasrid caliph, after all. He will prevail.

He will send a scroll to Zamrak: Desist!

He will send a scroll to Ibn al-Khatib: All is forgiven! I was wrong!

Such small words. Yet so full, so full! He will tell Laleima what he has done and they will dance again and hug and laugh. And she will stay his little star.

He leaves the chamber. The night has been long. He knows not the hour. The sky is clear, no storm threatens, the sun has risen.

But still he hears the thunder roll. Still he sees the lightning flash. Still he hears Ayesha's scream.

Oh –

It is as if midday has burst upon them. Sudden. Swift. The sky split by a kingly blow. A flash, an instant of white, floods the scene brighter than crystal snows drenched by the full moon's smile.

He sees her, more than an outline, less than a form, a bloodied shroud over a crumpled body.

The instant of white shimmers, hovers. Its thunderous twin explodes, booms.

Down the steps he runs. The guards stay their stones as the caliph falls to earth, lifts the shrouded figure in his arms, and weeps. Weeps.

Too late, too late – ever too late. He would be Mumu again, he would a brother be.

Rasool comes, rests a hand light upon the child's shoulder. For indeed he is Mumu, and another of those he loved best in the world has been taken from him.

Weep not for what is passed, says Rasool, for now she is free. See? And he points to a dove high-flown into the white of Sierra snows.

But Mumu does not see. Only Esha crawling to where she can wrap herself in a sister's blood.

We are Nasrids, Father said. And we will be remembered.



Panel Two
Cantigas
de Santa Maria

Contents

Song of the Monk:	
Verses 6-8, Verse 10 & excerpt Verse 12.....	112
Song of the Revelation.....	127

*Wayfarer, there is no way,
You make the way as you go ...
Wayfarer, there is no way –
Only foam trails in the sea.*

Antonio Machado (1875-1939)

*And sometimes a grave traveller arrives,
Who passes like a flash of light through our hundred spirits
And, trembling, shows us a new technique.*

Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926)

(6)

The Sad One took into his retreat no other sound than a whispered breath from the parched chamber of his heart. A great loneliness, of silent suffering rendered mute by thick walls, thus began. I closed and locked the door, withdrew my eyes from the fragments, all that remained of a dying soul.

What would re-bind him? What glue would he find to reassemble the whole, to keep what was left from crumbling, being swift-crushed to dust? Would a word be enough? Would his word be enough? Could I be sure of my counsel, its effect? I had borne witness to a ruined hull of tears, a saddened lament of ashen regret, and all I could do was pray.

I do not know when I first noticed, but a dove came into the habit of frequenting a laurel in the cloister yard, the one which shaded the fountain at its centre. A sweet creature, she cooed a gentle melody, trilled up from a sated heart like the contented purr of a well-loved cat.

At some point during his retreat, I noticed her there and then each day thereafter. The monks likewise remarked her gentle presence and took it as an omen that God smiled on our work – the harvest would be plentiful, they thought, and the winter not so wicked.

But she brought me peace for another reason. For when the novice returned from bringing the Sad One's meal to the window of his cell, remarking the cries of anguish which poured forth from within, I sometimes faltered in my faith, that my counsel had been correct.

At such times, I felt the need to sit by the fountain, within earshot of his distress, to pray. Yet it was the dove, not my prayers, which brought my anxious heart to rest. Whether her soft voice heard or her watchful eye spied through green leaves, yes, it was she who brought me comfort.

I have learnt, through long and bitter work, that the night is always darkest before dawn. Nevertheless, some small voice continued to invade my mind, like an earwig nibbling and gnawing at my resolve. Would he survive his retreat?

Over and over the Lord has told me to trust but ever I fail Him and this time no different. I grew ready to thrash myself for the ill doing I had brought the Sad One, prayed long for the strength not to break down the door and take his poor wasted fragments in my arms. To cry out: Forgive me!

I prayed. Oh, how I prayed! And at the darkest hour, yes, the Lord lifted me from the pit of despair when the novice returned one day and remarked: Now, he sings.

Sings? I thought. Sings?

Do we do it to ourselves? Is it a little game we play with the Almighty? Proof! Give me proof! is our demand, over and over. Prove that You exist! Prove that You listen and answer Your servants' humble prayers!

I who am a very poor servant, one who demands so much of his Creator. The boy who drives the plough has more trust in His grace than I.

Till now. Till the burden of proof, the sceptic's heavy load, lightened with the breaking of dawn on my heart's horizon on the thirty-ninth day when the novice came, not to tell of wails and rent flesh but the gentle hum of melody, and soft singing in a tongue he knew not.

That night Albaro returned from the monastery of Agios Georgios to wait beneath the laurel till I unbarred the cell and released its prisoner next day. So it was that we both watched the Sad One emerge like a babe born into the harsh light of a foreign world.

With one hand he shielded his eyes from a setting sun, with the other he clutched a single sheet of torn and filthy parchment. Indeed, we watched him emerge from the cave leaving all else behind save this scrap of paper trembling with life between his fingers, poetry in a script only his hand could write.

He had surrendered – fully, completely, been crushed to dust. No fragment remained of his self to be rebound, reforged. None needed. For out of dust had arisen a jewel of creation, our Lady Kiria, the merciful, the most compassionate. Embodied loving-kindness born afresh by his hand.

It was Kiria, the All-Pure, who had brought him home. By the grace of our Lady, he was restored to God's care.

(7)

He began that very day, such was his hunger to write, to perfect the image scratched in charcoal on a snatch of discarded parchment.

Striding purposefully across to the fountain where we waited, he fixed me with eyes no longer rent by pain, eyes in which desire, a deep passion burned in its stead, and demanded: From where can I secure more paper and implements?

He clutched the sketch in a grimy hand whose fingernails were torn and ragged. Gently, Albaro took the drawing from his grasp and we both looked long at the face of the Lady, the bonny health of the Child.

With her arms she encircled the babe, yet one hand reached out toward us, her eyes turned from a son's frothing joy in arms to fix her anonymous witness with immutable courage, knowing sorrow, infinite compassion.

Oh, how he had captured the bottomless well of her love within those coal-smudged eyes!

What you have written here is in the Eleousa style, I said. The Virgin cherishes her Son, it is clear, but still she shares with us the depth of emotion of a young mother who fears for the fate of her child.

No words did either the Sad One or his brother speak, yet the air was full of twinned resonance. And after some minutes, Albaro returned the drawing to its creator and said: It is done then.

Yes, the other agreed. It is done.

He had unblocked the channel from the source. A river pure and molten, wild and free, again flowed from his heart, and he trailed his hand in the water of the fountain which had murmured in the courtyard all these long days and nights.

This sustained me, he said of the water. It quenched my thirst with its longer-than ring song.

A new light welled in his eyes, these eyes of lightest brightest blue. He ran wet fingers through matted hair, scratched at a beard of rusty sand, suddenly grinned at the magnitude of revelation.

You knew all along, brother! he laughed and clapped Albaro on the back. Yet it was only when I heard the fountain's voice, when I listened closely to its song that I knew, that I remembered, and slipped into its cleansing waters to heal my wounds.

Albaro whooped his joy, scooped water from the fountain, flung it up into the air.

We shall have to find you a new name, I said into the Sad One's laughing face.

He is Agios Georgios! Albaro cried. Who has his dragon slain!

And anointed this fresh baptism with the holy water by his sleeve.

(8)

Some would call it fortuitous but I believe it an act of God. As Albaro took vows to join our order and follow his own calling to serve the brotherhood in Sinai, our master iconographer, Ioannis of Itanos, returned from the Queen of Cities without his young apprentice. It seemed the lad had been wooed by the grandness of empire and taken his leave of our modest island workshop to prostrate himself before a fine door.

Under normal circumstances this would have been impossible. He was indentured to our service, after all. But Ioannis could only shrug when I pointed out the obvious.

He is my son, Father. How can I refuse him anything?

Fortune smiles in the most ill-lit corridors. Ioannis acquired a new apprentice and Georgios ample practice in the polishing of his image. He continued to dwell in the small cell of his predecessor but now a candle burned the whole night through as he pored over texts describing technique and process, as he experimented with pigments and the application of gold leaf. Over and over he practiced the fineness of his stroke with brushes of different size, all the while working only with Her image.

The master approved this course of action. It is wise, he said, to perfect the writing of one icon before moving on to the other saints.

Yet Ioannis was greatly disturbed by Georgios' insistence on writing the icon in the manner of its original conception during retreat rather than the manner prescribed in the texts, and I would hear heated argumentation emanating from the open studio door.

No – no! The face must be more angular, the jaw firmer, the lips thinner!

He never questioned Georgios' portrayal of the Christ who gazed up at his mother in full abundance of the radiance of life, but only the manner of the Lady. And when he began to work with colour? Oh, it set the master's teeth even further on edge and his rants grew louder still!

Do you call this the Lord's work? I would hear him cry as a board was flung aside. No, no, no! You have read the texts! The maphorion must be ochre red! And she is too dark, her skin should be lighter, refract more of the light. Like this –

I could picture the scenes of tussle from the oaths issuing from the far end of the cloister yard each day – Ioannis hovering about, taking up pencil or brush

to adjust this or that, only to have his student alter it again. I could picture Georgios at his bench, quiet, implacable, no matter how much his master seethed. If I ever did hear him speak, his tone was low, even, its content undiscernible to those passing the workshop door.

One day I could take no more of my imaginings and invited myself in to bear witness. I watched as he worked, as they both worked at their separate benches, while several novices bustled about in the ongoing preparation of panels.

Indeed it was as I heard the master describe. This was not the Theotokos of template and tradition, of technique and rigorous rubric. Her face was softer, fuller, rounder. And yes, its colour was that of dark honey, her eyes the same smudged coals as in the first sketch, finely shaped like thick-lashed almonds. Yet within these black pools, a hint of green winked, a mix of malachite and azurite eddied in their depths, backlit by ethereal presence. I know not how he conjured it, but the effect astonished me. It was as if she held you within her well of compassion. Held you, and would not give you up.

Now I studied the maphorion which disturbed Ioannis beyond all else. Rather than painting the veil which dropped to her shoulders in ochre red to show her suffering and acquired holiness, he had rendered the whole in gold leaf. In the soft light of the workshop, the veil looked like the colour of ripened lemons. But when burnished by the afternoon sun? Then I beheld her true divinity – Kiria framed by the pure light of heaven.

Why do you persist in this disrespect? Ioannis cried at his apprentice, grateful for my magisterial presence. You know there is a specific text you must follow when writing the icon. You know you cannot intrude upon things you have not seen. Father! Tell him!

To paint in gold is to paint in Light, I said to Georgios. Ioannis speaks sincerely. You cannot play with images you have not seen. You must stay with the Truth as revealed.

But I have seen, Georgios said simply. And the Lord would have me write what I have seen. I dare not vary the script of divine vision no matter how many earthly rubrics I contradict along the way.

His eyes held a child's wide innocence while Ioannis' were confusion pure. I smiled into the gorge between the two and said: Aristotle believed that memory is an imprint on the soul. We see with the eye of the soul and therefore

recognise the saints when they appear in vision. But it seems it has happened for you the other way round.

That ended it once and for all. Truce called in the face of unwavering resolve and inner sight, Ioannis looked anew at his apprentice. This was no student who should mix his master's colours, prepare his panels, board after board, silently watching the teacher at work, year in, year out, heeding the murmured instructions of successive lessons drenched in painterly strokes.

I will not question you again, brother, Ioannis promised. But I can help you translate your vision with advice in colour and technique to bring what you have seen out from the ground of your being.

And watching their silent labour, the experienced craftsman and his simple brother, I felt soon we would have two masters in the workshop of Agia Aikaterini, one schooled in tradition, the other born to write.

(10)

Years pass as they do but never did he waver from his task. Afresh, anew, each time. Each time the first, the only time. Of entering eternity's halls to capture a frozen instant, less than the twinkling of an eye, when Kiria's countenance was stilled, her babe's arms outstretched.

Held within a deep recess of candled light, a niche within the circlet of the world, he wrote in a space where everything was stilled, where life itself held its forever breath, waiting for what would be – the moment after the tock, before the tick again. Intermezzo this space, in-between.

Like St Basil, he found his place of retreat below the crest of a rise, at the end of a path which attracted no wayfarer, a place where he could dwell on Her image and a fine view of the sea, a tranquil paradise for converse with God. There, he plucked what he needed from hillside orchards of fig and pomegranate, apple, pear, or walnut, tended his own small garden, and kept wild boar at bay with a stone wall topped by a hedge of thorn.

Regularly he loaded a Panagia Kardiotissa into the saddlebag of his donkey and, with a slap to the backside, sent him off through the lemon grove, up and over the ridge, down across meadows and ploughed fields, past orchards and vineyards. Presently his helpmate would arrive at the monastery gate of Agios Georgios where a monk, having remarked his passage from some distance, waited to relieve him of his load. Tossed hay was brought for his pleasure, he drank deep from a trough of water freshly drawn while the monk prepared a return load of provisions for his master's work or sustenance.

The hut in which Georgios dwelt was an old shepherd's dwelling long since fallen into disuse and disrepair. It was on land we leased from the widow Theodora of the house of Constantine, part of a larger parcel on which we tended olives, grew grapes, pastured a herd of goats. A pious woman of some beauty, still in her prime, she understood the great works we attempted and offered her land for only a small tribute.

One day she summoned me to her villa in the town to discuss the matter of a small chapel in the grounds of her country estate, erected in honour of the husband now deceased. It had been some years since I had consecrated the space. At that time she had no further funds to decorate its walls. But now, after several profitable seasons and another bountiful harvest expected, she summoned me and said:

I wish to commission an iconostasis, and for the walls to be daubed with fine frescoes. I have a desire for the farmhands to know the Word of our Lord although they cannot read Holy Scripture. I would wish their prayers directed by the stories of the saints, our Lady and, of course, our Saviour.

We agreed she should accompany me to the cloister workshop to discuss the various options with Master Ioannis. Once there, however, she was most taken by a depiction of the Theotokos rendered by Georgios in recluse.

By whose hand was this made?

An anchorite lives above the sea beyond our monastery in the Messara Valley. He writes from inner vision.

What else does he make?

None other than our Lady Kiria.

He never varies the script of her depiction?

I shook my head. It is the Kardiotissa he sees within his own heart which compels him to write.

She studied the form some more, then suddenly swept from the studio, throwing over her shoulder this instruction:

If you can convince him to include some other scenes in his repertoire, this is the artist who shall do the work.

At which Ioannis raised a bushy eyebrow which seemed to wish me much luck.

Some weeks later, opportunity took me to our brothers at Agios Georgios. It was time to do the calculations on quantities expected from this year's harvest. No more than a set of predictions at this stage correlated against a list of Sinai's needs, but as the task would be mine to fill the shortfall from contracts negotiated with third parties, it was best to have such information early.

Indeed, as the widow had informed me, this year would be prosperous by all accounts. Rains had fallen when they should, seed sown in the waxing crescent of the moon had flourished in warm earth, and an early spring free of later frosts had the orchards groaning with fast-ripening fruit. I put away my ledgers well-pleased and after joining Father Lazarus at his midday meal, called for a mout to take me to our recluse.

I stopped the donkey in the lee of the ridge and tied him to a tree near the top of the grove where he took to cropping grass while I continued on foot. Atop

the swaying beast I would surely have been bruised and battered by heavy-laden branches, and so reached the clearing in which his hut stood without injury, yet sweating heavily.

All was quiet about. The door stood ajar.

I proceeded to knock and squint within its sliver of gloom. No response, but that did not disturb my afternoon's plans. I washed my face and the prickly back of my neck with cool spring water collected in a trough by the door, then sat on a bench against the whitewashed wall.

The warmth of the day eased by a light breeze through the trees, I looked down through the grove to the sea and its clear sight westward to where the sun set behind a seamless blue-rimmed horizon, each eve without fail. The sound of the waves reached up to me – swash thrown onto the beach followed by the percolating clammer of its return through ten thousand smooth-faced stones.

Altogether a situation most agreeable and one which must have shapeshifted into sleep, for I became suddenly aware of the thwack of wood against wood. Opening one bleary eye after the other, I spied my quarry climbing a ladder into a nearby tree where he set to trimming away small branches overstocked with leaves so the lemons could collect more sun.

Greetings, I called.

Hello Father, his response.

He had long ceased calling me Master, his footing in the universe finally found and acknowledged, knowing now his master lay within, instructing in a visionary tongue.

I rose and went over to him.

I had thought you would be ensconced in your cave, busy working the image of your mind's eye onto a cypress panel. But here you are, a farmer become?

He smiled as he came down from the ladder. At times I would use other muscles than hand and brain, he said. Fresh air and sunshine is welcome respite from a smoky candle and paint-daubed fingers.

He confessed that he reserved the night hours for his reveries with Her, so-describing his work of visitation, and had established a routine of days in the outer world attending earthly labour, nights in the company of his soul in the space of divine contemplation. Well-suited to the life of a solitary, his face was tanned, a smile readily parted his lips, his arms strong and his back able to bear

great weight. Shaggy waves of sun- and sea-bleached hair crowned his whiskered face, and again I remarked the startling clarity of his eyes, his blue a full blue, shone through with peace.

As I listened to him describe his life, I was reminded of the teachings of St John of Sinai, his words of wisdom for a Hesychast's practice:

Take up your seat on a high place and watch. When the watchman grows weary, he stands and prays. And then sits down again, courageously takes up his former task, meditating on the Uncreated Light.

It seems this is what you do, brother, I said. You combine outer labour with inner work, a watchman in view of a limitless ocean.

I told him of my mission as he heated a jar of water for tea.

I am certain you would enjoy the experience of working with frescoes, I coaxed. You could create on a larger scale, and with more variety.

He sat circumspect, stirring mint leaves into the steaming vessel.

Is it close to here?

Quite. Only an hour or so's walk south-east.

He nodded, put down the spoon, took up his pipe, stared out to sea.

Some minutes of pause, of silence, before I prompted: Brother?

He turned, smiled. I am sorry. Reverie can catch me unawares, and this time I was knee-deep in memory.

He looked back to the sea, sighed his contentment.

I was thinking of a place where young wheat moved by the voice of the wind ripples like waves on the face of the water, he said. Vega. We called it the Vega. I can be there all day with only the image from a humble seaside mirador before me.

He clapped me on the back, broke the spell. A madinat of memory, nought more, he laughed, overlooking Elysian Fields. And returned to his tea, and a past beyond my sight.

Ah yes, I agreed. Sometimes in quiet moments I too see the place of my youth, the monastery I first entered as a novice.

From where do you hail?

Oh far, I chuckled, very far. On the mainland, deep in the north, past the mountains that hug Ragusa's harbour.

He shook his head. We sailed past on the way here but did not stop. The sailors called her a jewel, the white city.

Again I chuckled. Indeed, the greater jewel was my home in its fertile valley.

I closed my eyes and entered my own memory made of life upon a high cliff rising to heaven's garden.

We each carry home within our heart, he said. It is what keeps us steady in the face of whatever comes.

Ah, to hear him speak thus! Yet only after the vision of our Lady had opened his heart to what he had hidden from himself could he speak as he did. Only after she had steadied his hand and urged him to write out of this place he called home.

So, what about my request? I said, pulling both of us back to now.

He smiled at my return to business, the wrench from there to here no longer painful across time's invisible borders. And agreed to call at the monastery next morning to accompany me to the site of his proposed commission.

(12) Excerpt

The following spring I dedicated the chapel, a Bible of the Poor like no other. Theodora had hoped he would attend the service and asked me to put her request to him but I knew her suit was taken in vain. The ceremony was to be next day.

I arrived at his hut by way of Agios Georgios in the late afternoon. We sat out, took in the sea and setting sun, talked long.

It was certainly an interesting experience to paint on such scale but not one I wish to repeat, he said, tapping his pipe against the edge of the bench and using a paint-smearred finger to clear out the remnants of old tobacco before filling the bowl afresh. It disturbs my peace of mind to be indoors so long when I could be watching the waves on the Vega and preparing for my nights with Her instead.

He shook his head. I will not leave my sanctuary again.

Yes, we talked long and he invited me to share his evening meal.

Stay the night, Father, he said. It is too late to return to the monastery.

Oh, I scoffed. It is not too far to a warm bed! The moon is full and the donkey knows his way.

He laughed, the laugh of one who has dwelt long in the bosom of nature.

Then what shall you do when the donkey shies at a boar? he said. The mothers have their young just out of the nest. You had better beware. More combative mothers have I not yet seen!

No, he shook his head seriously. You shall take my warm bed this night, and he went out to secure the donkey's tether more firmly to the nearest tree.

But where shall you sleep? I called after him.

Sleep? He laughed anew. On this beautiful night? Father, this is a night to sing poetry to our Lady Kiria!

He returned to the oak table in the corner of the room, cleared away the remnants of our meal and brought out a prepared board and a box of implements to lay in their stead. The entire time he hummed and while he cracked an egg, separating white from yolk, I left the room to perform last ablutions before retiring.

When I returned, I found him hunched over the table, a single candle guiding his hand. I crept over to his bed to lay in the gloom. His first charcoal

sketch floated above my head, tacked to the wall with a blob of hide glue, as good an image as any to guide my evening prayers.

The moon skated the sky and I turned on my side to watch him work. The straw grumbled in its sack, unwilling to mould to a new body shape. But when all was quiet, all was still, I was at peace to watch him work the full night through.

That night I saw the Holy Spirit move through him, mix the colours, sketch the outline, fill the form with delicate strokes. Work silently written. As conceived, so delivered. As received from a space beyond thought, beyond language, so translated into gold leaf and egg tempera. No need of word, no need of thought. From the beyond to the beyond by way of a single hand, a pure heart, he wrote with full attention to his task, returning the Lord's gift unto Himself, gifting it on, out into the world, this gift of love divine.

While he wrote, something shimmered, hovered at his elbow. At first I was unsure, I thought my eyes failed me. The night was long, perhaps my sight was blurred by weariness. But it did not shift, this shimmer, no matter how I squinted. So after a time, I accepted it as I saw it, as I see it still in my mind's eye.

At his elbow was a misted presence of golden light. Either connecting with his body from without, or seeping from the very core of his self within, I could see no sharp edge or outline to his form. All a-shimmer, aglow, at his right side, melting, merging with the deft strokes of his hand.

Perhaps it was only the fluidity of movement which I smudged into unknowing by my witness. My eyes were not a youth's, after all. But perhaps, just perhaps, my vision was clear, and I saw straight through from the heart's inner eye – that an angel had entered the room.

I felt the tremble of divine rapture fill this sacred space as he and his angel, two as one, worked to bring this fresh Kiria into being. For the sake of what he loved, clothed in nothing save his love, aware of nought but an angel's voice, he had been tasked by our Lord to bring forth the love that dwells in spirit. He, the perfect lover become.

I know that few are specially marked by such grace. But through his work, this selfsame grace flooded the work he created and as I thought on this fact, I imagined to see further – down a shimmering tunnel of time, vibrating with light, marked by glimpse after glimpse of love incarnate. Through his work, through her creation.

No time had passed in the space where he was, yet dawn approached. With the first twitter of birds in the grey half-light which precedes the sun's rise, he stood and stretched, returned from a journey into the closet of his heart, the icon the story of his voyage.

I closed weary eyes on my watch, musing as I drifted to sleep of our order's preparations to receive the holy mysteries – chanting liturgy amid clouds of incense before tasting the flesh, the blood of Christ. Ours was a mediated experience while I had witnessed his by direct gnosis. Writing his silent poetry, partaking of communion through painterly script.

In this simple room, the grail was brought to his lips, over and over, and pure experience tasted. Here, in this space, there was no need to translate the language of love.

Song of the Revelation

He had left long years before to attend God's work in another land. Certain this was the will of his Lord, he made his work with the devotion of one complete. He recited the Hours, read the Gospels and Apostles, joined his brothers in chapel to chant liturgy and celebrate the holy mysteries. Their community supported a large brotherhood, hosting many pilgrims and visitors.

Long years had he heard the Lord whisper in his heart, flood his soul with surety that this, his path, had been well-chosen. Still he knew a day would come when the voice would call him further. Knew not when, knew not how, but had heeded when he had heard the Lord's whisper: *You will be called once more.*

A day came when a regular shipment from their brothers in Candia bore more than the usual provisions. Within velvet-lined chests were most-sacred icons to be raised on the monastery walls. And among these treasures was one by the hand of a master unknown to the brothers in Sinai.

He, who made his stooped way about the hall, attending a daily task to replenish oil in lamps and place fresh candles in brass holders, could hear excited murmurs issue from a group around the packed crates. These turned to expressions of amazement, the abbot's voice above all:

Holy Mother of God, Panagia Kardiotissa. But she is exquisite!

Curiosity piqued, he came over. From within the chest shone light with a radiance beyond this world. Yet no matter how much the monks chattered, pointing to this or that feature of the icon, standing on tiptoe, peering over each other's shoulder for a glimpse of the work in its cradle, none had touched the sacred object.

Moving aside, they permitted their aged brother to bear witness to the sanctity of the moment, so he too could revel in the source of the light. Emanating from Her veil, it seemed, so often the muddy red of holiness through suffering, here lovingly rendered in gold leaf which trailed to her shoulders.

He stared into Kiria's face and walked into the halls of memory. Of eyes he had known, and a lemon veil drawn close across a sculpted cheek. He heard afresh the murmurs of his fellows – how the face, the hands, the colour of skin and shape of eyes, all had a look of home for these monks, these local brothers, these ones who knew what it was to greet one of their own ancestry.

None of this could he have imagined when a charcoal sketch had been shown him beside a murmuring fountain in another place and time. None of this.

Yet knowing none, knew it all.

Now the Lord whispered: *Here is your task. Right here.*

He had journeyed far, but knew his brother had journeyed farther.

He is old, this man. Old, gnarled, hunched, but knows he has one last journey to make, and so returns to an isle of verdant abundance from the dusts and winds of desert wastes.

He returns to farewell a brother, but finds only a grave of summer grasses. Summer grasses and a story from an abbot still living to tell it.

The abbot thanks the Lord, thanks the Lady, and tells the man his dying wish. His own Kiria must be safely delivered to his fellows in the north, the brotherhood of his youth, and he trusts no other to attend the task.

The old man nods, understands. He, who journeyed with the icon writer to this place, who left him here having found his rest, yes, he understands his task. He will make the journey on the abbot's behalf to a monastery where a saint's relics lie, where a king has been crowned, a monastery far beyond the mountains which sit hard at Ragusa's back, she the white-walled city by an azure sea.

He sets sail with only a novice as his helpmate, the icon wrapped in a broad velvet pouch embroidered with holy motifs and wound many times round in fulsome silk.

All at peace, all at peace.

This he thinks as the ship roils under a billowing cloth, as his sight is caught by a beyond beyond the horizon, as a soft smile of memory shares space with tears whipped by a salty wind, off and away, beyond.

He arrives in the fortress city, continues his journey on horseback, following the trade route inland beside a fast-flowing river in a fertile valley till he sees the place perched upon its cliff.

Welcomed into the warm embrace of a kindly abbot, drawn into rich conversations with the monks at table, he shares the fullness of his life with them, tells the story of how he was called by the Lord in many ways. Called, called, and called again.

Now he is ready to unveil his gift, but first – what is this? – the monks all a-chatter. It seems they have treasures of their own to share.

He is led to a chamber where certain artefacts are kept. Objects he thinks to recognise – a woman's shawl, frayed and torn, worn threadbare now and thin, an ivory hair comb resting in its folds.

Memory strikes him hard in the gut, sucks breath from thin lungs as he lifts the comb free and runs an arthritic finger along its delicate spine. Memory. Of laughter, childish banter, of cushions tossed and skittles toppled, of being brought into service in a lavish court, of late night murmurs in a patio of myrtles. Gone, all gone, lost to time's mists. Except for a single memory comb.

A scroll of parchment lies before him, covering a full table's length, its story unfurled like a ribbon of road. A monk passes him a stone. He reads its alien script, the one known as if his mother tongue, and a sigh escapes parched lips, whistles long and low across the face of the amethyst, tracing a passage through histories unheard.

He turns back to his task, unwraps the icon for all to see and, with a deep bow, presents it to the abbot who nods, smiles, and begins to murmur about honeyed curls across a fine broad brow and eyes the colour of the sea on a day that foretells storms.

The abbot consults his fellows. Each nods and smiles in turn. No one remarks the Lady, only her Child. Brought home, they know, in a knowing that transcends the known. That he is home again, this son of the stranger who was most certainly a gift.

The old man of the desert retreats from their joy back to the scroll, its map of the universe a myth fresh-told. A story he traces across parchment with hands widespread, adding his own recollections to creases and smudged ink.

Finally he stops, surveys the whole, and smiles into his reading of the narrative. From a time before time, from a place before now.



Panel Three
Kisha's Story

Movements

So Many Stories.....	133
The Rhizomes of Memory.....	183
Into the Pit.....	208
Moving Staircases.....	224
Slippage.....	247
Beyond Siege.....	261
The Seventh Wave.....	289

*At five in the afternoon.
It was exactly five in the afternoon. ...
The rest was death, and death alone
At five in the afternoon.*

Federico Garcia Lorca (1898-1936)

*Reach me a gentian, give me a torch!
Let me guide myself with the blue, forked torch of this flower
down the darker and darker stairs, where blue is darkened on blueness
even where Persephone goes ...*

DH Lawrence (1885-1930)

So Many Stories

(One)

Do we have enough glasses?

Kisha looked over to where a muffled voice emerged from the bowels of the corner cupboard. Every now and then, its owner passed her a dusty tumbler for polishing. When the count stood at ten, she cried a halt. Good, he mumbled, getting slowly to his feet. I think all that's left in there are old jam jars.

A late summer's party on the balcony that evening. She'd made salads, dips, they had bread, olives. Berries for dessert.

I'll just nip up to the brewery, said Samir.

Can you carry enough? she frowned.

He grinned. Plato will give me a hand. We'll just be two old ladies wheeling our shopping trolleys home.

They sat around, laughing, talking, refilling tumblers at will with fresh frothy beer. Kisha smiled as Nada hugged Kasim tight, Jasmina told a joke, Marko strummed his guitar. All her friends were there.

It was a glorious night. Twilight past, the face of the old town had deepened to smoky blue. The minaret was lit, the cathedral tower too, the roof of the Orthodox church was a smooth dome of spotlight copper reflected onto treetops. Streetlights shimmered in the river below, its slim path through the city a brocade of bronze lace.

The sounds of their collective happiness spiralled up into the air and floated over the roofs to forested hills beyond. Then why the sudden knot in her stomach, the tightness in her chest? A feeling which rose, took sporadic leaps at her throat. She couldn't make it out, looked over at Samir. Could he sense it – the edginess in her finger tap, the twitch of her knee? But he simply smiled back at her, a white-toothed smile in a broad dark-eyed face.

He held a nutcracker in his hand which was busy performing a time-honoured task. Crack, crack – silver-gilded, sufficient. Crush one, now another.

She turned away but not soon enough. Automatic gunfire exploded in her head. The blink of an eye, God no. Samir! Her glass slipped to the concrete and splintered into shards.

Oh! She was lifted from sleep, bolt upright in bed.

It took several minutes before she could remove herself fully from the space of the dream. Even longer to piece together its fragments, recollect scene and actors, her very self. She stared at the wall, a blur of fuzzy shadows cast by streetlamps along Obala – wavy, shifted by the river’s flow – and saw again the finale.

Kisha reached out to the warm body sleeping at her side, his head tucked into the crook of his arm. She held a hand to the small of his back, acknowledged the rhythmic in-out, in-out of life and lay back down, nestled into him. Yet her eyes stayed open. Closed they would see the hole in his head, his lifeless eyes, frozen smile, and a shattered walnut in his hand, bleeding from an unseen wound.

At the café, a group of students sat around a table too small for them all and their detritus. Books and satchels competed with coffee cups and tiny cubes of Turkish Delight perched on the lips of copper trays. Several conversations were going on at once while Kisha mechanically stirred a sugar cube into her pungent soup.

Ki-. Ki-? Marko had been trying to catch her attention for some time now.

Hmmm? A blank-eyed expression greeted him.

Are you OK?

She shrugged. Not enough sleep last night. Bad dream, that’s all.

After class he sought her out more pointedly. Hey, he said, that dream. Hesitated a second. Was I in it?

Her eyes narrowed. What makes you think so?

He took her arm, steered her toward a vacant park bench out front of the faculty building. Because I had a crazy dream last night too. And you were in mine.

Kisha stared at the traffic, the trams rumbling past on their way to the Library turn and said: We were having a party and you were there, just one of the guests. Nothing more.

Well, why was it bad?

Something bad happened to Samir. She shook her head, studied her knees. It was a warm day, an Indian summer’s day. It gave me a fright, that’s all.

Mmmm – well, in my dream it was just you and me.

What?

Nothing like that, he grinned and punched her arm in that big brother sort of way he'd always used since school.

No, he said, face contorted. No, this was weird. We were walking along the river upstream from Alija, chatting and stuff, but when we looked into the water, it was blood red. He paused. You crossed the bridge.

Which bridge?

Goat Bridge. I stayed on the town side and you went on up into the hills. I stayed beside this sickening river of blood, and you –

Yeah, I get the picture, she interrupted. It was time for full disclosure. In my dream, Samir was shot in the head while we sat around, laughing talking drinking, typical party stuff. He was cracking walnuts – you know the sound? And when I turned back, he was dead. A bullet hole to the centre of his forehead and a bloody walnut carcass in his hand.

Phew. Marko's breath was slow to empty. Have you told him?

No, she snapped. Would you? She shook her head, chewed the ragged end of a fingernail. I don't know. Maybe it's all that stuff on TV, that stupid stuff in Croatia, the army going in. I guess it stews away inside and spews out as crazy dreams.

She stared at the traffic some more. I don't get it, she said. We're all Yugoslavs, damn it.

Yeah, sighed Marko. But some of us are more Yugoslav than others.

Christmas was at Baba's as usual. Her grandmother's house of upstairs-downstairs, attic in the roof and apple tree in the garden, once stood on the edge of town but now was flanked by a plethora of apartments built during the Tito years. Not that Christmas was officially celebrated, New Year the ritual of choice for good socialists when presents were exchanged and a glass raised to the glory of the Yugoslav ideal – brotherhood and unity!

Ah, but old habits die hard. Separating a people from its culture is never a permanent solution. They rise of their own accord, these desires for tradition, for how things used to be. Layers may be overlain – new practices, new beliefs, new rhythms to life lived – but some things are arcadian, deep, evolutionary. At the very least, trimming a tree is festive, lighting candles on a cold winter's night warming and sharing a thanksgiving feast joyous.

Baba's whole tribe had assembled. Aunts, uncles, cousins, friends long-standing, true. Respective cultural, ethnic or religious identities went unremarked. Five centuries of common life had yielded generations whose roots transected Serb, Croat and Bosniak, or Orthodox, Catholic, Muslim and Jew. An intricate mosaic, a tapestry tight-woven. An intermingled, intermarried melting pot of diversity bound by a single constant, Sarajevo, her nucleus no more than a kilometre-long stretch of verdant valley through which an observant river flowed.

Christmas, like New Year, like the Bajram feast to end Ramadan, like the Gypsy celebrations on St George's Day, like drinking Turkish coffee or the lucky coin stuffed into baklava, godparents cutting first hair on a first birthday, April 6 their shared day of liberation. All this bespoke common life.

Kisha stood at the tree, surrounded by baubles and tinsel, candles and crystal snowflakes, as she had each Christmas Eve since childhood. The menfolk chatted, the women prepared the feast, Kisha alone cocooned in a singular space of tradition and beauty, seeking the right branch for each piece, colour and symmetry enjoined in a dance of green needles.

Later she found Samir sitting on the stairs in the hall, deep in conversation with Uncle Haris and his several sons.

Communism has collapsed all over Eastern Europe, he was saying as she arrived. Everywhere's managed a peaceful transition to democracy – we will have our chance to decide by referendum. Let's see what the people say.

Her uncle was circumspect. I don't know. Look at what's already happened in the other republics. And now all this talk about where Muslims, Croats, Serbs should live? He snorted. Bosnia wouldn't be Bosnia without this soup of mixed traditions!

Slovenia and Croatia managed to leave the federation, but Milosevic is losing face, her cousin Ned said with worried eyes. What if they don't respect the outcome of our referendum? There are rumours of Chetnik artillery in the hills. And talk of siege.

Oh, but it's OK, Ki-, he continued, turning to greet her with a kiss. They plan to evacuate all you Serbs first. Anger gritted his teeth. But what happens to us? Would they look to Dad's heritage or Mum's to decide where they think we should belong?

Debates continued at dinner, round and round they went. She tried to block the voices but random snatches penetrated to bookmark her fears:

In Belgrade there are street stalls selling fascist T-shirts where all the ice-cream stands used to be ... It's like in the last war – local Nazis getting into the swing of things ... Only Tito and the Partisans managed to bring it off last time ... Yeah, but where are the Partisans now?

A sombre season, an unruly season, a season of tension, uncertainty and untidy fear.

They popped in to Baba's a week later before heading back to the city for the New Year's fireworks and found Azra there, sharing a quiet celebration of sisters-in-spirit.

Baba and Azra had been friends forever. The tiny Gypsy crone with her hand-woven headscarf had lived at the end of the street in a social housing block since before Kisha could remember.

Since my bones told me it wasn't a good idea to sleep in a caravan by the river any more, Azra had said to her years before.

The camp was still down on the riverbank where these two old ladies had first played as grubby bright-eyed children. Ever since Baba had sneaked out after dark one night to watch the men train their bears by the light of a flickering fire.

Oh, I was a rascal then, Baba chortled. Mama always said we shouldn't go near the camp. Your great uncle Mirko, rest his soul, was such a good boy, always heeded her words. But no, the camp was much too interesting – the dancing, the guitars. Oh – how their fingers flew over the chords!

You had white teeth then, she said, turning to Azra who sat knitting on the piano stool. I remember the campfire lit up your eyes and teeth all in one go.

Azra grinned a mouthful of gold and gaps. Can you still find the pinprick on your finger where I made you swear not to tell or we'd put your eyes out? she teased.

Baba squinted at her crinkled hands. Could be anywhere, she said and Azra laughed, blood sister through and through.

Baba brought out her secret recipe slivovica, plum brandy infused with rosemary, thyme, sage. This will see you safely through till morning, she said and they raised glasses to the year ahead.

Where are your cards, Azra? Kisha asked. The fun of Gypsy fortune-telling awaited each New Year. White cloth upon the table, the shuffling, humming, muttering. The whiff of incense and waft of candle, the thrill of choosing a first card.

The old woman shook her head. Not this year, she said clicking her knitting needles.

Come on, Kisha prodded. Remember your prediction of a dark handsome stranger? She grinned at Samir and drained her brandy in a gulp.

Azra lowered her eyes, unravelled some more wool. Again shook her head.

But Az –

Baba's hand suddenly took her arm. Don't press her, she whispered. She has her reasons.

(Two)

The referendum weekend came and went. Bosnia voted for independence. Barricades went up, shots were fired. Barricades were dismantled, everyone calmed down, and the newspaper celebrated the power of peace.

Marchers approached the barricades with songs and lighted candles, Samir read aloud from Oslobodjenje's front page. Sarajevo dismantled the barricades with its heart ... our centuries-long culture of common life, tradition and tolerance will defeat the challenges of division and conflict.

He shook his head, lit a cigarette. Gangsters in expensive sunglasses bussed in from Belgrade? The guns are still in their hands. They'll be tempted again.

It didn't take long for prediction to become fact – a month of tension before the Liberation Day long weekend in April coincided with the day Bosnia would be officially recognised by the world at large. Again the barricades went up, shots were fired, and pompous speeches made by Karadzic, Milosevic's local mouthpiece.

Samir's ear was glued to the radio. The crowd outside the Presidential building had swelled to tens of thousands, people singing for peace had marched into the parliamentary chamber. The National Army had surrounded the city and Karadzic's bullyboys were more than trigger-happy.

They're holed up in the Holiday Inn, he said. Apparently you can see them up on the roof aiming their guns into the crowd. Let's get down there. I want to see what's going on.

Is that OK, Baba? Kisha turned to her grandmother who'd joined them in town for the holiday weekend.

Of course, of course – you young people need to be up-to-date, she said, wiping floury hands on the apron round her waist. I'll have burek and cevapi waiting when you've had enough of affairs of state.

They walked uptown. People carrying hand-painted peace signs confronted balaclava-masked militia with automatic weapons.

Kisha tightened her grip on Samir's arm. A feeling rose in her stomach she'd never known before as she heard megaphones take the protester's pleas and ricochet them around the walls of surrounding buildings:

Let all the Serb chauvinists go to Serbia and let the Croat chauvinists go to Croatia. We want to remain here together. We want to keep Bosnia as one!

But not only words echo, ricochet.

Suddenly there are shots. Little pops rain into her ear like cereal doused in milk, random little pops echoing in the bowl of the buildings, and she wonders what it is. It is not a sound she has ever heard away from the breakfast table before. She sees people hit the ground, hears screams, feels herself pushed, pulled by the crush of the crowd. There is blood on her lip, spattered up from a lifeless corpse no more than a few feet away. People run, scatter.

Samir shouts, grabs her arm, wrenches her away from death. Away from the militia, rifles pointed skyward, firing off round after round. Their cavernous laughter roils together with the screams of fear and cries of pain in the swirled soup of her brain. As she runs, as she is led. Home.

Sweat-soaked, she shivers in shock. Baba soothes, brings out the medicinal brandy. Nip. Nip.

This is madness. Madness! Samir storms out on the balcony. Digging graves on the anniversary of Tito's victory? For unity?

Kisha downs another nip, begins to cry. I don't get it.

We are the Jerusalem of Europe! Samir shouts at the river below. Sarajevo is the font of convivencia for East and West! For five centuries we have held firm! For five centuries, since Spain expelled the Moors, expelled the Jews, we have been the new Jerusalem!

We were all out there in the streets, Kisha moans at the table, Baba's warm hand still rubbing her back. A few fascist pigs can't divide us, can't turn us into something we're not. Can they?

No, says Baba. But if you scratch the surface, you may find there's more than a few.

The humanities faculty was next to the Presidential building, a poor location in the current scheme of things, and worse once shelling began in earnest.

Samir was at a loose end. I should be rejoicing, he said. All this time on my hands, not rushing between meetings and teaching. Maybe Plato and I could start on that book we always wanted to write.

Nevertheless he twiddled the dials on the radio distractedly, smoked twice as much as usual.

Come on, said Kisha. Let's take your loose end to the bar.

They found Plato nursing a beer and lamenting his family situation to Marko.

Living up at Vratnik is too far away from everything for Susu, he said, looking up as Kisha and Samir delivered more beer to the table. It's a day excursion for her to even get to market, let alone visit her mother or the hospital if something happens to Farid.

Move in with us, said Kisha. That flat on the third floor.

Marko grinned. We could start our own commune.

Plato shrugged. I don't know. It's someone else's flat.

But they've gone! I'm sure they'd understand. They're good people.

Here or there, Samir said, the point is to try to avoid the bombs. He took his cigarette and painted a smoke signal through the already thick fog of cellar air to which their normally street-level café bar had strategically relocated. Kisha's right, they'd understand. And I like Marko's idea of a commune – the spirit of Yugo resurrected in a last riverbank stand, convivencia putting paid to all tribal instincts?

We could share rations, cook together, said Plato, warming to the suggestion. And you can pretty much spit at the brewery from your place. Susu's mother's not much further up the hill either. He nodded. You've really got the best spot in town.

So are we agreed? Kisha laughed and they clinked their glasses over the centre of the table, cried Comrade! as one, and sent burning conviction sliding down their throats.

There weren't many left in their section of the apartment block. Only old Mrs K downstairs, a Gypsy family which had fled Ilidja to take up residence, Plato and Susu in the abandoned flat on the third floor with tiny Farid. Everyone else had left the city on a convoy or escaped across the airport runway at night.

Two Jewish families on the first floor came to say goodbye, handed their keys to Samir.

We've been sponsored to America, one explained. It's time to start over again. If there's anything you can use, be sure to take it.

A mother passed a bag of baby clothes to Susu. Dress him warmly, she said, hold him close, block his ears to these terrible explosions. Her lip trembled.

With backs bent, heads bowed, the women's scarves knotted under their chins, the families left. Each carried the allotted two suitcases. Even the children banged small ones against bruised knees.

Plato sighed. I wish I could convince Susu to go.

It's my choice, she barked from the bedroom, holding up romper suits for Kisha's inspection while Farid kicked and gurgled on the covers.

Come on, said Samir, putting an arm round his shoulders. Let's go scavenging.

(Three)

Marko still lived at home with his parents and twin brother Miki. To save money, he'd said. But Kisha knew it was because they were so close. So different at one level, these peas-in-a-pod boys, yet so alike on another. When one stumbled and tripped in the schoolyard playground, the other let out a cry of pain. When one fought with his first true love the other went out to get drunk. That sort of thing.

Only natural, their mother said. Scrunched up together inside me so long, no wonder they know each other inside out.

Marko worked at a riverside café near the art college in between graduate classes in English literature, Miki was apprenticed to an architect's bureau downtown, but each night they came home to Mum and Dad in Grbavica, and slept in their childhood beds in a room full of old Olympic posters, frayed sweaters and Sevdalinka LPs.

That was until the Chetniks came down from the hills, opened an office in the apartment block next door and ordered all Serbs between the ages of 18 and 45 to report for military service within seven days. Their parents collected a few belongings, crossed the river and went to live with Uncle Chico up at Kosevo. The boys grabbed their instruments (Miki's the accordion, Marko's the guitar), told the checkpoint guards at the bridge they were due at a concert but would be back by ten. And promptly went and enlisted with the Territorial Defence.

Who do they think they are? Marko raged while Kisha painted his jeans in red and green swirls. How can they possibly expect us to join their war against us?

She shrugged, picked up the fashion fatigues and hung them over the balcony railing to dry. Nothing can surprise me any more, she said and turned to Miki. Next.

His brother put down the accordion and peeled off his jeans.

Oh, wow! she laughed. You've even got the same knobby knees! And was rewarded for her insight by having trousers tossed in her face.

Why do they want us to hate each other? Marko grumbled on. I've had these friends my whole life. How they can believe this fascist bile?

Just wait till it's the neighbour's voice in a trench on the other side, Miki said. Then what do we do? He shook his head. It's like living in a horror movie.

A month back I was celebrating the referendum result. Now I have to pick up a gun to defend the right to choose?

The boys smoked. Kisha made coffee.

Miki couldn't keep his hands off the accordion. It calms my nerves, he said.

Yeah, but those Sevdalinka ones are such sad songs, she complained. All about loves lost, forsaken, foregone.

Sad songs for sad times, said Marko, joining his brother's musical lament.

They left the instruments in a corner of the bathroom. So we can serenade you when we get back, Marko grinned. It was time to climb into stiff camouflage-colourful jeans, re-lace white joggers and pull on black vinyl jackets.

You're the craziest pair of soldiers I've ever seen, she said. Maybe one day you'll graduate to real uniforms.

If they ever manage to bring stuff in through the blockade, Marko winced, doing up his fly.

There were hugs all round. Kisha tousled her friend's hair.

It's getting long, she said. Want a trim? Might be better ...

What – so I can see who I'm shooting at? His grin slipped as suddenly as it appeared. No. I won't cut my hair again till this war is over.

Everyone had rituals to survive the siege, establishing little rules such as how long to sit by a lamp at night or when to do the water run (pre- or post-dawn), how many cigarettes were a fair quota for the week, predicting which bakery still had loaves to sell. Plus Baba taught her how to be inventive with the least amount of anything.

As they mixed powdered egg into a recipe, Kisha was reminded of the long weekend when her grandmother had brought almost the entire contents of her pantry into town for the Liberation Day party.

You knew, she said. Somehow you knew.

History repeats, Baba conceded. I decided to be prepared this time.

She had borrowed Plato's green VW Beetle to collect Baba that Friday afternoon after class and bring her back to their inner city apartment for the weekend celebrations.

I've done some baking, Baba had chattered, bringing out container after container of halva, cakes, baklava, cookies, burek and other pita. The back seat was full of food and a sizeable suitcase filled the trunk.

Ready? Kisha asked, turning the key in the ignition.

Wait. I've forgotten something.

She let the car idle a few minutes, but when there was no sign of her, cut the engine, sat, scratched her ear, looked around. What was taking so long?

Azra came out of her apartment at the end of the street, gave a little wave and started down toward her.

Ki-Ki-, she said, hugging her tight and kissing each cheek. How's that pretty man of yours? She pulled Kisha's hand up to the light and traced a rheumatic finger across the lines of her palm.

Ah, she said, turning the hand this way and that. My eyes are not what they used to be. Nothing is clear anymore. She kissed the flat of her palm and each cheek again.

You must be strong, she said, fixing the girl with a fierce look while floury hands patted her head scarf back into place. Now I must get back to my cooking.

Baba called from the front door. She was having trouble with the shopping trolley down the steps. It was brimful of coffee sacks, bottle upon bottle of home-made slivovica from the plum tree in the garden, cans of beans, tomatoes, corn, an assortment of spices and soup mixes.

What is all this? Kisha said. You're only coming for the weekend!

Yes, yes. But you have a car and I'm an old lady. This won't be used anytime soon. Just look at this brandy, she pointed. It's more than ten years old!

Once again they sat in the bar watching war erupt on the television mounted in the corner of the room. This time the post office blown up, the telephone exchange destroyed, the president arrested at the airport on his return from peace talks. Tanks entered the city but were halted in the streets by missiles from their own fledgling Territorial Defence.

Kasim groaned. Nada will have a busy night.

Yeah, said Samir. But just think, by the time this is over, she'll be the best-trained doctor in Europe.

Plato's eyes were fixed on the TV screen. You know, it's just down the road, he said. It's kind of them to show it live, saves us walking down to have a look.

It'll be live all right! shouted a veteran. Live in your goddamned living room! And he fell to, laughing, mouth full of teeth blackened by deprivation fifty years before. You young people – always trigger-happy, he said. We didn't let off a bit of steam with a rocket-launcher now, did we? Oh, he chuckled, wiping tears from his eyes. It'll be live all right.

Kisha went home to Baba, sat her down and fixed her with her most serious look. They're still taking names at the Jewish Centre for a place on the next convoy – and not just Jews, she said, anticipating the first line of excuse.

Baba scoffed, moved straight to the second. What would I do out there? Somewhere out in the world. I don't know those people out in the world, she humphed. I belong here, right here with you.

She tried again. We'll go and collect Azra. You can go together.

Azra? Leave? Baba snorted. She's the most sedentary Gypsy I know. Moving her a hundred metres would be a miracle.

And she went back to the kitchen.

(Four)

The bombardment had gone on all night, but by dawn had eased and mid-morning arrived silent, sunny and warm.

The poor lads are tired, Baba said. She bustled about the flat, wiped benches, put away dishes. What a busy night they've had! She put on her shoes, took her walking stick, string bag, checked the coins in her purse.

No, said Kisha firmly. You can't go out in this.

In what?

Kisha spread her arms wide. There were no words. She was too weary from a sleepless night and exasperated by a grandmother's boundless energy in the face of full-frontal adversity. Things couldn't be plainer from where Kisha stood.

Nonsense, said Baba in response to the unspoken, went and kissed her cheek. I'm just off to wait for the bread truck outside Planika. Those boys in the hills won't get busy again for hours.

Kisha sighed, went out to the balcony and heard the scuff of shoes and the solid plonk of Baba's walking stick rise five floors to where she stood picking at the thyme in the trough. She leant over the balcony railing to see her shuffle down to the bridge, watched her cross. A quick chat to a neighbour, a look down into the water, then up to the hills before walking on.

She went inside, brought some water back out to the herbs, looked again for Baba but she was already lost in the narrow tangle of alleys on the way to the cathedral, on the way to Vaso Miskin Street, on the way to the bread line.

Only a few minutes. Only a few minutes in which she has heard Samir climb the stairs, in which she has begun assembling pots and jugs and plastic containers on the kitchen bench for his cargo of water. Only a few minutes before she hears it, feels it, smells it. A huge blast which rumbles walls, sends windows shivering in their frames, delivers a fresh curtain of plaster dust between her and the world.

Smoke plumes near the cathedral across the river. A second mortar whistles overhead, strikes the same target. Then a third.

She does not think. Runs, flies fast down the stairs, is gone past Samir and his canisters before he has time to react. Fast, no faster can she run, down

the street across the bridge, over broken tram tracks and fallen wires. Sniper bullets, each a split second behind her heels, their author woken by the mortars no doubt, cannot break her stride. She reaches Vaso Miskin, reaches hell, reaches destruction *a la carte*.

It is blood, it is nothing. It is people with no legs, stomachs, arms, heads. What can be gone is, what has been severed has. Here is the chaos of the aftermath, the chaos which follows the silence which follows the shock, the vertigo. The delirium it could happen at all – how can intellect ever catch up with what is seen, witnessed, what the body has already processed, a lost voice which says:

What is this that they have done?

Ambulance sirens, screams of pain, the cries of victims calling out to loved ones, skidding trails of blood from those who can drag themselves away from the sunlit street into a shadowed doorway. A woman collects apples which have fallen from her shopping bag while life spills from her side, she chats to a person no longer with her, chatters on into the void of a world forever changed. This day, this instant. Hit.

Baba! Kisha cries, spun round by the four directions. Baba! Light-headed, fear rises to her throat, chokes her breath. At last she sees her, rushes. A sniper fires into the space between them and she leaps, crawls over and out to where Baba lies in blood. So much blood.

I won't leave you, she whispers. They can't make me leave you.

People load people into the backs of trucks, onto makeshift boards, ripping their own clothes to stem the flow of others' wounds. Angels waft in the air to search out the faces of the already dead, to shield them from the TV cameras, to mist the lenses of foreign voyeurs. While snipers continue to work the street from invisible sights, delighted to pick off the aimless wanderers who wring disbelief from shock-numbed hands.

Bastards! Kisha screams into the sky and reaches out to a woman's skirt to pull her back into the shadows. Fuck off! she screams to the prostitutes of pain, and cloaks Baba in her own body.

I won't let them hurt you, she whimpers. I won't let them hurt you anymore.

Baba reaches up, tugs at her hair. Her hand trembles but she pulls the girl close, close enough to breathe words in her ear, words she hasn't breath enough to speak.

Ki-Ki-. Baby, she says. Don't let them – don't let them make you hate. Don't give in to them, Ki-Ki-. It's what they want. They want you to hate, they want you to want revenge.

She takes the child's face in her hands, looks at her with clear eyes and smiles. My beautiful girl, don't forget love, don't forget to love. Ki-Ki-? Her voice is but a squeak, a breathless squeak from air pushed too tight through collapsing lungs. Ki-Ki? Find the Lady. You must go back and find the Lady.

Kisha nods and stares into the deep blue of eyes not yet ready to close. Not yet ready because there is still too much to tell.

Find the Lady, Baba says again. She knows. She never gave in to hate, only love. Remember, baby. Remember, only love.

A man sets his hand on Kisha's shoulder. How is she? he asks gruffly.

She can't speak, can't trust herself to speak.

Get a stretcher! he yells, pulling Kisha to her feet. Come on!

She walked through the ward, past bloodied sheets covering stumps of limbs, past the moans of those for whom there were never painkillers enough, to where Baba lay on a bed by the window.

Sorry, said the nurse. No one wants to be near the window when the next round of shelling starts.

Baba smiled wanly. But you've made me very happy. Look! she said. Spring is kissing my cheek, and pointed to where a small square of afternoon sun reached in through dust-filled air and crumbling walls to catch her pale skin in orange light.

Kisha sat by her pillow, stroked her snowy hair, and followed her gaze out the window to where the sun edged lower in the sky. Soon it would be gone beneath the windowsill.

She's waiting for me. She says it's time to go.

Who? said Kisha. Who?

The Lady, Baba whispered. Don't forget the Lady.

I won't, and she kissed her forehead. It's time to rest now.

Baba squirmed, grimaced, turned her head toward her. Ki-Ki-?

Hmmm?

Don't forget to water your herbs. You'll relish the little flavour they add. She smiled, sighed.

Ki-Ki-?

Hmmm?

Let them go to seed at the end of the season, keep them till next spring. You'll need them.

She turned back to the window. I'm so tired, she said. Maybe I will rest. Just a little nap. Then I'll go, she's been waiting such a time –

Kisha raised Baba's chilled hand to her lips and kissed the wasted flesh. Her eyelids flickered once, twice, fell still.

It wasn't long till the nurse returned and said: We need the bed.

She nodded, signed forms, made arrangements and walked through corridors oozing rotted flesh through pitted walls till she found Nada rostered on in the donation clinic.

She's gone, she said while blood was sucked from her arm.

Oh Ki-.

She'd suffered enough. Last time – then now. It's better this way.

Nada removed the needle, pressed a hunk of cotton to the vein, pushed the arm closed, said: You know, I believed what they taught us in school. I believed Tito's Partisans put an end to those fascist bastards for good last time. And now? Who are these people, who are their kids? Do you think it's genetic to hate?

Kisha stood up. I need to get home, water the herbs. She stared at her shoes. Baba knows. This is going to last a while, at least through next year.

How?

Kisha shrugged. Baba knows. She always knows.

No words. He held her, and she let herself be held, held, held. After a while, he went and got a bottle of Baba's brandy made from ten-year-old plums.

She skulled the first glass, felt the hot slice of chilled liquor detour to her heart, offer a resurrecting jolt to a shell-shocked organ.

Taking a deep breath and a candle, she went into the bathroom, rummaged around till she found the pink cylinder, unspooled the scroll of parchment it held, laid it on the floor, its edges held flat by books plucked from the shelf. Placing a candle either side, she looked into the face of the Lady.

She asked me to go back and find it.

That'll take some organising, said Samir. Dobrinja's still cut off.

Yeah – I know.

Kisha poured herself another glass and toasted the hand-sketched replica of her grandmother's icon imprinted with longer-than love.

(Five)

This time it began a little before dawn, surround-sound explosions pulling them upright from sleep, and she tried hard to acclimatise. It was as if the gates of hell had been flung open and every wild thing therein rushed out in a wide yawning scream. Yet as suddenly as it began, silence. A gap in the script which howling dogs were quick to fill before the next wave sucked sound from their throats. The building rocked. Walls trembled beneath her fingertips. But the only casualties were books tumbling from shelves and cupboard doors swung open, while a glass or cup too near the edge of the bench held its breath before freefalling to a shattered end.

She wrapped herself in a blanket, went out on the balcony. Tracer bullets skated the sky, sketching rhizomes of random hate. Shells exploded in flashes of white. On and on it went till banished by morning sun, till a fresh-sculpted wasteland lay revealed.

Samir came out, lit a cigarette.

Marko and Miki are out in that, she shivered and kicked her foot hard against the balcony rail. Typical – I can't even mourn Baba because I'm so damn scared for my best friend.

She slumped down against the wall.

I'll make coffee, he said and delivered the cigarette to her waiting lips.

More than a week passed before he walked in the door, propped his gun against the wall and collapsed onto the mattress in the hall.

Thank God! she cried and rushed to hug him. Then – Miki?

He's OK. Marko tossed a carton of cigarettes over to Samir. That's my pay for the week.

He rolled over and slept while she removed mud-caked joggers, covered him with a blanket, and smoothed sweat-soaked dirt-drenched hair away from his eyes.

When he woke, she plied him with food.

God, he said. This is brutal! He held up the pie, peered into its folds. What's in this thing?

There were only some nettles at market. I thought some greens would do you good.

He grimaced and kept chewing. You're all heart, he said.

So, said Samir, lighting one of the payday cigarettes. A good day at the office?

Marko humphed. Let's put it this way, he said. It's pretty difficult fighting a war when you need to share guns and are rationed to 30 bullets a day.

Samir grinned. Well, at least we're not the only ones forced to ration essential items, and waved the cigarette in his face.

Kisha headed out to the balcony to light the fire for coffee.

Ki-! Marko cried. Can't you be a bit more careful? If you can see the hills, the hills can see you! Don't make it too easy for them. He took another bite of pie. You're not the only one who worries, he mumbled.

Alright, she said and crouched down behind the herb troughs to tear up bits of cardboard.

It's surreal out there, he went on. Consider this – you're in a trench on the front line. There's a narrow stretch of rubble which is our version of no-man's-land so you can hear your friends talking in their trench. Friends you thought you had except apparently they were hiding an inner core of murdering bastard.

Or they've been convinced to become murdering bastards, Samir pointed out.

Marko shook his head, more than puzzled. We used to go and play soccer together. Now they'd kill me if they got the chance?

Plus they can use as many bullets as they like, Kisha chipped in.

Exactly! said Marko, another slice of pie halfway to his mouth. How's this for statistics – the Serbs have 200 APCs, 300 tanks, not to mention artillery and aircraft. We have two APCs and two tanks. That's it.

But, he grinned, we found two more last week.

Where?

His grin grew broader. The National Museum.

Samir leaned forward. You didn't –

Sure! They still work! Oh, it was brilliant. His eyes shone. Driving them out the gate, all the guys cheering. He shrugged. And if they make it through, we'll give them back.

Ha! Samir laughed. Such a creative nation we've founded. Embryonic, but full of glorious ideas.

(Six)

There seems to be a lull, said Samir, sniffing the air as if a storm cloud had passed and he could test for the timing of the next heavenly downpour.

If you say so, her nose buried in a book.

Coming?

What?

I'll go mad in here. I need some human company.

What. And I'm a baboon?

I mean more human company. Let's go to the bar, see who's there.

She marked the page in her book, it wasn't that exciting anyway.

They tripped their way down the staircase, buttoning up jackets against the approaching chill and reached the protective columns of the inner courtyard pockmarked with the calling cards of the neighbourhood sniper. Turned up collars, held hands and said together: On three.

The starter's gun sounded and they crouch-sprinted down the street, across the bridge, hurdling twisted tram tracks, leaping shell-rendered potholes, a steeplechase of forded debris, in and behind the first building on the right where they stopped, bent double, lungs aching.

I think he must have been taking a potty break, said Samir.

They skirted the burnt out Hotel Europa, made their way into the alleys of Bascarsija, into the café with its barricaded entry and black-out curtains. Down into the vaulted cellar they went where a generator hummed, small tables hosted smoking patrons and a radio stayed tuned to the hourly news.

Hey!

It was Haris, one of her German literature tutors with some others from the faculty Samir clearly knew well but who, as usual, ignored her presence.

Kisha was used to the response she received from these aging intellectuals, their assumption that their colleague would soon grow bored with a student lover and need a woman of more robust mental stimulation to meet his other, more lasting needs. She was used to the fact they couldn't see beyond a stereotype, so took her place on the edge of the circle, lit a cigarette and leaned into an intimate conversation with Haris.

Did you know Mirza's been looking for you?

No, why?

She's looking for all you English grads – Kasim, Marko, Jasmina ... something about translating. There's a meeting in the bar of the Holiday Inn tomorrow morning with one of the humanitarian organisations.

She nodded slowly. Marko's joined the Territorial Defence. But the others should be OK. What about you? You were an English grad once upon a time.

Yeah, he said. I'll be there.

The evening wore on. Everyone forgot the war outside, except in the abstract. Samir was holding forth.

Sieges are a time-honoured method of warfare, he said. We have a grand opportunity to prove we're more resilient than our historical brothers.

There were guffaws round the table.

The Moors survived the Siege of Sevilla for fifteen months before being starved into submission by Christian kings, he argued. It was the longest in history, and I salute their tenacity.

Cheers and gulps of beer greeted this announcement.

So, he said, climbing onto a chair, I predict that next summer we will overtake a seven centuries old record. All because Milosevic wants to enter the Guinness World Book!

Laughter erupted around him. Kisha looked up and he grinned down at her, eyes aglow from candlelight and beer.

She shook her head at his small theatre of the absurd. But Baba knows, she remembered. Baba always knows. And now Samir, too?

They fidgeted in the bowels of the Holiday Inn while Serb shells shook the walls. By the flickering light of a candle Kisha took in the tense faces of Jasmina, Mirza, Haris and Kasim while they waited for the woman who stood talking to a man at the bar to join them.

Two journalists and a cameraman raced out the door calling instructions to their driver on the way, someone played piano beyond the small circles of smoky light. A barman wiped glasses, stacked coffee cups, checked water jugs along the counter. Every now and then he glared at the students who hadn't ordered, whom he knew couldn't afford to order in this palace reserved for the international elite.

I feel like I'm on the set of Casablanca, said Mirza, chewing a fingernail.

I can't believe they charge \$150 a night to stay in this ruin, Jasmina said.

War tourism is big business, Haris quipped.

The woman gave a final nod to the man at the bar, gathered a sheaf of papers together and came over to the small table.

Sorry about that, she said. We were just trying to finalise where we can set up.

And? Haris asked.

It'll be at the Olympic complex at Zetra. The building's large enough for all the different aid agencies – UNHCR, Doctors without Borders, Caritas ... she trailed off. Oh, and a refugee shelter.

What would we be doing?

Translation, pure and simple. Anything, everything, she said and rattled off a washlist of tasks: Taking down people's details, hearing their stories, helping us work out priority evacuations, getting us through checkpoints, signing off on aid deliveries, distributing humanitarian packages.

She paused. There'll also be rosters at the soup kitchen.

They looked at each other, shrugged hesitant shoulders.

The woman flicked through her papers. I'll draw up a schedule, she said. The hours are long and we'd appreciate flexibility. We can pay a small wage in American dollars.

Kasim snorted. That's nigh-on useless. The black market's only taking Deutschemarks.

There's nothing I can do about that.

Can't you pay us in stuff instead? Kisha asked. Like coffee, cigarettes?

The woman shape-shifted her straight business face into a look of horrified surprise. Are you sure?

Jasmina laughed. It's worth more than oxygen in this place.

Back at the flat, she found them, heads together, deep in conversation.

What mischief are you cooking up? she said. A rebellion?

Samir grinned. We're going to start giving classes in one of the vacant apartments downstairs.

Plato wrote some last notes on a scrap of paper and looked up. We're developing a fresh curriculum, he said, in line with contemporaneous culture. It's called Siege Humour 101. Essays can cover any number of topics – ethics, literary merit, cultural conditioning, interfaith relations, socialist ideals. All on the

back of several jokes. See what you think about this one. What's the difference between Sarajevo and Auschwitz?

Kisha shook her head.

At least in Auschwitz they had gas.

Samir chortled. Ouch. How far we've fallen.

A Jew told me that! Plato was a study in righteous indignation. Alright, he grumbled. Here's another. A Muslim dies, goes to heaven, his best Serb mate goes to hell. They call their families in Sarajevo to tell them where they are. The guy in heaven has a half hour chat, gets charged \$200; his mate in hell also chats half an hour, is only charged 20c. So the guy in heaven complains to the phone company.

How fair is that? he says.

Completely fair, says the phone company. Your call was long distance, but his call was local!

Plato slapped his knee and belly laughs filled the tiny flat.

Kisha grinned. I like that one.

Wait, wait, he said, wiping his eyes. How's this. A guy is out on his balcony swinging in a hammock. His mate yells: What are you doing? Don't you know it's dangerous to be outside?

But it's fun, says the guy. I'm teasing the sniper!

Oh-oh-oh! Samir raised his hand like in class. I've just remembered a great one they were telling in the water line the other day. A guy comes home late at night, meets two policemen patrolling the streets.

You'd better get home, mate, says one cop. It's almost curfew.

Wait, says the other cop. Where do you live?

The guy tells him. The cop shakes his head, says: Sorry mate, and shoots him dead.

The first copper says: What the hell did you do that for? It's not past curfew!

Yeah, says the second. But I was doing him a favour. See, I know where he lives. He never would've made it home in time!

Baba's grave is in the sports stadium not far from the hospital where she died, not far from the aid centre at Zetra where Kisha works. She would visit more

often but it cuts her heart to see an entire soccer pitch heaped with mounds filled with the people of her town.

One day she hears the sound of meowing. A kitten purrs, rubs itself against her knee while she sits beside the makeshift wooden paddle propped in the dirt which bears her grandmother's name. Two more kittens emerge from a broken pipe with a half-starved mother still wearing her collar and bell from a life before siege.

She tickles the kitten under its chin, another casualty of conflict. Like the dogs which roam the streets and dig through rubbish piles, their homes now rubble or their owners long gone, like the cats which lap blood from the pools punched by mortar shells because it's all they have left to drink.

Is this what happens when we lose our humanity? she thinks, as she picks up the kitten, tucks it into her jacket. That we care for nothing or no one except ourselves?

(Seven)

Kisha?

Mmmm? She rolled over, opened her eyes, saw that Samir was up although it was still dark, and registered the silence which cloaked the city.

Today?

He nodded. I'll get Plato.

Wait. I'm coming too.

No. We know what we're looking for. It will be easier with two.

Then we two, she said firmly. I couldn't bear if something happened to him. With Susu, the baby and all.

He knelt down. And I couldn't bear if something happened to you.

She kissed him. Who was it said we should never be parted? She was my grandmother, after all.

In the surreal quiet of a pre-dawn free of birdsong, Samir knocked on Plato's door.

You've been outranked, he said, but I still need the car key.

They headed down to the riverbank, to the stoic Beetle studded with bullet holes and dented by barricades at tight-cornered turns. Kisha plucked broken glass out of the window frame, brushed more splintered debris off the split vinyl seat. The engine hummed into life and they were off, slowly at first but speeding up as risks grew exponentially at intersections and along Sniper Alley.

Duck, he instructed, crouched low over the wheel.

Shots ricocheted off the chassis as he swerved and pushed the accelerator to the floor, avoiding as best he could the potholes made by mortars. Toward Dobrinja, they began to pass the occasional UN APC, ghost-white, rising out of the mist. Off the main road at last and into the housing estate, they crawled along past burnt-out buildings and impromptu cemeteries. In playgrounds no longer used by children no longer there, graves sprouted like weeds. Now and then, someone stepped out onto a wrecked balcony to stare at the car, like a ghost in the rotting mouth of a giant.

It was worse here than in the old town. In their neighbourhood, there was still a feeling of life somewhere beneath the rubble. But here, nothing. The emptiness crowded in on Kisha, claustrophobic and heavy with its nothing.

How can nothing trap me? she thought in between desperate attempts to breathe.

Easy, said Samir, patting her knee.

They drove until blocked by a trench and walked on, hugging the sides of buildings, hopping fences and crossing gardens to where the older houses stood on the edge of the estate. They passed home after home of shattered windows cloaked in thick plastic sheeting, of facades pitted by shrapnel, of roofs without tiles. One of Baba's neighbours stood at her back door and, crying out in surprise, ran past the deep crater in her garden where the shed should have been to give Kisha a hug.

We saw the funeral notice in the paper, she said. If the road had been open, we would have come.

It's OK. Funerals aren't the occasions they used to be.

I'll make coffee.

Alright. We won't be long.

I don't think you'll find much, she said, going back into the house.

A thought came. Have you seen Azra? And Kisha turned toward the splintered hull of apartment block at the end of the street.

I think the Gypsies had gone by the time it was hit.

You don't know where – she trailed off as the other shook her head.

Memory is long, and good luck too.

Kisha looked up into the hills, remembered Baba's face the night they'd sat around the radio listening to the news of Dobrinja's destruction once the war began in earnest.

What about Azra? she'd said then.

She'll be alright, Baba assured her. They'll know where to hide, how to survive. They remember the Nazi death camps.

But you hid her last time. You hid her in your attic.

Yes, but she'll be alright. Baba smiled and patted Kisha's hand. Sometimes I think Azra's immortal. Or a cat with nine lives.

She left the memory where it lay in the hills and went to join Samir. One more garden to cross and shredded trees to ford before they arrived at a cavernous hull and collapsed roof, all that remained of a Howitzer calling card.

What do you think?

He shrugged. We might as well have a poke around. And climbed through rubble into what used to be the sitting room.

She followed inside, to an inside no longer within, a charred space lit by the rising sun through a gaping wound in its side. Wallpaper flapped hesitantly

in the breeze, no longer sure of its mooring. Ripped curtains framed non-existent windows, splintered floorboards pierced a rain-soaked couch, a tumble of bricks opened onto a new view of the kitchen.

She sifted through the corner where the icons should have been.

Nothing, she said. Did they disintegrate or were they looted?

Who knows? Where would she have kept her winter coats?

What?

I have a feeling they might come in handy.

Um, cellar probably. She didn't like climbing all those stairs to the attic.

He scabbled over and back into the hall while she stood helpless in the midst of nothing.

What to do? Look for some small treasure, some relic of her past, of Baba's life? Or was everything too shattered, the memory of some shard or other only a memory of pain, destruction?

Here, said Samir, passing her several overcoats.

She took the bundle while he picked his way through fallen timber, hunting and gathering as he went.

We could use some of this wood too, he grunted.

That night, by the light of a candle stub, Kisha once again removed the parchment replica of the icon from its pink cylinder, unfurled the crinkled scroll and whispered to the Lady that her real self was gone.

She returned it to its protective shell, placed it in the backpack she had used for class and then slowly moved around the apartment, collecting the few touchstones of their life, a handful of basic provisions and their passports, to place in the same repository.

Nesting in reverse, denuding a violated space, assembling her bright baubles to be scooped up in flight. While Samir watched.

(Eight)

Dusk gathered, approaching on all sides, ready to gobble up the day. A red glow guided her to the shadow on the balcony that smoked and contemplated the hills to the north, thick-forested and green. She kissed the shroud of night from his brow, stood by him and followed his gaze. And into this space, he said:

The hills will burn, you know. We'll need wood for winter and the hills will burn. The groan of the trees will go unheard by our ears, their cries drowned by the hack of axes and buzz of chainsaws, by the cracking crash of their fall to earth.

He took a last draw of cigarette. Its end hissed. He stubbed out the butt and said: I will not cut the trees.

She nestled into his shoulder and sighed as he said further: I will not, cannot kill. I will not sacrifice another life to fuel my own comfort. I will not add to the destruction of whatever still lives and breathes in our city and hills.

Then what shall we do?

We shall burn the books.

Speechless. His books? His precious library which swamped their tiny flat? She loved his books, had only been able to add a slim number to the space of their love in the time they had been together, but –

Books are life too, she protested. They're filled with life!

He smiled, knew the argument to come, was more than ready to engage.

We have lived their lives once, twice, many times over. Each time we read we bring more of them into ourselves. They're part of us already, Ki-. Why not complete the circle and let them feed us, warm us? It's not a sacrifice, I see it as a privilege.

He kissed her stunned forehead. There's no black and white to this war and this is my particular shade of grey. We shall burn the books. I would rather savour them one last time like a wine slow-sipped than see them poured down the sink in a bonfire fuelled by the ignorance of hate.

A small tin stove stood on the balcony, the one he'd brought home from Bascarsija when it was clear the gas wasn't coming back on. The couch had fed its hunger, the chairs, table, bed, cupboard doors, shelves. Samir's library now stood in high towers against the wall, floor to ceiling, a wall of books.

Yet she resisted and brought home random flammable items found on garbage piles, brought home a splintered park bench and the shattered

branches of the plane tree which shaded it, brought home anything she could find to stave off the books' fate, pleaded with the centre workers to let her take the boxes and crates the cans of aid arrived in. All to take home and burn.

A night came when they unleashed a barrage all along the riverbank. Up and down the Miljacka, bridges were hit, houses hit, their building hit. They coiled into each other, into the mattress, while shells rained down, closer then further, closer then further. Then a tumult, louder than all the rest, centred as no other, and striking a target a short five hundred metres upstream. On and on.

So a night came. As summer ended, as nights grew longer, as a chill in the air warned of winter's almost-breath, so this night came. When millions of books spanning a millennium of life spiralled up to heaven, extinguished before angels could grasp a single ashen fragment. This night, when flames licked the clouds, the National Library shot high in the sky. This night, when knowledge burned on Salem's pyre, when Samir's hand trembled as he lit each cigarette.

Once again we have failed the goddess of wisdom, he said. Once again we have built our civilisation on sand. And he spat his pain into the troughs of thyme.

A whole night, a whole day they watched her die. Till all that remained was a smoulder and a stench of burnt paper palled high. The wind jettisoned her charges far and wide, delivered them up to torn lament upon hair, clothes, herbs, balcony. Kisha reached out her hand to ease the landing of one refugee, but its tiny blackened wings had beat so long, so hard, that it crumbled to dust in the compassion of her embrace.

Dust, said Samir. They know. It all ends in this. Dust.

She could not cry, no tears came, evaporated in the heat of the flames. Too intense, this fresh image seared to retina, this cultural holocaust.

I need a coffee, she said and walked inside to the teetering towers of books, brought down her hand of fate, and gave it to Samir to light the stove.

Are you sure?

She nodded. But –

Wait, she said. Wait.

She hesitated, looked back into the room, to the dark shadows of pensive tombstones piled against the wall, took back the volume she had given him and flicked to the end where several blank pages footnoted the text, tore them out, took up her pen and began to write.

Every library has its catalogue.

Kisha stood at the firebox door, custodian of the firebox door. A sacred ritual, this dance enjoined of singular farewell. One by one, each in turn was offered into the flames with a prayer of thanks for what they shared of themselves on this, their last time read.

What have you found? Samir asked, leaning over her shoulder to where a finger traced heart-spoken words.

Basho, she said.

Summer grasses –

All that remains

Of warriors' dreams.

We wish, he grinned.

I was thinking, she said, just as a way to – you know – not let it get me too down, I could write all this siege shit out as haiku. Reduce all of it to separate discrete events – the classic moment-captured-in-time, seventeen syllables, three lines, a seasonal word ...

She trailed off in her uncertainty of whether it would be useful after all, and Samir watched as she placed the slim volume onto the tower furthest from the fire pile, watched as she rearranged the tower to slip it in further down, away from its future.

Here's one, he said.

Machine gun rattles

into life, or rather death –

siege in summertime.

Oh, you're a genius! she gushed, turning away from her work, drawn full fathom five from the space of melancholy. It makes Sarajevo sound like a holiday must, she laughed.

He lit a cigarette, drew deep and handed it to her. If you keep up that level of interest, I might invite you to my garret.

She smirked. You wish! And chose a different book from a different tower.

He took back the cigarette, fixed her with those damn gorgeous eyes.

Of course, he said. Always.

(Nine)

A quiet day in autumn, an afternoon of gold-shafted light.

Come on, said Samir. This may be our last chance to scuff some leaves before all the trees metamorphose into firewood.

Others had the same idea. Children kicked soccer balls, parents stood smoking in small knots of conversation. An artist had set up his easel outside the shattered mosque but he wasn't getting much done.

The contours are too unruly, he complained as they passed. It's as if my hand doesn't want to paint the scene before me but the one committed to memory. See how it trembles the closer the brush comes to the canvas? It twitters and zitters, I can't force it to connect! Body and mind have separated. What am I to do? He shook his head. In a war where nothing makes sense, even I don't make sense!

They left him to pack up his easel and paints and go home to paint from inner sight while they walked along the river through Music Pavilion park. Her remaining trees shed leaves with joyous abandon in a breeze skating up off the water. Shutting out all reasons why they shouldn't, they promenaded arm-in-arm, overtaken by the memory of how it should be on a lazy Sunday afternoon in late October.

They crossed the river at the National Library, looked into the tumult of ruin, looked beyond.

I see the turrets gold-washed by the sun! Kisha cried. The patios and columns and the vast Great Hall!

I see the students, their arms full of books, said Samir and laughed. Especially the ones who can't wait to start reading. They're sitting right here on the steps at our feet!

They stared into their illusion, saw only reality, and walked on, playing the same trick through the alleys of Bascarsija, past the mosque, cathedral and Orthodox church. They window-shopped the fine streets, stood before their favourite bookstore, shared roasted chestnuts from a street vendor who existed only in time past.

But were unprepared for the return circuit via Tito Street, past street stalls selling the salvaged and looted, the family heirlooms and stolen goods. Anything, everything, to raise cash – for the forged papers needed to escape or

to bribe this one or another, or to barter for survival basics on a market too black to be believed.

Kisha hurried past the stalls laden with icons, altarpieces, books, manuscripts, past the wandering locals and the UN soldiers who haggled in their template blue helmets.

I feel sick, said Samir, hands deep in his pockets, his collar turned up against a sudden inner chill. Selling our treasures to peacekeepers who can't keep the goddamn peace. Our culture either goes up in flames or out on the next air transport.

She looked back, bit her lip. You don't think Baba's icons could be over there, do you? You don't think her place was looted before it was hit?

He sighed, took her arm, steered her steadily in the direction of home.

Don't go down that track, Ki-. Don't even think to look – you'd drive yourself mad haunting these mafia-fed halls. And you wouldn't have the money to buy it back in any case. It'd break your heart all over again.

He was right, she knew. But still she felt the pull toward the cloud of unknowing.

(Ten)

Kisha got back from work, tipped the canisters of water into the bath, brought a junky paperback novel out from the living room pile to light the stove on the balcony. But first, she cut a cigarette in half, lit its filter end and flipped aimlessly through the pages of this evening's choice.

How could she ever have bought such a thing? Who was the Kisha who had bought such a thing?

She shook her head at the folly of it all, sat down, her back against the wall. The book's firing could wait, her desire for coffee could wait. She needed to remember who that Kisha was. It seemed important somehow. Important to confirm that the face she surveyed in the remnant of bathroom mirror, with circles beneath the eyes so dark it had the haunted look of a hunted gazelle, had a sister somewhere hidden. A sister who belonged to a time before now.

Whether she could be resurrected was irrelevant, only that her memory conjured. Who was the younger sister with the girlish laugh who bought junky paperbacks?

She tried to reverse the process – instead of then to now, she enacted a now to then. The transformation of tobacco to ash couldn't help, this was more complicated alchemy. She needed to deconstruct memory to reconstruct it, an attempt to rewind the tape of her life to a time before this endless looping. Before the endless sameness, the dull mediocrity, of life trapped in a city in a slow dance with death had announced itself at her door.

Perhaps the junky paperback was too specific a memory to dredge, she thought. But generally, she coaxed her mind. Generally. Come on. Surely you aren't totally inept, surely you aren't so punch-drunk from the shelling that you can't resurrect a before, an ante-now.

Once, yes, there had been a world which was perfect, normal, perfectly normal. A world where she was excited by her studies, in love with a beautiful man. A world where an abundance of potential lives swirled about them in visions of a shared future. But she had to work to sustain the thought, the memory of that pre-world. She had to ignore the muted voices, the numbed desires and drained hopes of now. Hope drip-dripping onto a bloodied pavement, hope slowly walking into a sniper's deadly sights.

She worked hard to put away the images of lost hope and conjure in their stead a memory, a story. Decided to look in her favourite drawer, the one marked S. And yes, it came. As surely as if it were –

Now.

A lecture theatre. A room full of students. Three people at a table.

She remembered the scene well. It was the first time he had appeared in her life, as a professor on an examination panel. Her stomach tumble-turned again, beyond the reach of war, siege, hunger, cold. Tumble-turned with nerves at this, her final oral exam in the quest to enter graduate school, to continue her studies in comparative literature and linguistics.

She sank into the memory, surrendered to its pleasure. Her tutor, Haris, gave her small nods from the top table, while she sat at the back, tense, fidgety, her knees jiggling in time to an unheard rhythm. Alphabetically, the students proceeded to the front of the room, chose three cards at random from a pile on a desk and spent the requisite fifteen minutes preparing their colloquium responses.

Mirvic! he called.

She took her place at the desk, looked into his eyes this first time. A question about Hesse: *The wanderer in search of the meaning of life – discuss*. And she had begun. It was all there, within, ready to be brought out.

Relief! Leaving the faculty building, she walked out and into the sunshine of a summer's day, spun round and laughed. In the end, it had been so easy!

Haris came, pulled her into a hug. You'll make a brilliant grad student, he confirmed. We were all very impressed. Come on, let me buy you a coffee. And they went to the small café near the river where Marko waited tables.

So? he asked, balancing a large tray of orders effortlessly on one hand.

She grinned and he gave a whoop in response. Cigarette lit, she sat back, closed her eyes. I can't believe it was so simple, she said. What a gift! Hesse!

Know why? said a male voice from above.

He stood, haloed by the sun.

Oh, professor! Sorry. She sat up straight and stubbed out her cigarette.

Haris laughed. Come on, Kisha, you're out of school now. Samir, he indicated to the empty chair. Please join us.

He extended a hand. Nice to formally meet you, he said.

Um – likewise.

But tell me, he said pouring coffee from the small copper dzezva into his cup. Do you know why I chose Hesse?

He lit a cigarette while she shook her head dumbly, took his time answering.

Haris had mentioned he had an excellent student who was passionate about Hesse's work and keen to continue her studies. How fortunate that you randomly chose a card from the pile on the desk so I could test the extent of that passion.

Kisha laughed and raised her cup in a toast. Here's to Hesse staying my guardian angel now and evermore!

She smiled. In the here and now she smiled into the memory of there and then. The beginning of a then, for them. The true beginning, before the beginning. For when she had asked some months later if he would supervise her master's thesis – on Hesse, of course – he declined.

Another part of their beginning, that end. She had gone to sit in the café with her disappointment and confusion, alone except for Marko waiting tables between lectures. To sit with her coffee and look out on a rain-drenched river which flowed, ever-constant, despite the petty troubles of a 22-year-old girl.

What's up? Marko said on his next drift past.

Kisha sighed. Just a bad day, she said as he sat down at the table and wiped greasy hands on a napkin trailed from a back pocket. Tell me a story, M. That'll get me laughing.

He screwed up his nose. Sorry, Ki-. I wish I could but I'm coming off shift now and have to run to a class.

She was far away, back in her thoughts, and didn't notice when he brought a second coffee, kissed her lightly on the hair, said goodbye. She just sat and stared out through a rain-spattered window onto a river's disinterest.

How could she have been so wrong about him? That day of the colloquium, all the lectures she'd attended since, the conversations they'd had. And now, when she thought it possible –

No. Impossible. No explanation. Just a: I'm sorry, Kisha, but no. And then a second time: Sorry, but I need to get back to this marking.

There it was, done. Dismissed from his presence.

What of all the times she had stayed back to talk to him, to remain in his presence as long as possible – just to hear him speak, tell of the things he knew, soak in the bath of his voice, fragrant with knowledge?

She sipped cold coffee and remembered a day not long past. He at the front of the lecture hall gathering papers, full of his thoughts, oblivious to the noisy exit of happy chatting students. A popular teacher to be sure, a brilliant mind, only ten or so years since he himself had been one of them. But reserved, singular, an important topic was needed to draw him into conversation, something interesting on which he could reflect.

She had walked down the steps slowly that day. Why, she didn't know. But all of a sudden, she had begun to feel self-conscious in his presence. Her question rehearsed, she walked slowly, to stay calm, composed, to arrive at his desk sober, not like some young flighty thing. All of a sudden, she wanted to think he took her seriously. All of a sudden it seemed to matter what he thought of her. And in the end she had not asked her question, had simply walked past and said: Thank you.

Kisha humphed, stubbed out her cigarette. Thank you. For what? How could she return to class now he'd refused her request? When it was clear he thought so little of her? Had she been blind to his opinion all this time because of her desire to be close to his knowledge, to share the same airshed? Had it blinded her to the fact he was polite in her presence, nothing more? Her face burned with the thought, the shame of it.

She lit a fresh cigarette, stared out at the grey of the river and grey of the sky. Suddenly thrown into disarray by the colour and shape of an overcoat crowding her line of vision. She stood sharp to attention, met the coat owner's eyes.

There he was, separated by a thin sheaf of glass, standing on a damp terrace, his old felt fedora dripping rain onto his shoes.

She sat back down, stared at the tabletop.

May I join you?

He placed a folder in front of her, lit a cigarette, sat back in his chair. You dropped this in my room in your haste to leave.

She looked at the makings of a thesis proposal between them. I – er – sorry – no, wait! she flashed. In my haste? You were the one who wanted me out of there!

Samir let the smoke exit his body slowly, lazily, surveyed her anger. I won't debate you, Kisha. At the very least, the folder gave me the chance to seek you out and explain my decision.

She folded her arms. What – you needed time to make up an excuse? I caught you off-guard, did I?

He inclined his head. Yes to the second question, no to the first. What I needed was time to formulate the truth. In my own mind at least before sharing it with you.

She hugged the folder to her quickening heartbeat, didn't want to hear whatever he had to say.

It's already resolved, she mumbled into the folder's edge. No explanation necessary.

She wanted to leave but movement eluded her. A push and pull kept her rooted to the chair, mouth firmly clamped to the folder's edge.

Kisha. His voice was soft. He reached out, touched her hand. A soft sparrow peck, then withdrawn.

I would be more than happy to spend some time with you, if it would be of value, if it's what you want, he said. I know it takes time to discuss certain – he paused – concepts. But I can't be your supervisor. It would be – again the slight pause, a tremor gone before she had time to register its presence – inappropriate. But I could spend more time with you, in a more relaxed way, if that were acceptable?

It wasn't a long speech. And in reply, she had no way of articulating how her joy in learning was so snug-wrapped in the joy of his teaching. They seemed to reside in her like Siamese twins, overlain by something more, something beyond, something that tugged at her belly, trip-wired her knees. She had no way of describing this, or even understanding it. But words bubbled up nevertheless, and she whispered into a void of slow-materialising consciousness. You melt me.

He moved closer. What? he said. I can't hear you.

She repeated it more softly the next time, and the one which followed, till only her breath remained. You melt me.

His hand touched hers again, the other rested against her cheek. She melted into his fingers, fused into his skin.

It's OK, he said into her mouth. We won't fly too close to the sun.

A mortar exploded nearby. She opened her eyes to dark. Had she fallen asleep? Or been so deep in reverie that time had slipped between the pages of the book in her hand?

The next explosion closer. It rattled doors and cupboard frames, forced her back to the hallway mattress where she curled, retreating further into a song of memory as the building shuddered.

Later – how much later? – the apartment door opened. First tentative steps over the threshold, out of gloom into gloom.

Kisha? Ki-?

I'm h-here.

He felt his way over to the mattress, lay down, curled into her back, kissed her hair, neck, ear.

She could hear his shallow breath, feel his quaking hand seek the warmth of her belly, smell the sweat on his skin. Mortars whistled down from the mountain to rock them in waves. Gradually his breathing slowed.

I really had to run – we were clearing out some of the offices when it started. Damn them. I had to drop everything and run.

Was it down your way?

Didn't you hear? It's been going on for an hour or more. Basically followed me home.

She turned to face him, kiss his sweat-soaked eyes, lie together forehead to forehead.

Yet, I've been in the most delightful daydream, she admitted. Memories of how we met, our first conversation, that sort of thing.

Tell me where you got up to and we can take it from there.

And so they stayed locked together while the wall zittered at their back, plaster cracked from the ceiling, showered them in porcelain white and the window plastic sucked in-out with each fresh pounding.

All night they went on, occasionally drifting into sleep but soon enough rousing with: Oh, and do you remember when – ?

At daybreak, she woke fully, no more memories on her lips, woke fresh, into silence. A silence not empty but full, pregnant, complete.

Ready to birth what we share, she thought. The idea of a longer-than us.

(Eleven)

The door opened and Nada tumbled straight onto the hallway mattress.

You don't mind, do you? she mumbled. I was coming over the bridge and nearly slipped in. I'm so tired, I don't think I could make it home.

She trailed off as Kisha covered her with a pair of thick blankets.

Tell Kasim when you see him at the centre, OK? So he doesn't worry. She sighed and snuggled deeper into the warmth. It was such a lousy shift. We got shelled three times. The wounded were lined up in the corridors, we could only manage patch jobs.

Oh, she roused herself on one elbow. If you've got time could you rinse out my coat? It's in bad shape – I fell hard against a guy I was treating during the last attack. Wasn't pleasant for either of us.

Sure, said Kisha, pushing her prone. Now sleep!

She could picture the hell of Nada's 24 hour shift, could picture it from Baba's time and her regular visits to donate blood. She could see it, smell it, hear it – the torches and miners' lamps used for operations without monitors or X-rays, anaesthetists hand-pumping oxygen with rubber bladders.

She washed the coat out in the bathtub, rubbed the stubborn patches with a cake of soap. By the light of a candle, the swirled soup of her work could have looked like a bath filled with wine or rose petals, ready for a relaxing restorative soak. It could have been, but wasn't, and she fought hard to contain the nausea rising from her empty gut.

We're going to celebrate the New Year, Samir announced to the room mid-morning.

What?

When was the last time we had a party with everyone here? His reasoning was sound.

Plato laughed. We're always partying – coffee, cigarettes, homemade cognac, a few candles, some music if the electricity decides to join us. We have parties all the time!

Samir waved a hand of exasperation. I mean a real party. With a proper guest list and a proper meal and – well I don't know – party games maybe?

They stared at him.

Come on, he said. We'll write invitations and everything.

On what?

Toilet paper!

No! squealed Kisha. Don't waste it!

Marko arrived into the discussion. Comrades, he said, kissing each cheek, throwing a packet of cigarettes into each lap.

Where's Miki?

Oh, he groaned, sliding down the wall and coming to a bump on the mattress where Nada squeaked in protest. He's found himself a woman to keep him warm. I think she fell for the fleur de lys tattooed on his head.

Nice, said Samir. Another of the well-known fringe benefits of military service. And lit a pay-day cigarette to prove his point.

I need a woman, Marko whined.

Maybe you could do a Miki, Susu said. And if that doesn't find you a girl, you could always share his. I swear I can never tell the two of you apart.

Don't shave your head! Kisha cried. It wouldn't be you without that shaggy mane.

You could put a wanted ad up in Tito Street, Nada suggested, pushing him off the mattress. You see everything there – requests for stoves, shoes, winter coats. The occasional woman.

But how would she find me?

Give our address, Kisha offered. I'll take applications, make a shortlist. What do you want – full hips or pretty smile, CV or recent photo?

Everything.

Has anyone actually got full hips these days? Plato wondered.

You'd be surprised, said Nada. Is age a criteria?

Marko shrugged.

Well, it's just that the grannies seem to hold fat longer. It's genetic.

No! he shrieked. No grannies.

You said woman, she grumbled.

Such a party. All the usual suspects, supplemented by Samir and Plato's undergrads, any of the doctors not on shift, plus some of the internationals from the humanitarian agency.

Are you sure? Samir had asked.

Well, they're nice, Kisha shrugged. And it's a chance to show them how the other half lives.

They'll bring the best gifts, Kasim noted. Especially if you tell them what you need first.

Shampoo! Susu called out. Face cream!

Books, said Kisha, looking at the ruins of the wall.

From well before curfew the tiny flat overflowed with people, the stairwells were full of chattering students, the halls a crush of humanity. After adding several books to the wall, stashing a couple of coffee packets at the back of the kitchen cupboard and delivering shampoo and moisturiser to Susu, Kisha piled the remainder of the myriad gifts – bottles of water, bars of soap, a few batteries, packets of matches, two cloves of garlic, a couple of onions and some sad apples – on a trestle by the lift with a sign: *Help yourselves!*

Earlier she had placed candles around the edge of the balcony and hung Chinese lanterns found in the cellar from the gutter.

It made Nada a bit edgy. Doesn't it sort of call attention to us? she said.

Relax! cried Samir. You know better than anyone that every shell, every bullet has someone's name on it. He kissed her forehead, enveloped her in a bear hug. None of them are for us tonight, I personally guarantee it.

M&M played request after request in the corner of the living room. Miki's new girlfriend jived to every song.

No hips, said Susu, sipping her mother's homemade saki. Pretty smile, though.

On cue, the Chetniks decided to see the New Year in their way. People huddled wherever they could as mortars hit the city. Everywhere the boom-crash of opera, everywhere the overture to Beethoven's 1812, everywhere but where they were.

Congratulations! Samir called from the balcony. We have survived 1992. May we all see each other again – same time, same place – in another 365 days. Fires backlit his grand speech. Automatic gunfire crackled and spat from across the river.

Have you ever noticed, said Kisha, how they sound like those tiny strings of fireworks we used to let off as kids? She sipped her rice wine. Women's farts, we called them. I wish these were as harmless.

What? hiccupped Plato. Since when are women's farts harmless?

Susu gave him a good kick in the shins while Kisha sipped her wine, bent-double with giggles.

What'd they hit this time? someone called out.

Looks like over around Tito Street, Samir called back.

Great, grumbled Marko. There goes my wanted ad. And he hugged a grim guitar while Kisha tight-wrapped him in a fresh round of giggles.

(Twelve)

What did they say?

She stood by the radio. There were always enough batteries at the refugee centre. Kasim leant his head closer. The reception was bad. A shell had hit the water line at the brewery. Eight dead, 20 injured – and –

No more. Out the door, pulling on her coat on the way. The streets were icy, slippery, but she didn't fall, falter. Like the day with Baba, it was as if she ran through air.

Don't think, she told herself. Don't think, otherwise the magic will stop.

Should she go to the hospital? Or home? The hospital was closer, but she couldn't bear to think the worst. Not yet. Not ever yet.

Samir, Samir? Calling his name as she climbed the stairs, two at a time, all the way to the fifth floor, the stitch in her side seamlessly merging with the struggle to find breath.

Mmmm?

He stood at the door, book in hand, backlit, beautiful, alive.

Oh! She fell into waiting arms, collapsed into the relief of his warmth.

I'm not ready to say goodbye, she whimpered, shaking her head over and over as he cradled her in one of Baba's massive coats.

Shhhh. He stroked her hair, held her to his heartbeat. There is no goodbye, he reminded and tilted her chin, looked hard in her eyes. No goodbye. Only hello. Over and over again.

He kissed her hair, smiled and said: Hello Kisha.

She stirred the rice in the pot. Steam tentatively rose from Tolstoy's dance with the flame while snow flurried in happy eddies about her head. She wound the scarf tighter round her throat and chin, pulled the coat's collar higher to hug her ears, and rubbed hands still bitter-cold inside thick ski gloves.

Sometimes I think I'm losing it, she said to Samir who was jumping up and down inside to stay warm. I really cracked up this afternoon.

You're not losing it, his breath a white cloud before his nose. Every now and then you have to let a little out. The sluice gates have to open occasionally. He grinned. I can take the adoration.

Yeah, but it all came at once, she said, trying to make sense of the fall. I mean – I was listening to the radio just after I'd finished writing you the letter. So I was already down in the pit, thinking morbid thoughts –

What letter?

A letter. Just in case.

Just in case what? he teased.

She turned back to the pot on the stove.

His step was soft, arms encircling. Can't I read it now? he asked. To see how much you love me?

Oh. She grimaced and stirred the pot harder.

Ki-

She looked up into his eyes. Twinkling, merry. Merry despite everything that went on around them.

She tried to return his grin. You're assuming things, she bantered. Maybe you'd find out things you'd rather not!

Ha! He tickled her ribs. I'd be forced to kill you before a sniper got hold – so no one else would know the dreaded truth.

You could put out a contract to the guy holed up in the Jewish Cemetery, she laughed. A packet of Marlboro for my life.

You're worth that much!

Kisha felt herself tight-hugged, felt his full life flowing, spilling into her. It was over for the moment but still it stood close, watching for another chance to catch her up in fetid fear. The sluice gates closed, the pressure released.

But till when? Till when?

The newspaper lies open in the staff room at the centre. Beyond the obituaries and lists of dead, she reads the day's editorial, *Empire of Hatred*, with Kasim on one side and Haris on the other.

Hatred and vengeance have recruited new, often reluctant supporters. None of those whose nearest and dearest have been murdered, whose houses have been stripped and burned, will be able to forget ... some say 'we will avenge every stone of our house' ... some will give in to this madness at the risk of damning themselves.

None of them speaks, each with his own experience to work through while she remembers Baba's words on the day she died:

Don't let them do this to you. Don't let them make you hate.

She had gone home and watered the herbs that day, had done as Baba had suggested and kept the seeds. Now it is more than a year. Now she prepares to let them go to seed again.

Baba knows. Baba always knows. But is there anyone left to tell?

(Intermezzo)

The chorus now speaks:

So many stories. So many stories of pain, so many to whom harm has been done. Why talk about it? Why bother? Why give voice? Does it become some sort of brinkmanship? Like that silly pub game – you think you've got it bad? I have it soooooo bad that ... on, on, on it goes. Building-building-building to a crescendo that slashes the soul as surely as shrapnel rips a body to shreds. The damage complete, irreparable, before its impact has even been felt.

No, don't talk about it, don't tell the stories. Or if you must, do it in a monotone, a matter-of-factual monologue of everyday normalcy. For yes, this is our normalcy, this is the new-normal, and the old-normal doesn't bear thinking about, reminiscing about, because it won't ever come again. We look out on a shattered landscape and know it can't. Ever.

At some point, we imagine it will be replaced by another new-normal, the only prayer offered is that it is at least no worse than the present new-normal. And so we speak about our lives, normally, in that monotone of matter-of-factness. This happened and this, oh, and then that. Over coffee we talk, tell our stories, over coffee and a cigarette. No matter that the cigarette is only half a cigarette, or with a filter made of toilet paper, and that the match used to light it has been split, finely, with a pocketknife, in half. It takes a while to go through a box of matches that way. But we have time, when it is light, to sit, split, and split again.

No matter that the coffee is made of burnt rice, or chicory, or yesterday's real coffee grounds boiled a second or third time. No matter. We still sit over coffee, sit with our cigarettes, and talk. Normally. For it is normal – who died, who lived, what was the body count on this fine, fine day, what the stupid politicians of the West said most recently, more stupidly than before, their latest thinking on a peace process to bring our hillside butchers to heel.

All so normal. We talk about the items on the radio news (no need to comment on the dwindling supply of batteries to maintain this particular normal). We talk about the weather (no batteries required). We talk about what to have for dinner (even if it amounts to nothing, or the same as yesterday, or the same as for breakfast – if the ration of tinned humanitarian guilt, well past its use-by date, managed to stretch that far).

This, then, is the sum total of our always, just a bog-standard-regular-normal-everyday-sort-of-always existence in this new-world-normal-sort-of-way which we live and continue to live until someone blows a leg off or a head off or an arm off and the new-normal changes again, with a sigh and an: Oh well, it was bound to happen sooner or later. The odds keep lowering, you see. As those who can escape do, as those who stay grow more careless or fatalistic in their dashes between safe points, as those on the hills keep receiving their regular supplies of ammo.

But wait. Don't tune out quite yet. There's more, there's always more.

Of course we talk about the day at the office, even if it amounts to classes in a stairwell, or serving soup in a school converted to a refugee centre, or patching up broken bodies in a hospital devoid of requisite instruments which the Chetniks, incidentally, enjoy shelling each day at noon during visiting hours. Each day without fail – they like their routines.

Of course we talk about our excitement when the electricity comes on, suddenly, sporadically, in the middle of the night (enabling washing, drying, ironing, cooking at 3am no less), or the water (enabling the filling of buckets, an extra flush down the toilet, a bath for heaven's sake!).

Yes, these are our stories, and no matter how dull the monotone, no matter how flatline the narration, no matter how earnest the attempt at matter-of-factness, perhaps you still catch the sadness of what we tell.

If you listen closely, with a different ear, not the ear of the senses but the ear of the heart, you will hear it. Tune into the subtext, scratch a little on the surface till a deeper layer is exposed. Feel free to finger-chip away at the façade, it has already been struck by gun fire. Just a little is needed – but be diligent, methodical. Take the small hunk of plaster in your hand, turn it over slowly, savour its texture (crumbly, yes? like a hard sheep's cheese). Then (are you ready?), swift-crush it to dust.

Open your hand, slowly now, to not disturb the remnants, cradle the debris, these fine specks of nothing. Look closely at them, look into them.

For there you will find the remains of a life, a home, a family, a story. There you will find the tired grains of hope and faith and trust and love. And yes, there you will find the sadness, the sadness beneath the monotone, the sadness reduced to dust. Dust, then, is all that remains, ready to be given up to the wind.

Spread wide your hand, let the dust lift from your palm and take flight. Fragments of sadness carried by a breeze to a beyond beyond the horizon, or perhaps delivered down onto a freshly-dug grave, or gently dissolved into the river Miljacka to flow away home to the sea.

So many stories. Yes, so many stories. But all reduced to dust in the end. There, in the monologue of a city's destruction. There, in the whistle of a mortar overhead. There, in the dispassionate disinterest of a Sarajevan like Kisha who watches to see where it falls this time, the plume of smoke, the flick of flame, the scream, the wail, the siren, the shout, pinpointed to a particular city block or landmark.

Earlier, she felt the pang of compassion, pain's spontaneous transference as she bore witness (a quickened heartbeat, an intake of breath, a tumble-turn of her stomach) but now there is nothing, simply a numb knowing.

Why? she wonders. Is it guilt to be spared once more? Spared by the randomness of an attack which could claim me tomorrow?

Or maybe it's something more banal, more practical that mutes her response – the fact that fear, shock, generates sweat. A cold sweat that licks at the back of her neck, dampens her hair, plunges the crevasse between her breasts, pools in her armpits. Too much sweat has a consequence – too frequent washing of clothes and body when there is little water and less soap to spare. Has she somehow unconsciously registered this? And her disinterested witness is its manifestation? Is this another of the by-products grafted onto her city's crucifixion?

We watch Kisha as she watches. We who have already flown from shattered bodies and shredded hearts. We who hover and watch as she watches the new-normal take shape. Daily, hourly, moment by suffering moment.

We shall not give up on those who remain, staying ever-close – our breath the mist on a foggy morning, our form the shadows cast by a wavering kandilo. We stay, we care, we trust to hope.

Even though we see how she reduces everything to its lowest common denominator of emotionless narration. Over coffee, over a cigarette. She does not examine too closely the chipped plaster in her hand. And certainly, certainly does not crush it to dust.

Kisha would never go so far. Never.

The Rhizomes of Memory

(One)

There is a place in Kisha's memory for everything that has happened – a place of memory full of singular memories in small drawers which she opens and sifts through. Each container hosts an image, a scene, a conversation. They are stories strung like pearls around the neck of a life, tiny firefly sentries within a heavenful of stars. Each is sorted, noted and filed, to be retrieved by some sense reaction perhaps – a taste, a tune, a smell – but more often by a random thought which conjures (by way of its own logic) interconnections with memories long buried at the backs of drawers, dust-coated and musty with age. An encounter with the past which sneaks in, worms its way back up and into now when there is no expectation of same. When the jolt is pure, sudden, flavoursome.

Less often, but no less potent, is the conscious resurrection of memory, to bear witness to the past, reflect on lessons learnt and build something new by coupling the actions of then with the insights of now. Perhaps a sort of wisdom ensues, a more rounded-out consideration of the original event, understanding granted by the time taken for it to mellow, ferment, age. Perhaps, but not necessarily. At the very least, she must prepare a new catalogue entry to acknowledge shared space between the then and the now. Or she makes a notation on an existing card with a furrowed brow, a chewed pen end and sighed scribble which admits: *Knowledge Pending*.

On any night Kisha can be found lying in the dark, staring at a ceiling which cannot be seen, going to this place within her heart to stand before her catalogue drawers. Here in the heart is the place of memory, not her mind, her brain – there are housed the mere artefactual tools to prise archaeological finds out and into conscious space, not the place of their storage or source, these energy-charged memory beakers reside beyond. Into her heart, into the centre of all things Kisha must go to find her catalogue drawers.

The image she conjures to enter the space is of the old oak cabinets in the National Library filled with their millions of typed cards. Containers for the artefacts recorded thereon, therein, they house the memory of all those who read them, loved them, referenced them in some essay or other. She likes the idea of a plethora of typed cards as keepers of her memories. Indeed, they themselves are memory texts, and she smiles before her old oak cabinets,

anticipating the long night ahead, this parlour game she plays, here in a parlour of war, of death.

Of course sense triggers can help kick-start a memory trail – a picture, a smell, a snatch of tune, a taste or touch of textured form. But she finds it difficult to rely on her senses in a parlour which overwhelms and numbs. Better to go directly to the source, knock on the door of her heart and let the inner flood the outer, submerge their war beneath her stream.

Yet she knows she must take care – so many drawers house the now of recent past. So short a time yet it commands a vast vault. Rather she searches for everything which lies beneath, below – events which take time to re-sift and re-assemble, to bring their fragments together into the circle of story. And on this night, stands before the drawers marked by year, cross-referenced by event, and traces a finger across the arc of time and space, an intersect between, say, 1984 and the letter O.

Olympics, she smiles. Too easy.

She starts again with 1974 and – well – a raft of letters could take her into a plethora of relevant drawers. A for Azra, B for Baba, D for Death, F for Feast Day, G for St George. How to unravel these tangled rhizomes and concentrate on only one thing? And sighs ruefully in the direction of the ceiling.

I should have stayed with the Olympics, she thinks.

But no, the more elaborate the search, the better the entertainment. To keep her whole, tight-woven, sane. Till break of day.

The cabinets creak with age and disuse. They groan, shudder, spool updrafts of dust. She flicks through the typed cards and at last locates the intersect between A and B and D and F and G and 1974, the fat tuber of rhizome from which so many roots are spread. It is the letter I.

The light is bright, stark white. It seems to climb all the way up the steep attic stairs to where she hides. As soon as Baba began to assemble the embroidered cloths, incense, perfumed oil, as soon as she began to hum the refrain of his chant, she knew. Knew where she must go to be safe from this event and her fear – of an unknown man and his magic unknown.

Yes, she knew, and remembered the day he had passed her and the other children playing in the street. Oh! How they had run and jumped, thrown up imaginary obstacles into his path, teased and tugged his beard!

You are too wild! he cried, splashing them with holy water. You will become mountain goats!

The water had not touched her. The splash of rosemary dunked in his shiny silver basin, the water skipping through the air, had not touched her. She had ducked away while the others squealed their delight. No black-robed man's magic water would drench her bird-brittle wings.

Brittle, yes, a fragile waif cocooned in Baba's lap, after the sudden flight of her parents, lost to a truck's careless swerve on a narrow mountain track. They had fallen-fallen, the car tumbling over-over, into a ravine. But their souls had flown, straight up to heaven and God, Baba had told her. To the God they didn't believe in, to the place Tito said didn't exist.

But they must be somewhere, Kisha thought. Somewhere high. Not stuck beneath the earth with worms, not caught by rocks in the gorge, scarred and damaged beyond repair. They had to be somewhere high, of this she was certain in a way all five year-olds are certain. And so wanted to fly, to visit them wherever they were.

She squinted up into the sky, to a place she couldn't see, to a place she could barely imagine. No priest's holy water would stick her like glue, bind her to this place, root her to the earth and its grubby bones. She needed to be wild to fly so high.

Kisha stays quiet in her refuge, this cave at the top of Baba's house. Living here is still new. Not like coming to visit, a tea and cake and then gone again. She needs to learn this place, explore it, feel it, dream it, so that even in the midst of a moonless night she knows every wrinkle of its face. She puts a finger to a wooden cupboard door and swirls a pattern in its thick film of dust. She listens to the tiny claws of a mouse scurry across the bare boards, and watches a spider repair her web in a broken pane of glass.

All this she sees. Now. Again.

She hears the priest downstairs. The creak of wooden floor accompanies him from room to room, muttered incantations float alongside, and Baba's responses echo in a singsong chant. Incense seeps through the floorboards and all the while there is this white light crawling in from under the door, an iridescent glow which surrounds her no matter how tight shut her eyes. Screwed up they are and her hands balled into fists before her face. But the light won't go away. It appears beneath her lids with a power all its own.

Kisha is young, wild, curious. However fragile her self in these early days of loss and newness, she wonders about the light. It is a mystery to be solved. She opens the door a crack, registers that they are in the bedrooms, and

quietly, on unshod feet, slips down the flights of stairs to stand in the hall. The doorway to the sitting room veritably leaps at her – something silvery, shimmery lies within.

In the room is an altar, a small table covered by a linen cloth. Candlelight bathes the icons which stand there. St George she knows, on horseback with lance high – the family's patron saint, the one whose feast day they celebrate with the priest and his ritual blessing.

But the other? The other is a mother who clasps a baby to her breast. Gentle is her embrace, gentle her love. Here is the white light, glowing from the clear-as-moonshine silver plating which embosses the icon from frame to veil. Only the mother's face and hands, and the baby's, are revealed within the beaten silver.

The mother cradles her child in arms, but also somehow beckons to the girl with a hand outstretched. Come, she seems to say. Come, let me greet you.

Kisha bites her lip. What should she do? She is already close enough to see her shadow in the fresh-polished silver, a shimmery wisp of smoke reflected in the frame. She rocks forward on the balls of her feet, propelled. Not enough, not yet –

Sudden. A heavy step behind her and she feels the priest's warm breath on her hair. A murmured prayer wafts down, reaches her ear as a mere hint of grace. And she is gone, to Baba, climbs into her lap and buries herself among the many skirts and embroidered apron she wears for the occasion.

Father Sava takes his place at the altar. His beard is long, his eyes deep-set, a small black hat perched on his head. He places Baba's prayer book on the table, pulls up the sleeves of his heavy black robe and dips long brown fingers into a bowl of rosewater.

She cannot, will not look, as he intones the rites, breaks bread and fills small cups with red wine. His melodic voice chants on and on, over, under, in-between. A stream's current swirled round and about and she a small leaf drifting down from an autumnal tree. There now, her landing is soft in the stream. The scent of incense is heady and she drifts. Gently.

Like rain falling, grass growing – *kisha pada, trava raste*.

Time passes. Or does it? For there behind her eyes she sees again the white light. Its brightness wills her to wake. Father Sava holds out a hand and this time there is no fear or thought that his magic will bind her to the earth. He

traces the sign of the cross upon her brow and a wet streak of oily water slides down her nose.

He leads her to the Lady in her silvered veil, and says: Kisha, let the Holy Mother's love rain down upon you, you who are rain itself.

A smile lies buried in his beard. Kiss the Lady, he instructs.

And she does, looking into eyes of the deepest green-black. Eyes that surprise with their life-filled witness, reflecting and absorbing in a looped and coiled ring song caught by refracted candlelight from behind a veil of silver moonshine.

No breath. No word. No thought. No sign. Just an emptiness, full of light. She feels herself exhilarated, lifted, lightened, by a joy she can neither describe nor understand. But knows it comes from the Lady, knows it comes from her light.

Ah. A memory hugged close in the drawer marked I. But where is A for Azra in this mix? Kisha must look further into the day. Later, after the feast, after baklava is shared, the sticky honeyed treat with a surprise secreted at its centre, where she takes a full and frank bite and finds a silver coin clanking in her mouth.

Hurrah! Everyone at the table claps. Luck will shine on our little Kisha this year!

She goes to the kitchen, washes the small coin and as Baba farewells her guests at the door, slips it into the sliver of gap of silver plating which hugs the Lady's neck. It disappears from sight, silver into silver, light into light.

Childhood experience lies deep-embedded. It forms the very bedrock of life. So it was with Kisha and the Lady. Simply there as Baba was there, as school was there, friends, games, drawings, storybooks. A quick kiss to her fingertips placed on the Lady's veil, the slight tremor felt, a buzz, hum or tingle. Each time she felt this life within life. Only now, in the deliberate activity of resurrection in the tense quiet of a moonless death-cleaved night does she think about the coin, for example, or the Lady's gift of light. And wonders.

But her time in this drawer is far from over as she finds the intersects between different memory-watercourses form a mighty flow before fanning out into a river mouth spread wide as a sheet of straight dark hair spilled into a basin in flood. So it is when A and B and D and F and G and 1974 are made whole in the memory of I.

Hurry! cries Baba. We need to get to the festival before sunset. Azra is waiting!

The time of the Gypsies has arrived. When accordions are played, tambourines trilled and guitars chord-thread their songs. When St George is set afloat on the river Miljacka with candles fore and aft to guide him home to the sea.

They sit on the sandy riverbank with Azra and her granddaughters, with all the other children of the camp, while women wade singing into the stream, their skirts fanned out on the face of the water, the musicians on shore encircling the rites with their music.

Kisha watches the saint float down the river toward the weir, his candle scouts fording the lip first.

Today we welcome St George and farewell him to the soul of the river all in one, Azra tells her. There may be different ways to live this life but one God answers all our prayers.

Imagine that we share the same saint! she laughs and cuddles Kisha close. Baba is my sister in spirit and you my granddaughter in love. Our connection is deeper than blood.

Kisha watches the women wade from the water, skirts wet-heavy at their ankles. A bonfire is lit and the sky deepens to evening blue. Venus grows bright in her heavens. She sits and thinks about the children at her school, the ones who tease her for playing at the Gypsy camp.

They'll steal you, right out from under your Baba's nose. You'll be gone! And when you die? They'll grind your bones to chalk and paint their faces with it!

Stupid stories, nothing more. Each year Kisha is freshly sad to watch the camp pack up their caravans, take their carts, horses and performing bear, and head off down an overgrown path shrouded by unknowing. Into another world, another year, another season.

Each year she sits on a rock with Azra watching them take their leave.

Why don't you go, Azra? You're a traveller too.

Ah child, she answers, drawing her into a hug as wide as the world. I'll never leave Baba's fireside.

Why not?

Because it is written.

Where Azra? Where is it written?

The Gypsy smiles and lifts two small hands into her lap, palm up. Here, she points to the left. And here, she points to the right.

Kisha squints but cannot see. Still she believes. For this is Azra. Whose magic is real.

She reaches into another drawer, this time marked U. It is time to fly the nest. She wants to live in town close to the faculty where she will study these coming years. She will miss Baba, will miss the Lady, but it is time to leave.

Baba knows and sets to work.

It is late. Kisha sleeps in her room upstairs, her childhood room full of a child's outgrown things. But she reaches into Baba's memory, reaches deep and brings out this image of Baba at work while she sleeps.

Baba brings the Lady, lies her flat on the kitchen table, looks into green-black eyes and gains an unspoken agreement to duplicate her incarnation, to re-birth her in new form. She places thick parchment over the embossed silver and using a soft-coloured pencil – lilac, she has decided – begins to sweep her hand back and forth, rubbing the edge of the pencil across the paper.

Her hand flies swift across the page, such is the energy of her task. No longer a grandmother, she is a girl at her desk in an art studio, an art studio bombed during a war set to divide and conquer almost half a century before. Yet she has not lost her touch, her feel of parchment and choice of colours. She draws the paper away from the icon, pleased with the rubbing thus far.

Once more she secures it in place, taking care to align the edges, and touches up areas of lightness and softness with a firmer hand, carving borders deeper with colour. Suddenly, she removes the paper, deftly sweeps it up and away in a single fluid movement of artistic knowing. Yes, she is well-pleased.

Small spaces lie free of colour and imprint. Here belong the faces and hands which lie beneath the silver plating, on the board itself, in egg tempera stuck fast to wood by layer upon layer of lacquer.

Baba chooses her pencils, translates the Lady, then the Child to parchment – the turn of mouth, the shape of eyes, the curve of jaw and straightness of nose, a true and faithful translation. She works by candlelight, the flame flickers, the icon and her sister slip in and out of shadow. Now only her eyes remain. Her eyes, their inner light.

A difficult task. Baba thinks long on the mix of green and black she needs to capture the effect. Her hand hesitates above the page and she wonders if the icon writer found his task as difficult. Did his hand hover with uncertainty as hers

does now or did he instinctively know how to make her eyes speak? Was it easier with pigment swirled in egg yolk, a matter of tool and technique, of simple craftsmanship? Or was he taken in hand by God's grace?

She prays to the Lady for intercession in her own task, squeezes her eyes into narrow slits and begins to lightly shade this tiny space which holds an ocean of colour. Her breath flows easier now she has begun. A little more green, a little more black. She cocks her head, lifts the candle, looks from one to the other and back again. A smudge of blue? No. It is done, complete.

Baba sits back, wipes the sweat from her lip and brow, smiles into this expression of love fully formed on a sheet at her table. She blots the surface, rolls it into a piece of greaseproof paper. Into a pink cylinder it goes.

Upstairs, Kisha sleeps. Also time for Baba to sleep. She returns the Lady to the icon corner, whispers her thanks and sees the mere flicker of acknowledgement fanned by candlelight at her side.

A memory not self-made, but when Kisha receives the gift, unscrolls the parchment, and asks her questions, she enters the scene just seen. It is her birthday and this her gift in the last summer of childhood. She marvels at the beauty of a simple piece of parchment imprinted with the Lady's image as Azra joins them at the kitchen table to add her own gift.

She lays a sprig of lavender on the paper, lights a candle, sprinkles perfumed oil all round this Lady of the Lady and chants:

Sun shines, wind blows, rain falls, grass grows ...

Three times round the chant, the candle in her hand swept across the parchment, its flame sketching a passage home to source.

Let us sing, says Baba and they hold hands, close eyes. It is the old love song she learnt by heart as a child:

Kisha pada, trava raste, gora zeleni ...

(Rain falls, grass grows, green is the forest ...)

Shall we call Father Sava to bless your Lady for you?

No, your blessing is enough, Baba. And your magic, Azra.

A three-way hug becomes three sets of tears, and on a frigid mattress in a frozen hallway, Kisha looks down the years and smiles to see Azra's face in each – her mosaic of scarves, her jewellery and skirts, the trill of melody from the bells at her waist, the scent of incense when the cards are cut.

Azra, Azra. Where are you, Azra? Did you leave us like Baba or have you hidden yourself away? How can one sister remain when the other is gone? How can she not? Who will light a candle then?

I will, Kisha decides. I will light a candle for you both. Whether in this world or the next, I will keep your memory safe. Here. Inside.

Out on the balcony a cigarette becomes her candle of the night as she watches the sky open her windows to shake out her crumbs. Snow flutters down, a spring shower of weightless crystal which has no desire to reach the ground where its magic will melt.

Why do they call snow powder? she wonders. It's more like goosedown in a breathless breeze.

She looks into the tunnel of memory once more and finds herself stuffing pillows, duvets. All the while feathers escape to drift nonchalantly in the no-breeze of time around her and the Gypsy children down by the river under twilit poplar trees.

Laughter, as they jump and grab at the soft clouds about their heads, reaches her down all these years. While Baba waves from the circle of the camp, sitting, knitting, smiling.

There beside her sister.

(Two)

Kisha wears a ring. Has no idea why she still wears it, but each day, in a ritual as long-standing as face-washing, teeth-brushing, toilet-going, she twirls the ring back round to face heaven. It always manages to shift slightly on her finger during the night, its heavy core of amethyst-set acquiring a half-mast perspective which she corrects automatically, instinctively even, in an act as natural as breathing. Each day.

Occasionally she looks at the ring surprised it still exists as its own entity, surprised it hasn't melted into her skin and disappeared, an embodiment of all she has witnessed in this performance of life. Since the first it has felt like a part of her anatomy, like the mole on a cheek, the scar on an arm, the too-early strands of grey in a thicket of chestnut hair. Only when someone comments on its unusual design is she reminded of its separate self. And a wan smile of acknowledgement may cross her face as she answers:

Yes, it is beautiful, isn't it.

Few in this place have noticed. Few have come close enough to notice. But the woman at the supermarket check-out does during the time it takes her to rummage for change.

Moment schnell, she may say, but in that split second the assistant remarks – for its size, its ornamentation, is not easily overlooked. At one time the social workers at the centre had admired it and now it is the turn of Tobias. Only natural, when she reaches to pluck a book from a higher shelf.

With anyone else, she unconsciously restricts the exchange to a light answer in the affirmative. But Tobias' enquiry is deeper, his interest more earnest.

The ring's provenance, he asks. It is most unique.

And she wonders. Should she remove it from her finger to make his enquiry simpler? Or is he satisfied to observe at a distance, too much the gentleman, too aware of her reluctance for contact to take her hand directly. How would she answer in any case? What story would she tell?

Once she had a dream. A dream of how to tell the story if someone asked. Of what happened, back there, back then. How it all came to be – why, when, and to whom.

In the dream, a typewriter began to tell the story, typing by itself. All she had to do was watch as each sheet was lifted through space to a workshop

bench where the text was laid out, stacked and bound. A frenzy of words tumbled out of the typewriter in their desire to tell the story of what happened. And she watched everything become ordered, everything in its place, linear, rational, believable. All she need do was watch.

But suddenly it went awry. The words, the very letters began to float off, detach themselves from the completed pages of the story while the typewriter still pounded, producing more, yet more words.

No! she cried aloud in the dream. Stop! And reached up, tried to catch the letters and words, return them to earth and finite logic.

Ream upon ream of gobbledy-gook swirled about her head, bobbing in a chaos of thought, merging, separating, scattering, like fireflies tugged by a turbulent breeze. No sense to the text, no meaning to the story, no language in which it could ever be understood. Who could possibly translate such a mess?

But the letters seemed happy, the words satisfied to float in an airborne harbour, and no amount of poking, prodding, imploring or urging could put the story back the way it was.

We have leavened your dust into seeded loaves, they explained. Our rhizome clusters host real meaning. Here, you will find your truth.

Nothing for it. She surrendered to their supremacy, their insight into best-fit, and when handed a needle and cotton, she understood her task was to stitch a fine cloak from their scattered snatches. As translucent as muslin, she tried it on for size, looked in the mirror, the sheer wrap following the contours of her form.

Is this who I am? she asked her reflection. Is this the life of me? Do I exist before I am told? Can I tell if I do not exist?

Kisha returns from the dream, from her memory of the dream. Tobias and his interest stand before her. And she knows now what she cannot tell, what she does not understand enough to tell. Not yet. The ring is her witness and confessor. This is the way it must be.

Look into me, the ring says. Look into me and the story will follow. The memories I house are good ones, not to be shut out or choked of their flow. Please. Twirl me round with less distraction, more conviction this new day. I do exist and what I tell is real. Despite your doubts. Perhaps even because of your doubts.

A lovely morning. A summer's morning.

Come on, says Samir, let's go window-shopping. He tousles her hair, pulls her reluctance out from under the covers.

Oh, she groans. Can't I sleep a little longer?

He hugs her tight, fierce in his resolve. A little longer is too long on such a beautiful day! Come on, a coffee will rouse you.

Kisha opens her eyes a fraction and groans again, the steamy rise of morning mist into the glare of July sun predicting the hot day ahead. They had partied late for her birthday the night before, out on the balcony where the cool of river breeze kept all refreshed till almost dawn.

But not quite – everyone preparing for holidays, an early start next day their excuse for 3am exits. To pack and be ready to jump on buses or trains and head out of town into the mountains, toward the lakes, off to the coast. Ah – but not the Adriatic, not this year. Everything a mess over there this year. Tomorrow she and Samir would head off as well. To a Greek island, a real treat, and all because of war in Croatia.

Why waste a beautiful day? he coaxes. Come on!

She is slow to dress, her reflection bleary in the bathroom mirror. But he's right. A first then a second coffee works to banish the cobwebs.

Ready? he says.

Can't we sit awhile? she whines. We can window-shop all day.

Yes, he says, dragging her to her feet. But this is a particular window.

Across the bridge they go, winding their way into the narrow alleys of Bascarsija toward the stalls of the smiths, their small shopfronts secure behind lock-down wooden shutters. They pass merchants unfastening the wooden clasps, hooking the top shutter up as a welcome awning from summer sun, the lower flipped out as a narrow sill for further trinkets.

See? she says. They're barely awake!

Yes – but we have an appointment.

Still she hasn't twigged. Till they stand before the man himself, the one they call Zlatara, gold and silver worker. With a nod he continues his morning ritual, bringing low stools and a small copper-topped table out front for the coffee offered after each transaction. Or simply to sit, relax and watch market life.

Later, Samir murmurs as she inspects his window display.

He guides her into the cool dark of a tiny workshop. Behind the counter is the master's work bench where some intricate strands of filigree lie, the small implements of his craft stacked neatly to one side.

It's time to choose a birthday gift.

Oh really?

And an early one for me, he says as the jeweller lifts a selection of rings onto the counter.

Your choice, he says, setting the rules of engagement. But we both receive the same.

The same?

He kisses the top of her head. How else can I properly connect to you? He grins and sizzles a fingertip against her forehead. *Zzzzzzzzz*.

But what if I don't like any?

All these rings, says the jeweller, sweeping a long-fingered hand across the black velvet tray, are replicas of archaeological finds from digs around the country.

Really? Her interest piqued.

I have a commission from the National Museum to produce them – rings, brooches, necklaces and earrings. They receive a sizeable cut from my sales.

Twenty-five percent, Samir whispers. So we're helping preserve national heritage at the same time.

Alright, she smiles. That's a good enough reason to restrict my choice.

She looks through the tray, only half-hearing the smith explain the provenance of each and how difficult it is to translate techniques from centuries past to produce a replica that reflects this embodied spirit.

Her fancy is finally caught by a wide silver band, its stone set in a cup of finely-looped metal ribbons.

This is very special, he murmurs, no longer the salesman, but the craftsman who reveres a higher craft. I would never have expected silverwork to be so finely wrought. A true artist produced this piece.

It's an amethyst, isn't it? she asks, pointing to the violet gem at its centre.

Yes, but here is its brother.

She inspects his choice set with plain rock crystal. The stone is much larger, a huge chunk which overflows and blurs the ribboned nest in milky white.

She shakes her head and slips the amethyst onto her finger. It hugs the space between knuckle and joint, home found.

Fourteenth century, the smith says, showing her its certification. From a castle ruin at Visoki.

When she looks up, Samir has the rock crystal locked firmly in place on the little finger of his right hand.

A perfect fit, he says.

Yes, she marvels. Perfect.

The bazaar is full of summertime joy, strolling shoppers and people-watchers, but they leave the crowds behind, take a horse and carriage from Alija upstream to Goat Bridge.

What a treat! Kisha cries.

Ah, but I'll make you walk back, he laughs while the horse clip-clops along, mane singing from copper bells strung to the fringe of its bridle.

Kisha twirls the ring on her finger to catch the merry wink of the sun's reflection. And takes Samir's hand to repeat the ritual. These ring twins, heavy, solid as their commitment, age their love by centuries, weight it with longer-than memories, of life deeper-lived.

I think we should go to the museum one day, she says, so they can say hello to their ancient forebears. And laughs at a random thought. What if, some time in the future, they come across our graves in an archaeological dig – do you think they could tell we're from now, and not then?

Samir shrugs, his thoughts elsewhere. He pays the coachman, walks slowly to the centre of the bridge, and at the highest point of its medieval arch over the Miljacka's swift flow, takes her hand.

This is more than a birthday gift, he says. It's a promise, a pact. Nothing, no one can separate us – whether six centuries past or six centuries hence. With this ring as my witness, I am with you.

Tobias asks again, points to the ring on her finger. But she is still unready. Much more is bound up in this story, much more must be dredged before the grains of sand settle at the base of the pool and her sight is cleared of debris. So answers this question the same as any other:

Yes, it is beautiful, isn't it.

(Three)

They say most people die in the spring. And so it is, even here. She hears the bells toll to announce the hour for setting a new body into the earth. A man on a park bench down a nearby lane sits hunched, soul weak with grief. Lunchtime over, a child skips past on his way back to school. Skipping, running the whole way. The man looks up, watches till the child and his innocence are out of sight. Till his head drops back in his hands.

Everyone has a story, she thinks. Anything can lay siege.

In the early days of this place, she had walked with Hanna, trying to learn the town. One day they walked by the lake, the sky a heavy sheet of grey mirrored in its gunship metal surface. No chance of clarity on such a day even though a thin seam of light attempted to split the mass of grey upon grey to offer a space for thoughts to slip through.

Kisha stretched out her fingers into the fog that day, sent them as her scouts to the other side. The other world was always there, close enough to touch, beyond the blurred non-edge of lake.

Cobbles icy with January sleet led her and her guide away from the lakeshore, back into the old town and up a narrow path to a high square.

History, said Hanna. We also have our history. And showed her the statue to the warrior women of her city.

Kisha looked up to the figure of a medieval knight in skirt, armour and hatchet. Their men were away, fighting another battle, yet still they stood firm when the city was under siege.

When? she found herself asking.

Oh, Hanna shrugged. Six-seven hundred years back?

Nothing changes, they agreed that day. Nothing changes, and everyone has a story, a history, or in this case a herstory. The woman's expression was stoic, tough, resolved to her fate to cleave a head in two or deliver a knife-slice to a chainmailed breast if needed.

Everyone has a story, even of siege.

Look! cried Plato, leaping through the door. I got tickets to Hair!

When? asked Samir. How many?

Four. Tomorrow afternoon. He grinned. Think you can make it?

Let me check the diary.

Kisha frowned. I'm rostered on at the soup kitchen.

Can't anyone cover?

I'll see if Haris is about. He's already been. Can you do the soup? A quick kiss and she was off.

A reconnaissance mission of mammoth proportions, she needed to scout the most likely locations for the given time of day, her journey studded with risky intersections, disintegrating bridges, detours round (or through) bombed-out buildings. She leapt backyard fences, crawled along trenches past card-playing soldiers, and an hour and several kilometres later found her quarry.

Yeah, sure.

She hugged him. Owe you one! And was gone, the exercise repeated, the tape rewound into its canister.

Hair. Hair. Hair. Let the sunshine in, indeed. Forget the stepping over dead bodies on the way to the theatre, forget the acoustic candlelit performance, forget the sub-zero temps and the actors, singers, dancers, musicians all bundled up in thick sweaters, forget the fact that every now and then someone fainted on stage due to low blood sugar brought on by chronic hunger.

Forgotten, unremarked, unremarkable, the passion of the performers was their only focus, the red-hot anger of their chant:

We starve-look at one another, short of breath

Walking proudly in our winter coats, wearing smells from laboratories –

Facing a dying nation, of moving paper fantasy

Listening for the new told lies with supreme visions of lonely tunes.

No hippie flower-power re-enactment in Kamerni 55, no nostalgia trip. Embodied experience was alive and well to scream its suffering from a war-torn stage.

Did you like how they called themselves the United States of Love? Kisha said as they made their way home, crunching through dirt- and blood-smeared snow at street corners and skating on sheafs of icy pavement.

It won't make a shred of difference, Plato grimaced. Just further evidence of how tragically inadequate peace activists are to halt the power struggles of brutal geo-politicians and their slavishly indoctrinated electorates.

Oh you're a cynic, she said.

And with such big words too, Susu quipped.

(Four)

The girl often came to sift through books on the stand outside the bookseller's shop, the cheap ones he carried out each morning in an old wooden crate and stowed on a rickety table set against the wall, an eye-catcher to his window display.

She always kept her head bowed, he did not know whether out of concentration over her task or to avoid being observed too closely by the gawping goldfish in his bowl, pipe in one hand, book in the other, his reading glasses at half mast specifically for this purpose – to observe the goings-on beyond his limited horizon. From a cracked leather armchair in the corner of the shop, he had a good view onto all street-based activity, and it was a position he often took up. Rarely did he have the need to rise and go to the desk, make out a small handwritten bill of sale and ring something through on a till as crusty as he, as old as his books.

That said, there were times she caught him unawares – halfway up a ladder, stowing new arrivals into appropriate locations on shelves high over his head. She always stood quietly with her meagre haul, waited till he had finished, waited till he had turned and, noticing her, nodded his surprise. Her response never more than a thin sliver of movement from a mouth which may have had an early softness of form before hardening into its serious line, a line which quivered on occasion as if the borders were tremulous, open to negotiation.

He remarked a brittleness about her. Whether borne of tension, avoidance, denial, he did not know. Hardly a word was spoken during their infrequent transactions. He was quite shy by nature, gruff – too long among books and too little among humankind, his few friends scolded. But neither did she attempt conversation. A swift *Danke* in an accent which betrayed she was not at home in this land-locked land before leaving, a slim slip of a thing, on a bicycle.

Pink, it was, the bicycle. And he found it so incongruous, for everything else about her person said: You can't see me. I'm invisible. Like a chameleon she melted into the cityscape of grey-brown, seemed weathered before her time, a ghost pale-etched against smog-stained stone. But if the sun were to shine, to catch itself in her hair as she rode away? Then a dark amber glow brought the smudged fresco to life. Dark amber – as if it held in its strands the

memory of a life before now – and at odd moments, he would find himself musing on her past, the determinants which caused her to act as she did.

Melancholia – the word found him before he even noticed its arrival. He had been reading Keats and his cloud which *hides the green hill in an April shroud*. Yes, it was as if she shrouded herself. A *wakeful anguish of the soul* seemed to stalk her, bubbling up from the thin ridged scar which dissected her uncertain mouth. She wore suffering's imprint upon her skin but it was deep-sunk, he imagined, in a well of memory. She had a story, he knew, like all those who entered his shop had a story, seeking a book to bind them to life, to lift them beyond their own stories to dreams housed in bound packages, to landscapes offering alternate truths.

He imagined her first purchases from the crate on the footpath were required for this purpose – an art magazine and a slim volume of botanical prints. And found himself planning the early morning sorting of old forgotten stock, to place paradoxical possibilities within and see what would pique her interest if she happened past that day.

She was not consciously aware but the time had come to re-populate her life. A need, an urgency, had arisen to bring life back into her life with his books. And returned to the flat, sat with one, then the other out on its tiny balcony – a metre wide, only two or so long – sat on the folding chair (never folded away), placed these first offerings on the folding metal table (likewise) and entered *Wonders of the Plant World*.

She leafed through the book of drawings and felt the love which accompanied the artist's task to replicate nature's beauty, to translate it from the earth into another form, metamorphosed like a butterfly released from its chrysalis. His touch was light, she thought, gentle. A kiss, perforce, tangential his journey from there to here – skating past, he deftly brushed the source and conjured its afterlife in the book in her hand.

And so she studied each picture as she would contemplate the original, a full life cycle laid before her. The ubiquitous dandelion, for example, its seeds taking flight, speckled gossamer heads lifted by the wind, surrendered to the sky-tides, to float and beach them at whim. A still life, this portrait was anything but still. A frozen moment, to which she grafted a before and after like a cultivar to rootstock. All this she saw, slip-sliding between pages. On one a gentian, on

another an oak. The volume began with a snowdrop, ended with a pomegranate, order bestowed by the cycling of seasons – first bulbs cracking through frozen ground, last fruits harvested before winter dark.

She placed the small book back on the table and reached for the art magazine to continue her engagement with the aesthetic. Here were still lifes of things man-made. The artifice of unnature cursed, she flipped through reproductions of objects which litter lives in meaningless arrangements, long shadows cast at their backs – the experience not as satisfactory.

She turned another page and the contents of a box stared up at her: *Still Life Belgrade, 1986*. A tambourine, a cross on a gold chain, a photo of a man in uniform, a gilt-handled sabre lancing the box in two, some marbles from childhood, a wooden toy, a cracked and faded red tin star – an image of what would be. The future foretold, made real.

Did the artist know when he assembled these touchstones of the old regime? she wondered. Did he stick it through with a sabre after listening to the radio rhetoric of the ones jostling for power in the wake of Tito's death? Was Milosevic mouthing off his ethnically pure ideals, his dreams of a greater Serbia, even then? Painted in tempera on wood, it was made like the icons of old. A perfect fit, she thought, to subject, theme, outcome. Such holy relics.

She is back. Back in it again, the curse of memory has found her napping once more, *zeitgeist* woken by a foreign artist to things they did not, would not, see. Everyone has a story, she knows, and now his had found her, had become hers, lain siege. Again.

(Five)

July arrived. Samir's deadline approached. The Siege of Sevilla had only lasted fifteen months.

Only, said Kisha. To think at the beginning, we thought that was so long. That it could never last so long. She sat with her arm laid flat on a board, blood draining into a pouch.

Mmmm, said Nada, withdrawing the needle. She held a small square of cotton to the mark, pushed Kisha's forearm vertical. Are you sure you're OK to give blood, Ki-? You're getting awfully pale. I'm going to have to check this lot for anaemia.

She bit her lip, turned her head away. How to explain she didn't want this red liquid coursing her body anymore when everywhere else it spilled onto the streets? How to tell of the quick rush of exhilaration each time she watched her arm drained of life, how she could almost feel her veins become thinner, starved of sustenance?

She shrugged instead into Nada's question and said: I just keep thinking what would happen if someone I cared about didn't make it because there wasn't enough blood. Like little Farid for instance.

Nada's response was lost in a blast at close quarters. Plaster poured down from the already cracked ceiling.

Damn, she said, scribbling a note on the pouch of blood. I'll see you later.

Kisha picked her way through corridors of least resistance, past ghosts of the dead and near-dead, back outside into bright summer sun. She edged her way round the corner of the building, passing through a tableau of steaming rubbish mounds where a half-starved dog licked out an empty aid can and an old man scoured for scraps.

You got home alright, Nada said later, walking in the door at the end of her shift.

Yeah. As always. Where did this one hit?

On the third floor I think. Has Kasim come by?

No. Should he have?

He said he'd drop in with a change of clothes. I really must stink.

They talked late that night, each lying on a mattress, end to end in the hall, talking about nothing in particular till they drifted off to sleep.

Kisha dreamt of mice, a colony of mice living inside a tree. But none of them happy, the conditions were cramped. One after another they left home, zooming off on a flying fox, then suddenly letting go to take a slippery slide round and round, down and down, to the ground. She repeated the mouse journeys over and over, her night spent in a dizzy blur.

In the dream, it was autumn. Leaves fell from the trees and hit the mice while they were on the flying fox. Some lost their grip, slipped and fell. Far, too far for a mouse to fall. Backs broken, they were buried beneath a constant rain of bloody leaves.

This is grotesque! she shouted and tried to push her way through the leaves, but they were thick, unyielding. Caught in a rising tide of red mush and dead mice, she cried out, cried again. Cried until she no longer heard the sound of her cries.

Her head in Nada's lap. You were very distressed, she said, stroking her hair.

Kisha got up, lit a cigarette, came back to sit on the edge of the mattress. I'm OK, it was just a dream.

But the shadows of mice crowded the hallway wall, a bloody mush of leaves swelled around her ankles. I'm not looking forward to another autumn of this, she said.

Nada took the cigarette. Have you ever thought it's time to go?

No.

Maybe you should.

I'm not a deserter!

I didn't say that. Nada sighed. What's here for you, Ki-? What's left?

Each day Kisha makes her way up to the centre at Zetra, the long climb through city streets made longer by detours and delays caused by the usual hit-men in their usual locations. There are no weekends, no days on which people do not need help, support, a comforting arm or warming soup. Each day her mask thickens, sets her face into a taut mantle of furrows worn deep between brows, inked smudges of unsleep beneath eyes, hollowed-out cheeks, thin dry lips. Each day she becomes less permeable, each day more like stone. Each day there is less to talk about, joke about, express anger about. It just is. It all just is.

On her way back downtown, before the soup kitchen roster late afternoon, she walks through the ruins of Theatre Obala. A short-cut, a safe cut and, since the exhibition opened, a knife cut through memory into a place beyond hope. *Witnesses of Existence* – this is what they've named the exhibition. In a burnt-out shell of blackened walls and charred beams, of buckled pipes and concrete rubble, lies an art installation. Dirt, broken glass, bits of brick and stone transformed into a mass grave. She looks into the faces of the fallen, tiny cameo cut-outs from the newspaper obituary pages, smiling faces held in ashen eternity. She looks down and they smile up. Each day they bear witness, watch her mask tighten.

That night she kneels before the low table in the living room and begins the slow ceremony to bring a new kandilo to life – a jar half-filled with water, a little oil, a little more water, a coil of wick floated within. Its end she pushes through a scrap of tin foil and presses it into place over the lip of the jar. Which is more precious, the oil or the water? The match to light it? The wick itself? Or the jar, the container which makes everything possible?

The tiny flame sputters into life, sheds soft and shadowed light upon a colourful mosaic, a slim package of holiday snaps she has stumbled across while searching out the tin of oil at the back of a kitchen cupboard. Not so many, a single occasion, their first and only holiday of together-life. They had finally gotten around to developing them just weeks before the photo lab, like everything else, fell victim to hilltop artillery. There had seemed no rush, back then.

She spreads them before her, fanned out like playing cards. Samir had collected them from the lab, deposited them on the kitchen bench where they had sat unopened while arguments raged about the coming war, while the radio was tuned to political debates, while friends came and went, shared bottles of slivovica, talked round and round irresolvable issues over and over again. Perhaps Baba had put them safely away in the cupboard at some point. And now she had found them, a whole lifetime later.

She searches out the one, for there is only one, of the two of them sharing a single frame. Hears again her laughter at the old man with his donkey who had seen their dilemma – blue sky, white cliffs, green sea. First one, then the other taking their turn against the beauty of the backdrop. A flurry of hand gestures, click-click sounds ensue, and he takes the camera, they grin, he snaps. But suddenly his donkey is gone, has shied at some invisible hazard,

and he too is gone with raised stick and a volley of expletives. The camera forgotten, his good deed cursed.

Yes. Again she sees her laugh and Samir's shrug as he rescues the camera from the dirt, checks to see if the lens is scratched.

Well, he'd said, kissing her hair. All will be revealed soon enough. And so it is, this sliver of together-life.

She walks through the ruined theatre next day and the picture falls into the mass grave. Gravity-pulled, it drops. Like an autumn leaf from a wind-tugged tree.

They take it in shifts. She doesn't realise, not at first, but there seems to be always someone with her, wherever she happens to be. Today it is Marko, today it is Saturday. Today the weekend Chetniks are up in the hills.

Sometimes I've seen women up there doing their bit for the cause, he says. One had an air mattress beside the trench. She was in a bikini and all.

Kisha prods the tiny flames, reaches for Eliot's *Wasteland*. *These fragments I have shored against my ruins*. Scrunched up paper added to scrunched up paper.

Every now and then – I don't know, maybe she was tired of lying in the same position, maybe she was hot or bored – she got up and pulled the catch on the rocket launcher. Didn't check the sights, didn't choose a target. Bitch didn't even take off her sunglasses.

Kisha rises from her squat and looks to where this sister – this Bosnian Serb sister – was, or still is. Doing it because she believes in it, or perhaps to earn a rabid boyfriend's approval, or for any other of a million reasons.

It goes in, this new knowledge, goes in to a place deep inside. Walks up to the door, no need to knock, the door already open, ready to welcome this new anecdote to join a crowd of fellows jostling inside the entrance. Jostling, because she has given up sifting and sorting them into catalogue drawers.

Her artefactual tools stand idle now, her process crumbled to dust.

(Intermezzo)

The chorus now speaks:

She stands on the balcony on a warm late summer's night, and we watch, we who have already flown. We watch how her ear is tuned to the river's patient flow.

We know the river won't stop to lament the fires on her quayside, the stones punched from retaining walls and plunged into her stream. We know they can stop most things, but not the river. She leaves Sarajevo over and over, she knows what it is to move on.

All this Kisha knows too, for Samir had said it. Once. And now nothing can pull her sight from this rippling brown sheet, straight as a hair ribbon, not on this night. We know that nothing can coax her ear from its single fulsome note, its constant calming shhhh. No. Not on this night.

Once, yes, she would lie in the night and listen to the river with one ear, his heartbeat with the other, her head lain full on his chest. His soft downy-haired chest, like a fledgling's, his heart the one constant when even the river's voice was muted. When the waves of shelling blocked all except the certainty of life within his breast. She, fused to his skin, melting into his very self.

But this night all senses must be attached to the voice of the river, to follow its stream away. This we see, this we know. And watch, as she finger-chips away at the balcony façade, looks once, twice into the face it presents in her palm.

Now. Now she is ready to swift-crush it to dust, and leans over the balcony rail to let the wind guide her lonely grains to the river. And away.

Kisha's glass hosts a generous shot of brandy, the lights in the courtyard shimmer like tiny globes of hope, each a world announcing a better tomorrow. She has turned off the lights in the flat, rendered herself invisible by dark. Only the red glow of cigarette end would confirm the presence of someone on a third floor balcony to a close observer, tobacco crackling and spitting from a shadowed outline.

A key turns in the iron lock, the gate swings open with a whine. The low crunch of feet on gravel signals someone's return home. On this, her first night

alone in a place that isn't home. Soon she must sleep and mutes her senses with liquor. Just for tonight, just to help.

We understand. Gulp now, Kisha, gulp.

She converts the couch into its minimalist futon. Sheet, quilt, pillow are retrieved from the cupboard. All in place, all prepared, she lights a candle, sets it on the floor to the right of her pillow.

She wants to stare into its flame, wants to fall asleep before it burns down to nothing, before she burns down to nothing.

The slivovica swims and swirls in her head. A breath from somewhere beyond closed windows sets the candle to dance. She sees it flicker, waver, rise and fall, become a line of dancing souls on the wall, golden light dancing in and out of focus from the inky depths of alien space.

She closes her eyes, her breath slows to a steady rhythm. While we watch from the wall and dance.

Into the Pit

(One)

She stoked the smouldering fire, waited for the coffee to boil. Early morning – a thin veneer of rising sun skated across the misted quiet atop the calm of death. She could almost hear the brutes safe in their hilltop bunkers, snoring off their work of the night before. Sleeping, farting, dreaming, scratching, stretching, dribbling while she tried to focus on the miracle of silence, she on her treadmill in this experimental rodent's cage. An almost Pavlov's dog-drool lurked in her mouth at the thought of staying out on the balcony to drink her coffee rather than scurrying back inside to sit in the gloom.

Yet as surely as the sun rose, the moon set, they would wake and it would begin again, this delight in destruction, this joy in evil. The ceasefire hadn't worked. Not this one, nor the last, nor the one before that. Such a fun game – why spoil it?

She prodded the hesitant flame, forced herself to stay in the moment and not look ahead to when it would next begin– in a minute, an hour or three. She knew, they all knew, that when the mongrels finally woke, cursing the pain in their heads from too many celebratory drinks, they wouldn't search far for someone to blame. An old man negotiating the twisted remains of bridge so easy a target for a still-drowsy sniper, a balcony where someone bent low over a makeshift tin stove the therapeutic first mortar of the day for a pimply-faced teenager in oversized fatigues. The heart-starter, the whiskey chaser, the Bloody Mary for breakfast to set the brain in gear.

Come on, she cursed. Pick me, you bastard.

Come on, as she scrunched another page from Rilke's *Book of Hours* into the firebox, pushed it into the feeble smoulder with a broken bit of wire wrenched from the smashed gutter above her head. Do it. Now.

Steps on the staircase, the creak of the door, Nada's 24-hour shift was finally at end. She groaned and collapsed onto the mattress in the hall.

Coffee first? Kisha called.

Yeah. I think the smell of it was all that kept me going past the first floor landing. She threw several packets of cigarettes over. I saw Marko. He brought in some guys last night.

Is he OK? She turned to get the answer straight.

Sure. Not even a scratch. But his mates were in pretty bad shape. Nada looked away for a moment, rallied and said: Anyhow, can you get to the market for some homemade cognac or whatever? Something to share when we get back from the theatre. And maybe some chocolate to go with it? I really need to get some sleep – I don't want to nod off during the performance.

Performance?

Yeah – didn't I tell you? Or did I forget? He got us tickets to *Waiting for Godot*. You know, that American writer Susan Someone who came to help with the Festival?

Sontag, Kisha said. And no, you hadn't forgotten. I had.

Now it was her turn to look away. I don't know, Nada. I don't know if I can make it.

Nada sat up properly to get a good look at her. She was hunched. Hunched more than usual. Hunched over a slim volume, her hand trembling as she debated whether to tear out the next page or not.

She came over, stood behind her, lifted the book from a non-existent grip. Rilke, she said. No wonder.

*... a monk has just writhed through the doorway,
his hair lank and his habit creased,
his shadowed face a sickly blue
and blotted out by demons.
He toppled over, as if he'd snapped in half
and thrown himself in two pieces on the ground
that now seemed to hang at his mouth
like a scream, or as if it were
a flung-out gesture of his arms.
And his fall went very slowly past him.*

Nada's hand was on her shoulder and it spilled: I don't know if I can do it anymore. Everywhere I turn there's pain. In a damn book of verse, in a Beckett play. Everything I read, see, feel seems to be about us. Like everyone has always been writing about us and our pain. Since the beginning of time! Which, of course, they haven't. But it feels like that. I'm so sick of seeing pain pushed back in my face from anything I read or see. I want to read, see something again and not think it's about us. I want to read Rilke as Rilke wrote, not as I feel.

But you'll come, said Nada into the silence which followed the monologue. You'll come. Not a question, a statement, said into the space bookmarking the void.

Yeah, I'll come, she sighed and tore out Rilke's pain to wait its turn in the queue. I always come.

They sit in the dim daytime theatre beside Marko and one of his comrades, both in flak jackets, guns propped between their legs. In amongst the murmurs and bums shifting on seats, the whispered Sorrys! as knees are grazed by stragglers shuffling in to find an empty seat in the dark, she remembers:

I always come because I can't say no. I stay because I can't go. I come, I stay, because I'm weak.

Others had the strength to stay. This she sees. People like Nada and Kasim, or Marko, or the actor who sat in the wheelchair at the end of the front row, merely an audience member these days courtesy of both legs blown clean off by a shell in front of his house. Staying gave them strength, a strength in defiance of everything that had happened, a strength born of sheer stubborn tenacity to see this thing through, to emerge from its other end as moral victors.

Once, I had their strength, she thinks. But now?

Where is your strength, Kisha? What do you feel after reading Rilke and seeing your fall go very slowly past?

She shakes her head. I don't know.

But what do you feel? the doctor in her head asks again.

Nothing. I feel nothing. Like a great cloud of dust is being blown toward me and I'm too weak to run. Like my legs are filled with putty, they're so heavy. And I'm too weak to move.

Are you afraid of the cloud?

No. I feel nothing, she repeats.

Hmmm, the doctor diagnoses. You are under siege.

Well, that's a revelation! she snaps.

No, the doctor humphs. This siege is within. And she feels the point of the doctor's pen jab hard against her breastbone.

You have lost hope, the doctor goes on. It's time to leave and search it out. It's probably just past the dust cloud. There, she points, beyond the

horizon, beyond the nothing, waiting for you to catch up. She scribbles on her pad, hands over a prescription.

What's this?

Two in the morning, two in the evening. The doctor turns back to her desk, busily sorts through papers, prepares for the next consultation.

Two of what?

She looks over the top of her glasses. Memories, my dear! Good strong potent memories. Gather them all up in the folds of your skirt, they'll be a good tonic to bolster your defences against the cloud of nothing.

She pats Kisha's hand kindly. We have to get your legs moving again, don't we? Leaving won't be easy but it'll be a darn sight more hopeful than sinking beneath the nothing.

Vladimir and Estragon sat, hungry, homeless, hopeless on a candle-lit stage. The audience rigid participants in their leaden mood, Sarajevo's communal breath on the verge of suffocation. As suffocating as the noon-time heat here in a theatre in a second summer of siege. Smoke, ash, dust, a great cloud of crumbled buildings, shattered lives, torn facades and shredded flesh – all this they saw on a stage peopled by two actors.

A boy came out and spoke to them, his lines well-rehearsed in this theatre of life:

Mr Godot told me to tell you that he won't come this evening, but surely tomorrow.

The audience released its together-breath.

Yes, surely tomorrow the Americans would do something. Surely tomorrow Kisha would find the courage to leave.

Surely tomorrow, after watching a play in which nothing happens, twice, she would quit the looped tape of life in this swamp, marooned in the quag of pain.

(Two)

The theatre is dark, but Kisha has entered a place of light to search for a self that had not yet lost hope, the one she saw each day in the myriad fragmented shards of a mirror gracing the wall above the mantle.

After it had shattered in one or another of the bombings, she hadn't removed the mirror from the wall and remarkably it had never fallen of its own accord, the frame seemingly holding out some slim belief in its ability to become whole again. She admired its tenacity in the face of all evidence to the contrary and imagined how it spoke to its large family of fractured children, encouraging them to stick together as long as possible, to remain embedded in the secure lodgings of home. To not give up hope of restoration.

Indeed it had held together as a fragmented collective for quite some months before slowly, gradually, one or another of the slim slivered shards lost hope and fell to earth with each successive mortar blast which shook the building to its foundations and sent a wave of shuddering tremors up and down the apartment walls. Occasionally, randomly, the pieces dislodged, fell and stayed where they fell while the patchwork which remained on the wall offered split and splintered witness to disintegrating life.

Is each shard that falls a life lost or dream crushed? Kisha asked one day.

Samir shrugged. From all the mirrors in the city, maybe.

He sat on the floor on the small square of carpet they kept beside the low table and lit a kandilo, a cigarette as well, sipped his coffee.

But for us? He shook his head. I don't know. Are all these tiny slivers that glint in sun- or candlelight dreams crushed? Do we have so many? He looked at her. And are they so fragile? So easily damaged?

He looked at the mirror, studied what remained. Look, he pointed. That piece there.

A bit like a star, she said of a fragment in the upper right of the frame.

He scrambled to his feet, took the candle and held it closer to the star-shard, willing it to shimmer into life, a dream uncrushed despite everything.

It's a marvel, he said, to find such a thing of beauty amongst the rubble of destruction, the debris of death. Don't you think?

He turned and smiled, his dark features illuminated by excitement, a new light plumbing depths in his brown eyes. They had become soft-golden, and his thick lashes feathered fringes which shadow-dusted his cheeks.

She had wanted to rise and kiss him, encircle him in her arms, dance through this nightmare world, this scrapheap of pain, a splintered piece of starlight to guide their passage. She had wanted to, but hesitated, for she also didn't want to lose the moment, the memory of the moment. Of his face lit by a glow from another place, haloed by the candle in his hand. So imprinted the image, branded it to her heart, delivered it into the waiting embrace of a library of catalogue drawers.

This was the night she would remember. Later. A night when she wanted the candle to stay lit, not to be blown out to preserve its precious oil. Just once she wanted to fall asleep as they used to, faces licked by the shadows of night, the flame's waver silently measuring the rise and fall of their breaths. So they slept, tight-wrapped, one fitted to the other like snuggled children, nested fishes, nestled spoons. Slept long and deep, and woke late and refreshed to the star-shard and its brothers greeting another sun's rise.

The water had come back on – oh, glorious day! She filled the bath and buckets, and they took joy in standing naked to sponge each other clean. And forgetful of everything beyond joining as one, lay down again. Together.

Later over coffee, looking out on a city which could have been any other in Europe that day, quiet in an early Saturday morning sort-of-way, Plato and Susu dropped by with Farid, now toddling. Samir bounced the gurgling boy on his knee, remarked his blissful ignorance, caught in a tiny circle of knowing they each dreamed of rediscovering.

Here, said Kisha, I've been saving this for you. She passed several packets of powdered milk to Susu.

Her eyes lit up. Where did you get this? There was none in the last aid package, only some out-of-date fish paste.

Samir laughed and tapped the side of his nose. Oh, you know Kisha, she has her friends in the black market.

She poked him in the ribs. They received a shipment at the centre. When it was pay day, I took some in lieu of cigarettes. God knows we smoke enough.

It was time to get moving. Susu was off to market to find anything worth taking up to her mother in Alifakovac for the next few days.

Wait, said Kisha, I'll come with you, and she raided the cigarette kitty. Let's see if we can barter a few smokes for an egg for Farid's dinner. She grinned. This can be his high protein day.

Hey. I don't want you gossiping all day! Susu scolded Plato. Don't forget the old flat up in Vratnik.

Yeah-yeah. He turned to Samir. Want to come? There may still be some good books to burn – Lenin, Marx, Trotsky. He paused. Though on second thoughts I'm not ready to give up on Trotsky yet.

Just make sure you're home by curfew, Kisha said. I need my bedtime story.

Always, he said, giving her a squeeze. We'll only pop by the bar if there's time for an early nightcap.

Say I swear by Tito! Susu chimed, halfway out the door.

Samir grinned. I swear by Tito. His eyes soft-golden. Again.

Mortars rained down the whole night through, a battle which could not wake her, she who was more than awake, she who sat numb in the dark the whole of this long night through, no candle lit. Ears deaf to the blasts, she was tuned to the sound of the mirror's last stand, the jittering, shivering, tinkling trill of precious snatches falling slow-motion to their grave all this long night through.

On and on, sometimes one, sometimes several at a time. Melodic percussion to an overture of hate, like wind chimes in a gentle breeze. Such a pretty thought flanked by the colourful tracers and lightning flashes of a torched city whose sintered fingers rose into a disinterested sky. Strange how the mirror had held for months, till now, on a single night, the correct ones in their correct positions, the ones which held all others in place, dislodged, and the chain reaction to render the poor dear frame naked, abandoned, denuded of hope began.

Dawn's dull arrival announced it to be so. All had fallen. Save one. Their single shard stayed hooked in the corner of the frame. Caught by a thread, a single point quivering beneath the edge. Tenuous – oh so slight! – this grip on life. One shudder too many, one final grenade. Close, so close. Enough.

She shut her eyes. Breathed in, breathed out. Opened them again. No. No mistake. Softly, gently, reaching over and collecting the star-shard from a symphony of glass splinters, she raised it to her lips, kissed it fully, passionately. A farewell kiss, a sleep-tight kiss.

It cut her lip and she tasted blood. Her blood, like his, ruby red, sticky wet. And yes, right then, still warm.

(Three)

When Plato returned late that afternoon, he found her busy at work, sitting cross-legged on the floor of her war-torn room, puzzling over a mirror frame in which fragments of silvered glass were being arranged and re-arranged like patchwork squares on a quilt of memory, like a jigsaw missing its picture card. He found her thus, on the floor cross-legged, chattering away, explaining her task as if it were some schoolgirl assignment.

I found some glue in the cellar, was her first remark as she heard him arrive, after listening to his heavy boots climb slowly, so terribly slowly, up the stairs. Listening as he stopped on each floor, each in-between landing, and then some, before arriving at the apartment door.

Glue? he said. Glue?

Yes, she went on. I'm putting everything back the way it was, the way it was before.

He came and looked over her shoulder. There's one missing. He pointed to where a star-shaped fragment was conspicuous by its absence.

Oh, he's here, she said brightly and opened her hand to reveal her blood-smeared prize.

He heeded the trail of blood from her lip, hard-caked now, a dry creek bed in a harsh desert land. The scar would be permanent, this he knew. All landscapes retain the gully-scored traces of past watersheds.

I thought maybe, she said, resuming her chatter, maybe you'd been caught up in it and decided to sit it out – you know? – with a bunch of strangers in a cellar somewhere, and then curfew came and you thought it'd be safer to wait till morning. That made sense. But the pieces of the mirror kept falling, see? They couldn't hold on. You still didn't come and the star fell. You know?

She looked up, as if he could confirm her theory, and shrugged. When the star fell, I knew for sure.

He sighed, dropped to the carpet beside her and they shared a deep-seated pause, conduit reduced to a shattered mirror and a pot of glue.

God! he cried suddenly. I asked him to come! He began to sob, great gulping sobs, had journeyed so far, but now no further.

Baba reached through her, touched him softly on the hand, this wise woman of the tribe, her spirit of compassion incarnate. From whence had she arrived? From which reservoir of unexperienced memory could this instinct have

been conjured? But still, intuitively, Kisha reached out a hand and stroked the bruised and battered flesh, dirt and ash-caked, fingernails torn and split from a frantic dig beneath rubble for the body of his dearest friend.

Shhhh, she said. If not now, when? When of a million different excursions, his suggestions, yours, together, alone? Don't add blame to the pain of losing him.

Plato wiped the back of a hand across his eyes, his dripping nose, smearing grime and blood into war-painterly streaks, stared into the mirror and began his flatline narration, his monologue of matter-of-factness.

We got into the flat OK, started sorting through stuff, got reading, got chatting – you know.

Yes, she knew. Hours, days, months could pass unremarked by these two during their more animated discussions.

Before we knew it, it was dark. We threw as much as we could into a couple of backpacks. I found a torch. We didn't have a clue about the time. A couple of soldiers pulled us up at the checkpoint near the local refugee centre – the one set up in the school.

She nodded.

They reckoned we wouldn't make it back before curfew, were really serious about it. Said everything was tense because of the battle out at Stup. Everyone trigger-happy. Said we should bunk down in the centre for the night. And, well, you know how it started. Artillery hitting the old town, working its way along the river, coming up the hill.

Yeah, she said. It was really heavy.

It never occurred to us the centre would score a direct hit. They were shifting as many of the women and children as they could into the cellars, but who were we? Just a couple of interlopers for the night? We found some blankets, settled down against a wall near the kitchen, switched on the torch, started reading Trotsky to each other.

He shook his head. We were the best of friends but I still can't make out why his favourite parts were so different to mine.

She turned away, back to her companion of the night. A distorted reflection greeted her gaze, broken, crazed, chipped. She had stitched it together, this mosaic of self, but it would never again fit, never again be fully whole. Always, ever, scarred. And minus its evening star.

(Four)

It was a small coterie that assembled at his graveside. Some stayed away through fear of a sniper's bullet, others because they had preceded their friend, their son, their brother or cousin into the earth. She knelt by the pallet, such a slim board to bear the weight of the dead, laid the star within the folds of green-blue cloth holding his torn body, placed the treasured *Tales* on his chest. No more nights would her Scheherazade weave his magic.

Marko and Miki took up their instruments while dirt was shovelled into the trench. The accordion wailed its agony, Marko's voice was a stream of tears.

Kisha pada, trava raste ...

Samo ce nas crna zemlja rastavitic moc ...

(Rain falls, grass grows

Only black earth comes between us)

Machine gun fire filled the area but the brothers played on, repeating the refrain over and over, a ring song in her heart.

Hit me, she pleaded. Put me in your sights so I can fall. They need never break the rhythm of their shovelling, the boys need never end their song.

A gust of wind, a breath of air, the sigh of angels caught on the breeze. All dust, all dust, swirled up, fallen down, crumbled to fine powder in the wake of destiny's surge.

The imam came and whispered to her. Nodding, she tried to stand. But on trembling legs – what could support such heavy sorrow? Plato gave her a shovel to lean on, Nada gripped her from behind. Her body shook with great waves of gelatine. Marko dropped his guitar and came to cradle her, hold her, warm her.

She heard a silly high-pitched laugh in a voice not her own. It's so weird! she giggled. My body's shaking fit to burst, but inside I feel as still as stone, as stiff as a corpse.

I am death, she intoned, staring through the container of earth, into the heart of him, and fainted, still no closer to the light of her star.

The performance was over. Announced by the low thrum of murmuring patrons rising to leave, it was an orderly exit, despite the occasional stubbed toe or banged knee in the dark. People were moving past them.

Come on Ki-, said Nada. We need to get going.

No response. Not there. Still buried beneath the earth with Samir, still in that space of Bergson's memory-image – the one which arises from the pure, sets out its arc on a continuum of becoming. The place of Proust's Madeleine. Godot's non-presence a full slap to her face.

Who – who are you waiting for, Kisha?

Me, she whispered. I'm waiting for me.

What? said Nada. What did you say?

(Five)

Sometime in February, they started on the good book pile.

Hmmm, said Samir. I think we should review the cooking order.

He went through the list, put little marks against each – one, two, three and so on. Always the academic, ever the catalogue-king.

Ahhh, he said. I'd forgotten about her.

Kisha looked over his shoulder. You don't want to burn her first, do you?

Not likely! I want to read her again. And he started sorting through the remaining towers until he found Scheherazade's *Tales of the Arabian Nights*. Surely by the time we've finished the book, King Clinton will have had the guts to stay our execution, he said.

They began that very evening and set a rule. Each night just like her nights, a chapter, no more. The first, *Jullanar of the Sea* – lots of demons, evil queens, dark magic.

You'll love it, Samir grinned and cuddled her close, reading aloud as they sat wrapped in a blanket.

On the thirty-ninth night, Jullanar and Badr's story still unfinished, the book lay in her lap till dawn when she began the faulty restoration of a fragmented mirror. And now it lay in a grave with his smashed and broken body.

Where Samir journeyed he would need a good book, if only to stave off boredom. Forty days, forty nights his spirit would wander. Till arriving where destined. Well-read.

She could see the whole of their life from the hill where he lay. Home, beyond the few remaining trees in the park, the university further on past the shell of Post Office. There was Bistrik's brewery with its life-giving waters, the Library now the stuff of dream. Markale was over behind the cathedral and the cellar bar nestled on the edge of Bascarsija. Her eyes wandered up the alley near the Bey's mosque where they had bought their rings. And on to the path beside the river their lovers' promenade upstream. From where he lay, she saw their whole life mapped on the grid of this town, a memory carpet if she turned her sight within. If only she remembered that life is lived within.

They say most people die in the spring, when winter parts her curtains to gladden wrought hearts. Suddenly surprised by a hint of warmth in the sun, a scent of jonquil on the air – ah spring, they say, welcome home. And with a final flutter, a gentle sigh, so they expire, at peace.

As it was with Samir. If she remembered correctly – for when was the last time they had seen a calendar? – it was indeed the equinox on which he breathed his last. His day, his night, of equal length – no need to push further, toward more or less of one or the other. Perfectly balanced, his soul had surrendered to an inner equilibrium, a celebration of sorts of the rites of spring.

Finally Marko came. Stuck out at Stup, he finally came, walked straight into her pain. She looked over to where he crouched on the balcony, making her coffee for a change. His soft-tanned face, sad-weary blue eyes, ponytailed hair, and fatigues a kaleidoscope of mud, blood, sweat – all this had enveloped her in a hug as wide as the world when he finally walked through the door.

I have to go to the morgue, she said as they sipped the stiff brew.

He nodded.

Plato needs to come as well.

Again he nodded. We'll all go together.

Susu's eyes were heavy-swollen. Farid's sleeping, she whispered and buried herself in Kisha's shoulder for the umpteenth time.

Plato lifted her gently away, kissed her forehead. Get some rest, he said and closed the door on their little expedition.

I want to see where it happened first, said Kisha.

They crossed the river and headed up into Vratnik where she studied the debris with an almost scientific curiosity. She picked at crumbled bricks and broken concrete, touched burnt beams, held shattered windows, ran her hands over once-smooth metal now twisted into grotesque shapes. She had to know – not just know, but deep-know, embed it in her very self by sifting dust from dust, ashes from ashes.

Now she looked past the immediacy of destruction, out and over all the graveyards visible from this perch above the town, each a broad rip in the city's scarred flesh. So many souls, so many ill-prepared to pass, torn from their bodies too early, too fast, shocked by the act and no chance of farewell. So many, she thought, and each remaining their allotted forty days in ghostly flight above a beloved Sarajevo, remarked only as wisps of cloud or filmy fog swirled round on a full moon's night.

A shot, a single report. They had strayed within range of a sniper by dallying at the scene. But his target skyward for once. A peace bird flung to freedom from the UN HQ two blocks away, maybe its gentle whiteness had disturbed the purity of his anger.

The bird fell lifeless at Kisha's feet. No blood or mark stained its snow-feathered form. Perhaps it had simply died of fright, suddenly confronted by alien territory, the sniper an incidental extra in the drama all along. She lifted the warm body, cradled the delicate head. And carried it with her to Samir.

At five in the afternoon.

Strung out in a ribbon of life, the mourners climb the hill from the mosque to the cemetery. Led by the imam, Marko, Miki, Plato and Haris are at the four corners of his shrouded pallet.

Kisha marvels at how her feet step one in front of the other without instruction or intervention. How did they learn that? she wonders. Her mind is numb, yet the metronome tock of her steps sets percussive thought in action.

How long did it take you, Samir? How long to leap from here to there, to cross to the other side? It can't be that difficult. No stream to wade, no stile to climb, no gate to unlock, no muddy verge to traverse. Just a step, a breath (or not) and the passing complete. Is the blink of an eye too long or the time it takes for a thought to form or a pinpricked fingertip to register in the brain? The time for a wave to lap a shore, perhaps, or the wing-beat of a hummingbird's hover? What about a pen placing its mark upon a page or the toll of a bell not twice, barely once? Is that how long it takes to die?

Brief, simple, the last action of a body in its here and now. Automatic, reflexive, known. An unconscious knowing, she supposes. The mind put away, the body knows how to do this very last thing it must do. The mind is useless.

And after? she thinks. When the body is absorbed to earth and the soul high-flown? What then of the mind? Unless its products are translated into artefacts to remain in the world for other minds to peruse. But what use an artefact when a Library spanning ten centuries of mind can have its treasures hunted to extinction, reduced to ash, to dust? What use is anything in life, in death? All this she thinks as they arrive at the knoll.

Atop a knoll where a breeze blows fresh. She has walked up a hill and into air. Lightness-infused, her body lightens, feet lift away from the ground. She hears the cry of an angels' swarm. Is this how it is to cross?

Samir? she cries into a sea of silver mist, suddenly afraid. It's not my time, she says. Not yet.

Oh, but a part of her wants to detach. Please! it says, fuzzy-loud in her ear. Let me fly from this earth-bound hell!

No! she cries. It's not possible. The body must detach first, it can't be back to front. Stop!

Like a flag torn from a mast, whipped away she could be. An ephemeral wisp of breeze-borne spirit, a cottonhead setting sail on a summer's day, she could sacrifice her gossamer sleeve, be caught by the current, give herself up to the whim of the wind.

Did she know this would happen? Is this why she wore the hat?

She who never wears a hat, a woollen cloche Samir had spotted in the market one day, plopped down on her head and said:

It's you, it's just so you, darling! in a silly fashion designer voice.

A hat which sat in a cupboard untouched until this day.

She pulls the container down hard round her ears, anchors herself in its bowl, grimaces, struggles, shuts her eyes tight. What keeps us rooted? she wants to know before her soul can have its way.

Come on Ki-

Marko's hand is under her elbow. Samir has been lain in the grave.

Was she gone so long?

He guides her to the edge of the pit where she sinks to her knees, buries her hands in fresh-dug soil, plunges her fingers into damp living earth. Delivered by the structure of dirt, away from the space of space.

(Intermezzo)

The chorus now speaks:

Samir used to say: I am your companion of the evening, in the hours when the world is dark. Samir used to say: Like a good book I will come, and share with you my myths.

He reaches to her through memory, tries to reach her through dream. But she sets her faith only in memory, her door to dreams locked ever since the crushed walnut in his hand.

We watch from the shadows, sit and think: If only she had told! If only he had known how frightened she was of dreams, perhaps it would be different. Perhaps something could have been said or done differently so she could take heart now.

As it is, she lies in the dark reading from the book of Samir, the one in the drawer marked S, the one which hosts ancient and modern history both.

We watch her work, work hard, to push past pain and consciously conjure the images, to sift and sort her memories into an order of best-fit. Her lips are pressed firm in resolve, to not lose the imprint of their story. Her heart beats fast, so worried that she will forget. Hears again the wise woman words Azra spoke to a small girl whose parents had flown:

As long as you remember, as long as you honour them, they're not gone. They won't leave, ever. But you must remember. Their presence is up to you.

Kisha has tried, oh, so very hard. But as the next overture of hate begins, memories scatter like skittles before a rumbled bowling ball, the patchwork woven this whole night through rent by the whistle of a single mortar. She hugs her chapped knees, curls into the dust-caked mattress, strokes the place where his head used to lay, and leaks hope, this last hope, to remember.

Oh – how we share her agony! Oh – how we feel her pain in our hearts of light!

We understand. We know, substantively know. That anything can lay siege.

Moving Staircases 1

(One)

Marko walks through the dark room out to the balcony. Are you packed?

There's nothing to pack, she says, still communing with the river.

Pack – the word conjures one of those countless days at the bus station, people milling about, talking low, the harried smoking of a last cigarette. While she stands with a clipboard to mark off names destined for yet another convoy. Confronted by a quantum of suitcases and plastic bags tied together with string, Kisha listens afresh to the wisps of thought which escape the battered broken cases, their contents lamenting the descent into exile. Oh-so-contrary to the traces of hope which issue from their custodians:

We'll be back. It won't be for long ... I left food out for the cat ... The valuables are buried under the apple tree in the garden. If you need anything, start digging.

She sees the excited faces of children who think they're off to the seaside, hears the ache of conversations between those who stay and those who go. No. She'll take nothing, be nothing. Inner and outer as one. Nothing.

Come on, says Marko. I'll help. He puts an arm around her reluctance and tries to draw her inside.

She shrugs him away, stubs out the remnant of cigarette, grinds her foot into it, hard. Just to hear something else cry out in pain.

Samir had never packed.

She grabs the backpack by the door. Feather-light, it holds her passport and papers proving she is an employee of an accredited aid agency given leave to jettison misery, hijack malaise, fly west into sanity. Baba's scroll, a tattered notebook, some stale crackers and a flask of water complete the haul. Marko forces an extra pair of jeans on her, shoes and socks. And tells her to bring a rain jacket.

No need to knock at Plato's door, it's already open, Nada pacing the hall.

Finally, she says, enclosing her in a hug. I'm not going to cry because if I start, I won't stop. Ever.

Kisha squeezes her tight. Everything's still up there, she says to the small group of eyes crowding the doorway. Food, shampoo, books to burn. Oh, and some make-up in a small sponge bag –

It is barely dawn as they drive deserted streets to the tunnel's entrance in Dobrinja. A soldier emerges from the shadows, slaps Marko's hand, climbs in behind the wheel and drives off.

In here, says Marko.

Here? It's just a hole.

Yep, and a wet hole at that.

Bent double like an old beggar, he holds her hand the full distance, guiding her through the passage, ill-lit, stale-aired. Often she stumbles in the muddy water or needs to shrink to the side when soldiers hurry by with arms, ammunition. Finally they catch up to a farmer slow-leading his goat. Only eight hundred metres, but more than an hour of lips and turns, of high-stepping over unseen hazards in the stream, to arrive in the cellar of a house where a woman and her clucking hen offer water to commuters beside a humming generator.

Kisha accepts the plastic cup with relief. That was unbelievable! she gasps, climbing into the trench beside the airport runway.

No oxygen, says Marko. But you get used to it. It's like driving the same road to work each day. After a while you enjoy the monotony before the real stuff starts.

She strips off soaked jeans and mud-filled shoes, sheds the rain jacket, wraps it around the dripping pile, kisses his sweaty cheek.

I can't say goodbye. It's not, is it?

Take care, Ki-, he tries but she is already off along the trench toward the airport building with its handpainted sign for *Maybe Airlines* as an Italian Air Force Hercules comes in to land.

As if on cue, shelling starts and she runs swift and low for the cover of sandbags and her designated UN contact. He hurries her through security together with a handful of other passengers. A couple, fear dilating their eyes, and a pair of journalists yelling instructions to their cameraman. The videocam hones in on UNPROFOR soldiers unloading pallets of aid before cutting to still-spinning propellers.

Flak jackets are handed out, helmets.

No luggage? Mr UN asks. You knew you could bring two suitcases, and points to the couple's bulging bags.

She stares into their burden. I have enough, she says.

Visas in order? Italian? Swiss?

She nods. Croatian if we get diverted to Split?

She's stunned. No. That's –

It can happen, he mumbles. Let's pray it's not today.

The French ground patrol urges them across the tarmac.

Come on, he says, grabbing her arm. As soon as they've unloaded she'll take off again. The crew never leaves the cockpit.

They run up the cargo ramp, past the newsman's camera zooming in on the wide belly of the plane's hold before a last atmospheric shot of smoke over smouldering fields. A soldier directs them to rigged seats along the shell of the aircraft, hands out earplugs with a wide Italian grin and returns to his own place atop an empty machinery box, comfort cold and hard.

As the ramp rises from the ground, she watches her town disappear, then her hills, and finally the sky's sun-streaked trails of high cloud. No thought penetrates, no feeling pinpricks. All is numb from the shock of the new.

The Hercules rumbles along the tarmac, screams its load into the sky. The couple sit huddled, he fumbles for a handkerchief while she mimes her distress. Though possibly she is being very loud about it, Kisha finds it hard to tell.

Mr UN leans close. The best thing about the noise in this thing, he shouts, is you can't hear the bastards trying to shoot us down!

She turns away from his delight, turns hard around and stares out through the small porthole in the fuselage. The sun races them west, clouds shift, separate.

Is this what an angel sees? she wonders. Is this how an angel feels? Like a vapour trail dissolved into the wind's embrace?

She presses her nose to the glass, sets her head against the cold metal hull, lets her brain rattle loose inside a throbbing head. And shifts, separates, dissolves.

She had climbed the hill to Samir's grave, sat with him, said goodbye. Nothing moved in the landscape except a small green beetle trundling nonchalantly over the hard-bitten earth. Collecting him in the palm of her hand, she rubbed a finger over his dust-covered shell to reveal the luminous sheen of bright summer wings. A thought occurred to her and she tucked him into the zippered pocket of her jacket.

Now she stands in Giovanna's garden and unzips her pocket. A full twenty-four hours later, an eternity for a small green beetle, he begins a random wander over her hand and arm, shirt and collar, while she smiles.

Welcome to your new home, she says, kissing his bright-buttoned hull, and delivers him onto the waxy green leaf of a camellia.

Instantly he takes flight, a flurry of shimmering wingbeats which sends him high across the terraced lawn to an oleander more to his liking. Such a quick transition for a small green beetle.

(Two)

She had been told someone would be waiting at the airport in Ancona, a volunteer from the Italian chapter of the aid agency, to assist her passage north. She had been told, but was far from prepared for the effusive welcome of an Italian mama of the first order.

You made it! Giovanna cried, clasping Kisha's face between her hands, kissing each cheek, twice, thrice, more times. My, but you are thin! she said, squeezing her tight. We must fatten you up, yes? Come – let us go up to my villa.

It wasn't difficult to be mothered, to shut down and enter a space of no-think, to surrender her destiny to someone else for a change and in a place where everything was safe, normal, strange. In Kisha-speak, normal equalled strange these days – streets of colourfully painted housefronts, washing strung from balconies, between buildings, upholstered car seats, unshattered windscreens. They wended their way out of town up a steep winding road cut into cliffs above the sea and she looked out at an uninterrupted view of Adriatic coast. There was salt on the air, its scent damp, tangy.

Ah, the sea.

A heady mixture of sensory joy shape-shifted into memory fast-risen. Their young-in-love holiday – the adoring student, the professor quoting Dickinson.

Ah, the sea! he whispered into her neck as they lay locked together. *Might I but moor – tonight – in thee!*

Her giggled response:

Beat your breast, break my heart –

Ah, the sea, I drown in thee!

Here we are! Giovanna announced, pulling into a driveway bordered by blooming oleander. Welcome to full pension R&R. And smiled at Kisha from behind expensive sunglasses, her manicured nails still curled around the wheel.

She slipped from the car, stood weak-kneed before the house and a lush garden which fell away into the sea below, and now understood why the agency workers always came back refreshed from leave, ready to struggle anew on behalf of the endless stream of refugees before their door. Yet it niggled, prodded. The twinge of guilt that said: Why are you here? What right do you have to relax, be pampered when there, just over there – and at this she squinted into an easterly swell beyond the horizon, over limestone mountains

and down through summer-green valleys – you know what 4pm on a sunny afternoon in a besieged city means.

No promenading beside the river, no children's calls of joy from the carousel in the park or as they leap from a bridge into the surge of the Miljacka's flow, no shade trees under which to lie and drink cool beer. Now, right now as she sat in a wicker armchair with plumped cushions and matching footstool, as Giovanna served her coffee and biscotti, chattered away about the camellia hedges being trimmed by an elderly man in a battered straw hat – Federico's been with me for years! – Nada would be trying to staunch the flow in some life-threatening injury, Marko would be manning a sentry outpost on a beleaguered frontline, Jasmina and Kasim would be covering her shifts at the centre, continuing the attempted translation of confused and harrowing stories into the linear narratives required for asylum applications.

It won't be easy, Giovanna said.

She found herself looking up into the kindly face of her hostess, her hand outstretched with a cup.

I'm sorry, she flustered. My thoughts were elsewhere.

Giovanna turned back to pouring her own coffee out of a silver urn with an ornate family crest. I was saying I admire your bravery, my dear. To leave Sarajevo and forge a new life away from family, friends, everything you know?

All I know is war.

Yes, that's part of what I mean. It won't be easy to rejoin normal society where people have their petty troubles and squabbles. Giovanna leaned across and touched her lightly on the arm. Your nerves will be very raw. Don't let yourself fall victim to bitterness. It's not a pretty path.

She drained her cup and stood up. Now I must be seeing about dinner.

There was nothing for Kisha to do, nowhere for her to be, than sitting here, looking out at the blue of sea. And soon the gentle clip-clip of garden shears backboned her descent into dreamless sleep.

I had a call with the Zurich office this afternoon, Giovanna said later at a dinner comprised of nourishing soup and some crusty bread. You must start to eat again slowly, she counselled. It will take time for your body to remember what good food is like.

When am I expected to start? she asked. I could catch the train up tomorrow.

Oh no! Giovanna scoffed. Not so soon! You will be much more useful if you arrive in decent shape. What's that expression – to hit the ground running? Her voice trilled. It seems to be the only thing anyone says these days. But, she frowned, I find it so strange. If we were to hit the ground running, wouldn't we fall over?

I can't rely on your hospitality forever –

Giovanna waved her hand, shooed away a pesky fly. I have a job to do, you know. I must deliver a product in full functioning order. She seemed to enjoy her little foray into management jargon. Plenty of fresh sea air, relaxing walks along the beach, healthy food, sunshine. Two weeks, she said and held the requisite fingers aloft to seal her commitment.

Kisha studied her soup and saw a fleeting flash of Baba's coddling. It will be over all too soon, she reminded herself and stirred the memory back into the bowl.

I would love to swim, she said after some consideration. But I have no costume. She stopped short. Actually I have no clothes.

Giovanna laughed. Darling, I know! I saw the size of your bag. Tomorrow we shop, yes? Mama Italia had spoken.

The fortnight passed in that slow-quick way of peaceful immersion. There were times when she could have sworn all clocks had stopped. But at others, whole sequences seemed to rush by in a giddy blur.

She watched the tides – sat on the sand and watched the ocean breathe in and out. If time were like the tides, she thought, I could surge into the future, rush back to the past. And looked down at her toes lapped by transparency. Now, right now, was simply a shifting lip of damp sand on a permanently dissolving border.

Yet what existed if not now? She squinted to the horizon and its constant movement, an in-between zone of sea lapping sky. What could she do if even a moment were unstable? Where could she find firm ground? And she walked the beaches – through driftwood and the detritus of recycled lives.

A beachcomber scuffed toward her, searching for treasure with a magpie's eye. I have nothing to discard, nothing left to salvage, she thought. My coastline is as wasted as its heartland.

Ah, Kisha. In her melancholy, she watched the happiness of tourists, Italians on holiday with icecreams at midnight. In her melancholy, she heard

Samir recite from the *Cantigas D'Amor* of Portuguese troubadours. The sear of sea salt in an open wound nothing to the pain of love, they sang:

Damn the sea that makes me grieve.

Nonsense! she had laughed at the time. How can you grieve when we're in the midst of such joy? And kissed his neck, laid her head against his chest.

They sat on a beach, surrounded by the shy tinkle and roll of pebbles and shells pulled seaward. His skin was cool, quick-dried after their swim.

Kisha, he said and tousled her hair. Can't you see? I take this divine memory of here-now with me to the grave! A memory which cuts out my heart each time we're apart. That's the pain of which they sang!

Yes, I know all this now, she said into the memory. Now I too:

Damn the sea that makes me grieve.

She closed the catalogue drawer, placed his file card neatly back in order and crossed the border from then, past now, swam far out. Shape-shifted by an intertidal zone of neither here nor there, neither one nor the other, she floated, eyes closed, gave herself up to the tide, the sun behind her eyelids flooding a memory-tripped mind in molten gold.

Her pale flesh turned bronze with delight, her hips acquired form and shape, and she took the train north to Milano, on to the border and into the Alps. Steep cragged cliffs, grey gleaming, guided her passage through a long tunnel burrowed through the mountains to emerge among neat paddocks and patient cows. Along lakeshores the train raced till the sun slipped in the sky, till she arrived in a city of tall church spires, clear river and a train station filled with peak hour commuters.

She stepped onto the platform, joined the slipstream, consulted her notes. The woman would meet her under the giant clock in the main hall near the sculpture of a blue angel. She searched out the appropriate landmarks – angel, angel – bit her lip till her attention was drawn to the glass-domed ceiling where a gold-winged blue angel in hippie bathing suit was suspended. There was a funky side to the town after all.

She made her way toward the clock, as popular a meeting place as the cathedral steps in Sarajevo in the years before war. Students chatted after class, business types with briefcases looked at their watches, others hovered near the florist, seemingly not too eager to announce they'd been stood up, while she lent against the railing above the escalator stairwell.

Giovanna had been very particular. I shall let them know what you're wearing and what time you come in, she said giving each cheek a lipsticked kiss. She waved furiously, blowing a million more kisses as the train set sail, another of her foster children on her way to the new world.

Miss Mirvic? A hesitant voice at her side.

Rita Mueller looked at her through the most intriguing metal-rimmed glasses Kisha had ever seen. Rectangular, with heart-shaped side panels.

Your glasses – she began.

Rita smiled. They're not so unusual, she anticipated. You'll see a lot of things that seem – how to say? – space-age to you here. Shall we go?

She fell into step beside the taller woman who strode ahead as if late for something important.

One of the biggest problems we have is trying to help refugees understand how to work the taps in the shower, Rita said. Don't forget you've come out of a war zone which was previously a communist land. It may take a little while to adjust and, she stressed with a steely sideways look, not to think everything here is an expression of complete decadence.

Now, she said with rapid-fire efficiency. We'll head into the office to complete some paperwork and get you settled in temporary accommodation. It's dormitory living for the moment, I'm afraid. A communal kitchen, that sort of thing. One of our local volunteers has been assigned to help you search out a flat of your own or a share-house – whichever you prefer. She'll also help with budgeting and so on. This is an expensive city. What you learn from your own experience will, of course, apply in your work.

Kisha let the words skate past her. Why would anyone walk so fast if they weren't trying to avoid a sniper's bullet?

The aid agency was several stories of grey steel reachable by tram, Kisha's volunteer a girl her own age.

Hanna was a philosophy student. I guess I'm trying to make sense of the world, she explained as they went into the kitchen on the ground floor. Believe it or not, working here helps.

What sort of coffee do you want? she asked.

Um – just coffee.

Yeah, but what? And pointed to the machine which filled a corner of the counter with its array of buttons and blinking lights.

Kisha squinted. Um – an espresso?

The closest blackest thing to home, bitter-sweet with memory. The kitchen was filled with posters describing the extent of the agency's work, and she sipped her coffee in the shadow of the past.

They talked long. Until the centre was empty, until the cleaners had come and gone, until Hanna had said: God, look at the time. I was supposed to get you to the shelter an hour ago!

It's OK. Just give me a map.

She scabbled through her bag. But it's not OK! You need to be there by eight if you want a bed. She found a piece of scrunched-up yellow paper, went over to the phone on the wall and dialled the number she'd scrawled.

So, she said, hanging up. Do you mind staying at my place tonight?

What?

Well, it's my fault. And they're full. And well, my flatmate is away so if you don't mind ...

They walked through twilit streets, took a tram, then a bus, walked some more, turned into a narrow side street off a busy rubbish-strewn road, and deftly made their way around a brimful skip, avoiding the tottering tower of beer cans in its wake.

Welcome to the side of Zurich not shown on postcards, Hanna grinned.

The overnight stay became temporary-permanent.

You're an easy flatmate, she commended. Thoughtful, quiet, and we're never out of milk or bread. Priska won't be back till autumn term starts. It'll give you time to sort yourself out, decide what you want to do.

How to sort herself out? Her days spent translating others' pain for the social workers at the centre, her nights spent calculating the cost of living here against her meagre earnings. Options for beginning her own life seriously deteriorated before they could even be considered and she gravitated to sleeping on the couch as the city slid under the damp cold of November fog.

It's hard for me to accept your charity, she said one evening after making them dinner. But I am very grateful. There aren't many ways I could even think of repaying your kindness.

But do you need to? Priska said, helping herself to another bowlful of goulash. I'd be happy just eating your cooking now and then.

Look, said Hanna. If we help you, you have more time and energy to help the refugees at the centre. Which means they're in better emotional shape to help their families make a life in this country and, and, and ... The circle is way wider than you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours. She broke off a hunk of bread, dunked it into gravy.

Plus, you'd make a perfect case study for our class in applied moral philosophy, Priska laughed.

Later, they sat on the couch with the dregs of a bottle of red, Priska off to a late night movie with her boyfriend.

You could have been my sister, Hanna said. I look at you and know it could have been me. By a simple quirk I was born here, not there. And it's made all the difference. To my life. To yours.

Kisha wished Plato were in the room to offer some wisecrack to an increasingly sombre reading of the evening. Was it even worth remarking? she wondered. To question the whys and wherefores when destiny had already been foremarked by the position of the planets or the lines on a hand? Or by the power-hungry bullies who fuelled fear and hate with their lies to achieve selfish geo-political ends? Was it even worth remarking that a quirk of fate had placed her life arc in the path of fundamentalists who sought to hijack ethnic, cultural, religious concerns so they could eliminate the other, the them, the us?

Anyhow, Hanna continued. That's why I help. Because I can. Because I know it could have been me.

Kisha tried to smile in sympathy with the statement but the weak flicker barely touched the corners of her mouth.

Me too, she thought, her own life on hold as she tried to help others. Knowing it could have been her, knowing it could have been worse. Much, much worse.

(Three)

Saturday. She was off to see a flat. Had saved and slept on the couch for months under an old quilt, luxury under the laws of relativity. It was spring and the urge to find a nest of her own was keen.

It wasn't too far from the girls, but on the other side of Kasernenareal, away from the worst of the precinct's pimps and drug deals. Priska told her to lighten up and quit being so prudish.

It's not that, Kisha countered. I'm just tired of seeing pain and an absence of hope in dilated pupils every day.

She checked the map and found herself facing a U-shaped court of low-rise apartment blocks each with its own gated entrance of tall iron balustrades fronting onto a small green of maple and linden trees.

She rang the bell for No.9 and a girl came down.

I'm Sara, she said, and they trekked up to the third floor and turned left.

It's small, she apologised, as they entered the small vestibule with one large room leading off it, a bathroom and kitchen beside. I think I wrote that in the ad?

Kisha walked into the living cum sleeping space. Large windows overlooked the street in front. She went across to the kitchen on the backside, its tiny balcony face-to-face with a courtyard maple.

We've still got ages to run on the lease, Sara said. My boyfriend's got itchy feet. Thought we might go to India. Just go there, you know? Get some serious heat.

She made coffee, brought it out to the balcony. They talked price, capped rents. Timing.

Oh, and do you need any furniture? she asked.

They walked through the flat, through an inventory which documented the spartan together-life of these two. It punched at Kisha's gut – the couch that folded out into a bed, the cupboard for clothes, the bench fashioned from a slab of timber balanced on two packing crates, the beanbag in the corner, kitchen table, a couple of chairs. But no bookshelf, no book wall. Was it relief she felt? Or surprise?

She went back downstairs, out through the gate and wrapped her fingers around the solidity of iron, pulling it to with a satisfying clank.

Oh and Kisha, Sara called. Do you want my bike too? It's the pink one at the back. No extra.

In amongst the mountain bikes and town bikes in the gated yard it stood – handpainted by the look of it – with a basket and bell, three gears.

She hadn't slept alone since those first nights spent trying to shut out the night with her games of memory, flicking through catalogue drawers in the library of the heart. So long ago. More than a year in days.

Do you want us to come over? Be with you the first night? Bit of a party? Hanna had noted the mood shifts, the melancholic staring into space over enough months.

Kisha shook her head. Actually I want to be alone, she said. I'll need to get used to it sooner or later.

There wasn't much to shift. Just her backpack, crammed fuller now, and a shopping trolley with a dodgy wheel someone had left beside the rubbish skip.

Priska emerged from her bedroom, watched the slim contents of a life leaving through the front door.

It's amazing how small a dent you make, she said, giving her a kiss. Still, I'll miss your little dent. You make a great goulash.

(Intermezzo)

The chorus now speaks:

Kisha rises in the grey half-light of morning, lights the stove, puts on water to boil and opens wide the balcony door, braced for an in-rush of cold dew-heavy air. The days may be growing longer on their journey toward the solstice but she feels no warmth in the sun's kiss yet. Nevertheless, she steps over the lip of sill in bare feet, skin tingling as much as under any icy shower, lights her first cigarette of the day, and as the church clock strikes eight, leaves for work, up and around the corner to the tram while children run past on their way to school.

It's a simple enough task for us to track her journey, follow her passage through this town. If we fall into step, glide alongside, a hair's breadth to the side of her right elbow, we are close enough to sneak a glance, take note of the measure of her breath, the quickness or otherwise of her step and remark the sights to which she is drawn. If we observe well enough, we may anticipate her psychic stumbles and offer our witness, our heart-felt compassion. And perhaps – yes, perhaps – she occasions the thought, the feeling, the impression, that somewhere, someone unseen cares about her fate and understands what it is to suffer, to change.

On this fine spring morning, we stand beside her at the tram stop, we from the shadowlands, we who cannot return but hope, ever hope, that those of our kin still life-filled with breath can move on from siege, move on through exile and into a brighter tomorrow.

Not long till the tram slowly arrives, gently departs. She sits by the rear door and remarks the river's progress at the bridge crossing. Lulled by the roll of tram wheels, the luxury of civility, she drifts into non-thought. Round the back of the Hauptbahnhof and across another bridge, the river here flows swift and clear. Not far now, Kisha. She rouses, presses the button, alights at her stop.

We know her route well – not the quickest way to the centre, but the most calming. Stumbled upon once and added to her daily ritual, she walks through the rambling gardens of an 18th century villa now home to university institutes. Students mill about the entrance, a fountain plays in the gravelled courtyard. She walks past ancient beeches and under a solitary oak, its branches almost as long as the trunk is high. Stops, each morning, to breathe deep of its air,

share its cocoon of space for just long enough to draw on a mantle as thick as gnarled bark to see her through the day.

It is time to enter the sad grey building further down the street. In past the drop-in centre with its cheap drinks dispenser and tattered couches, she heads straight for the staff kitchen, grabs a cup and hits the espresso button in one fluid movement. Rita sits at the long table checking the roster for the day. Two social workers discuss case notes at a small table near the courtyard door.

I just got a call from the clothing shop in Josefstrasse, says Rita. Jens needs to head out this afternoon for a couple of hours. Do you think you can cover? He'll need you there by two.

She bypasses the tram at lunchtime, walks down to the riverbank and gets a sandwich at the student-run café beside the metalworking co-op, its colourful frenzy of graffiti and radio rock masking the whine of machines. She sits on a bench, her feet hover over the water. The wind is strong here, like the Miljacka generates through the centre of town. But that is the only similarity and she takes a last bite of sandwich, crosses the footbridge to the far end of the museum gardens where people read beneath huge trees. Perhaps this could be her escape from the centre during lunch breaks in future rather than staying to listen to tragic stories in the staff room, second-hand this time. A second footbridge takes her to Sihlquai and up past the bus station where she has farewelled too many who found this place too hard, too nice. Homesick for the grittiness of the Balkans, their suitcases bearing more scars with each further journey. Here she waits for the tram to Limmatplatz. A couple of blocks further on, then a right, she finds the small storefront catching afternoon sun.

Jens is at the counter, fumbling with an incense holder. He points to the drawn curtain across the change stall, waves a hand in front of his nose. A drunk is trying on jeans.

Kisha nods, lights the incense cone, places it in the open doorway to catch the breeze.

Thanks, he says. I'll be back by five.

She listens to the cubicle mutter expletives. A vacant jeans leg strays beneath the curtain, displaced by a holey sock. More muttering, but soon enough he's out, jeans discarded, and he leaves, complaining about the foul stench he's forced to step over on the way.

After five she waits for the trolleybus in Langstrasse and travels its full length, face pressed to the window, eyes focused on a world beyond a

reflection of self. At Kalkbreite, she hops off and takes out a map to trace a route to the second-hand store where she can use her vouchers. Starts off down Elisabeth but is brought up short by a Serb Orthodox church midway along the street. A slight stumble, an eye blink's worth of registering, sifting, discounting.

Walks on. I don't want to know, she says into the space where we listen. I don't want to know who prays there, what they believe, what they would have done if given the chance.

At the store, the narrowest spiral staircase she has ever seen, a home-job of beaten tin and black enamel paint, leads down to the cellar where kitchenware and household items lurk. She gathers up china, two of this, two of that.

Why? she thinks. There's only one of me. But doesn't return the second to the shelf, instead brings the practical to the fore. I won't need to do the dishes so often, she reasons. Still, the symbolic niggles at the edge of consciousness, the ghost at her elbow, the shadow stuck to her heel. Who is this who tugs?

We know, of course. But she hasn't sensed it, not directly, not yet. The way is blocked, but no matter, for she has spotted the prize – a Turkish coffee pot of bright copper, as simple and timeless as anything sold in Bascarscija, enough for two cups on the gas burner. Ah, see? Even her shadow will receive his measure.

At the supermarket she buys fresh ground coffee and a box of sugar cubes to honour his dip-nibble-sip ring cycle, his slow ingestion as if by osmosis, his pleasure in normalcy relived. Till all sugar consumed, till all coffee drained, till he rests his eyes upon her again and says:

It's like they say. The best coffee should be as black as hell, as strong as death, and as sweet as love.

There is a spring to her step as she makes her way home. Already she is there in her mind in the kitchen with him. And, anticipating this small ritual where she sips from both cups, takes his part in the drama, a more-than-worthy understudy, we smile, we sigh – sighs which brush her cheek as she crosses the street, heads down past the church, takes a right before the playground and arrives at the heavy iron gates.

Sara's pink bike is propped against the courtyard wall waiting for her to pump up the tyres and begin her stewardship. Maybe tomorrow. Maybe this coffee pot is her turning point. We do not know but trust to hope – that she'll

brave the pink bicycle and try to find the bookshop Hanna told her about, the one near Lochergut where a famous writer once lived.

Maybe tomorrow, Kisha. Yes, tomorrow.

She fairly runs up the stairs to her one-room life with its high plaster ceilings and old parquet floors. Yesterday, it was so difficult to drag her up, but today everything is different simply because of a shiny copper pot. Shoes off in front of the door, jacket on the hook in the hall, straight into the kitchen she goes. Water poured, gas lit, doors opened, a cigarette, and she stands on the balcony to pluck at the thyme in the troughs, rub it between chapped fingers under her nose.

She goes back in to watch the pot on the stove, twice boiled it must be –a little longer is needed. Aroma fills the small space and she greets it with a soft-spoken sigh before returning to the balcony where she taps her foot, gnaws a fingernail, finally remembers what it was she wanted to do.

She looks out over the railing to the bikes in the yard. Tomorrow, she promises the pink hand-me-down with its merry basket. Yes, tomorrow, she repeats. Tomorrow we'll go exploring.

Moving Staircases 2

(Five)

Kisha's coffee pot, little more than a long-handled dish, serves its purpose well. To open the portal between spaces, to offer comfort in an alien world. Each day she slips it into her backpack and takes it with her to the centre, ready to make coffee for her drop-ins the old way.

If a mother's nerves are too bad, she will take her by the arm, bring her to the kitchen to stand by the stove and watch the coffee boil and bubble, watch pain dissolve with its steam. And after the coffee, sipped out on the kerbside sharing a cigarette and some words, they return to the social worker's office to begin again. Where she sits by the woman's elbow to attempt the faithful translation of her problems and fears.

Sometimes it is too hard, too sad, to repeat the full tale of suffering. Sometimes Kisha paraphrases and commits the remainder to a case history sheet, externalising it in print. She finds it difficult to stay afloat, not to slide under and be trapped by another's pain. How to offer full voice when the knife scrapes against her own heart? How to translate suffering when its tongue is universal? She is the shadow by the sleeve, the witness who intones: What did they do to my Sarajevo? while the woman rocks back and forth on a stiff metal chair.

I run away from unhappiness but it chases after me, catches me! wails the woman. When you're a refugee, nobody asks how you are!

I'm asking, says the social worker.

You're paid to, she spits.

Kisha makes another coffee. Again they stand outside.

I was a dentist, says the woman. I went to university, had my own practice. We had a nice house, a nice life. But who am I, what am I here?

She looks at the trees across the street, picks at a speck on her jacket. No one says anything bad to me, but they don't say anything nice either. We're like ghosts – no one sees us because they don't want to know.

Thank you, she says, stubbing out her cigarette. It's good to talk.

Kisha nods and watches as the woman calls to her son and they head off down the street to the tram stop.

This new anecdote, the same as all others, walks up to the door of her heart. No need to knock, it's more than welcome to join its fellows in that place

of inner siege. But to brace the walls of her library, she decides to take a night job in a bar, retreating further from the mirror of others' stories which leave her own translator's tongue.

(Six)

Days pass, weeks, months. Sometimes it's so hard for her to rise, to know that another day stands before her like a wall to be bulldozed, a mountain to be climbed.

She makes her surface excuses, like she is tired from her shifts at the bar, and ignores the niggle of a deeper weariness which cuts across all others, which remains immune to her attempts to forge something new from the remnants of the old by working two jobs, and populating her life with books.

Weariness, like a colony of termites gnawing at her tentative foundations, reducing everything to dust. And now her bicycle with a flat tyre? Damn. But maybe it's a good idea to catch the tram. She feels so tired these days.

She picks up the free daily newspaper at the tram stop and its same old, same old, of government regulations, celebrity scandals. Till this – an image of war – and she finds herself reading the caption, it looks so familiar. But no, it's somewhere else, other lives dragged through the furnace of hate.

Bile rises in her throat, instinctive, lived. And she is back in it. Deep. Tears prick unbidden at the corners of her eyes, angry bitter tears. The bile burns her throat, squeezes her stomach tight. She winces and screws up her face.

How can a chance encounter with a free newspaper incite such inner riot? But it has, here, now. So long her dam has held but now it bursts through and her tiny self quakes on an unstable shore bank at the force of the surge. Mute, rooted to the spot by the shock of its coming, the flood sweeps all before its path, leaves rafts of debris in its wake, carves new watercourses in a landscape slashed by pain, fills her dry gullies with the wails of children, flings dead cows atop winter-bare trees. She sees the Miljacka, the Miljacka of Marko's dream. And yes, it is blood red.

Everything subsides. Everything subsides eventually. But the mud remains to be scraped away, no insurance guards against the wrath of the gods and the menace of their snarls. She wipes her eyes, dabs at her nose, presses the button, leaves at her stop, walks to the centre, straight into Rita's office.

And resigns.

She escapes on a train heading east for a day, gets off in a random village and looks at the tourist bureau map plastered to the station billboard. A 14th century pilgrimage church is nearby, its frescoes apparently one of the best poor man's bibles north of the Alps.

Good enough, she thinks. Six centuries should be good enough to resist the lure of memory.

She sees the slim spire in the distance, about a half-hour's walk away, on a knoll above a snaketurn of the Rhine, cradled by beech and oak. Dedicated to Sogn Gieri, the local language means nothing to her, the saint's name hidden behind a cloud of unknowing.

Soon enough she stands before the chapel, its single bell tower and portico of stone, doors of reinforced oak. Alone, apart from the wind and the river, she enters the musty far past where frescoes fill its walls and ceiling. The saint himself stares down from above, replete with armour, horse, lance, slain dragon. Her intake of breath is audible, its exit visibly chill. Surely, George. Baba's patron saint found on a wooded hill beside a tight swing of river? Six centuries not enough, a remote Swiss valley not enough.

She sighs and sits down on a low-slung slab of oak, curls her fingers around scarred edges smoothed by years of prayer. When will her scars be as smooth? When will her memories be as faded as these frescoes?

An image arises of their island holiday, how she scoured the ruined chapels of Crete in search of a Lady, a Lady like Baba's. One she had seen, been sure she had seen – the turn of chin and light in the eyes. Without the scroll she could not compare, yet had gone on with her quest in each church they came across.

Samir's sigh – sitting with arms outstretched across the backs of dozens of church pews while she toured walls with torch and camera – and his voice: Give it a rest, Ki-. They all look the same.

She looks at her knees, looks at her toes, looks up at St George on the ceiling. The past always catches her, always finds her. But this is Baba – Baba and her icons, Baba and Azra. Good memories, strong memories, the ones her doctor had ordered.

When? When did she have that conversation in her head? Too long ago and never heeded, they've arrived by themselves, it seems, sneaking in and around the folds of a day's escape from city confines to arrive with a wave and a wink among frescoes and stone, among beech trees and oak, and in sight of high snows.

She misses Baba, misses Azra, misses her childhood, her youth, her love, her life. Misses them all. Only the scroll remains.

And she finds herself missing the Lady.

(Intermezzo)

The chorus now speaks:

It all started the day she found the bookshop. Formerly her acquisitions, albeit of discarded objects in second-hand stores or on a flea market stall, were functional, practical. But another dimension surfaced the day she found the bookshop.

We were with her the day she hopped on the pink bicycle to find the bookshop, and once there, watched as she made her purchases. Each one like an abandoned dog eager for a new master, selecting their target with discretion, the one who seemed as homeless, as lonely, as they, establishing a relationship between two lost souls, healing through belonging. We heard their whispers the same as she:

Choose me. I need a home.

Finding a second-hand bookshop. This is when it began. We saw how she relished the layered dust and musty leather, the high wide shelves and unwieldy tomes, called by the sound of their voices, the texture of their offerings. Called to step into pages, through into worlds, cocooned in tales of the long-dead or never-lived, her journeys conducted within well-braced walls.

Yet, now they begin to pile in her limited space, jostle for attention, assume an accusatory air.

Do you care so little about us? we hear them cry, the same as she. Shall we be given up to an animal shelter of the written word once your fancy changes? Don't we deserve a real home?

We see their soulful eyes turn toward her from the couch, the bench, the toilet floor, wherever she stacks them, all ears cocked to a kind word.

Alright, she concedes.

And we smile as she buys a bookcase, assembles it on the living room floor, stands it up against the long wall and begins to populate its shelves.

The uppermost she reserves for the past. Pink scroll, a tattered notebook – among other things, it houses haiku she had written to stay the monotony of days and nights merged into one, reducing her life to seventeen syllables, three lines, a seasonal word.

First spring storms arrive.

A face freshly fire-whipped

Can't be lashed by rain.

She flicks through the notebook and finally closes it, scar tissue and all, while we watch.

Branded with the slim white-edged reminders of knife-slices to her heart, secreted beneath a shirt swift-buttoned to the neck, she closes the book, places it on the uppermost shelf. While we watch.

Slippage

(One)

She saw the notice in his window: *Help Wanted. Apply Within.* And went home, handwrote a CV, made up a half-life, an after-life, enough of a life. He interviewed her in a small room off the back of the shop where filing cabinets spilled contents at random onto a desk to the side. In one corner stood a small table with an electric kettle, a jar of tea bags.

I need someone as you can see, he said, indicating the sprawled mess of delivery dockets and receipts. My last lad graduated in summer. Headed off to Kathmandu as I recall.

He looked down at the brief resume. You studied in Sarajevo.

Yes.

Were you there during the siege?

No. I moved to Vienna before the war.

Sheer tragedy it's been allowed to continue this long.

Yes.

Who is your favourite author?

That depends on my mood. She paused. But Hesse, always Hesse.

How long have you been in Switzerland?

Several years.

Do you enjoy it here?

It is very – calm.

Yes, he smiled.

How many times had she stood at his window while he read and smoked a pipe in the light of a single lamp? Like a composite of all that was familiar and comfortable, he was warm woollen socks and Baba's kitchen table, the patched elbows of jackets and the scent of mulled wine. Everything that said – calm.

Let's try shall we, Miss Mirvic? he said and extended his hand.

Please, she said, my name is Kisha.

His eyes crinkled. And I am Tobias.

He would find himself watching her. Watching as she took a book from the crate, her finger tracing the length of its spine while she considered where it belonged – on a shelf or stand, or perhaps the table reserved for customers

who sought the thrill of trawling through dusty piles for a chance discovery. Each now and then she would look up, green-amber eyes momentarily tugged from the face of the book, and her scarred lip would twitch as she attempted a smile. A smile originating from a place beneath the scar's cragged ridge, a place as soft as waters on which a silent leaf drifts.

He would watch the silence of her work – how it completed her experience, like the rests in a music score rounds out the sound or the resonant hum which remains after all instruments are stilled at a symphony's closure. He would find himself watching and thinking that the gaps in her conversation offered a similar space of silence. And was reminded of the times when she began to speak but fell silent mid-sentence, tugged to another, different place it seemed, tugged tangentially to an unspoken realm, a space of self alone which she would not, could not share.

Like the time he inadvertently mentioned his sorrow when he read about the night her National Library burned.

Such a shock, he said.

Yes.

Her response a monotone of surface non-thought but when he watched her in the aftermath of the comment, he thought to witness the bruised and blackened pages, the fragments gnashed from their fragile spines. Twirled and spun, heaven-bound, dust-dissolved. Torn leaves trailed to the horizon, beyond the furthest star.

Can we see into another's memory? Tobias wondered that day. When a face is half-obsured, turned away toward a window, but focused on an image seen within?

(Two)

Hey Kisha, you've just missed your brother. So said the neighbour on the stairs.

Brother? She stared at him.

Yeah, I heard someone knocking and here was this lad at your door. I don't know how he managed to come up. Someone didn't close the gate properly is my guess. He said he'd try calling instead. Oh, but you don't have a phone, do you?

The man shrugged, scratched his chin. You never told me you had a brother, he said and continued on his way downstairs with a bag of garbage for the skip in the yard.

She bit her lip, walked slowly up the last flight, turned the key in the lock, stepped into sanctuary, and locked the door behind her.

A normal Saturday, a shopping Saturday, a crisp autumn day of golden maples in the courtyard. Perhaps the last of the good weather – a cold front was expected through that evening, rain in the lowlands, heavy snow up higher.

She took her trolley out from under the hall stairs and headed off to the local supermarket. On the way home, she stopped off in the park behind the church to sit on a bench, suck in the sun. Maybe she'd go down to the lake later or for a walk through the forests above the zoo. It would be a shame to waste such a beautiful day.

The gate swung open with a heavy creak and she heaved the trolley over its lip.

Hello Ki-

Marko. Thin tanned tired Marko limped toward her with a shy grin.

My God! She threw herself into his uncertain hug, stayed locked there while she sorted through emotions, stepped back at last.

Phew! You gave me a right shock! And looked at him, at the slit across his cheek – red, angry, puckered – flinched on his behalf. What did they do to you?

This? he barked. Tripped in the trench, sliced it open on a rock of all things. Miki had to drag me out, get me down to the hospital. Can you believe it?

He turned away. It meant we weren't there during the big one, the one when the rest of the guys were taken out by a howitzer. We were safely out of the way, all because I'm so fucking clumsy.

His laugh was hollow. Hollowed out by memory backwashed with guilt.

She felt the bile rise in her own throat, swallowed it. You want to come up, don't you?

He helped with the bags, climbed the stairs slowly, his left leg stiff at the knee.

And this one? she asked.

Sniper. Nada wanted to take it out but it wasn't worth it, not with everything else on her dance card. So it just sits in there, grinds away. He shrugged. If the girls raped by the bastards can live with their mongrel children, I can put up with a damn bullet in the leg.

Solidarity, she said.

Yeah, Ki-. He stopped on the stairs and looked up to her shadow on the next landing. That's right – solidarity.

He sat at the kitchen table, smoked. She made coffee, smoked. The balcony door was open, the breeze warm, unseasonal.

When did you get here? she asked.

A few days back. I've been staying with Almir down on the lake.

She nodded. Enge. Yeah I know where he is.

But you've never bothered to catch up? he said. You've both been here – what – three, four years now? And you've never bothered?

It's not about bothering, Marko. It's about –

What? His voice shot through the air.

She got up, went and stood out on the balcony, looked back at the face confronting her like a battle shield. Who had they become? Who? Atoms split, divided, razed off on different tangents.

It's about forgetting, she tried again, staring at the golden maple. It's about not being able to handle the memories.

Her hand shook as she placed the cigarette to her lips and inhaled deeply. So much they didn't know about their journeys. Where to start? Why even start? She tapped her fingers on the railing, contemplated the tree.

Listen, she said and turned, tried to smile. Can you stay? Shall I show you around town? What about this evening? Hotpot, pita, baklava?

Can't you make any Swiss food? he teased. Still clinging to the exotic Balkans?

You always liked my hotpot – don't deny it!

They walked by the lake, sat beneath lemon-showered willows in the park, tiptoed around the past, skirted damaged souls, clung to the together-memories before life soured like milk left out in the broad sun.

She looked at her watch. I need to do some more shopping before they close. I could meet you back at the flat later?

He traced a finger through the grass, didn't meet her eyes. I brought a few things over for you – they're at Almir's. I'll go get them, OK?

Sure, she said.

And they walked off in opposite directions.

He arrived with a plastic bag tucked under his arm, handed her a bottle of slivovica.

Not the best brand, he apologised. But at least it's Croatian rather than Serbian.

She brought the same out from her afternoon's shopping and grinned. It'll be quite a party, she said. What's in the bag?

That's for after the first few shots.

They had eaten, drunk, reminisced, she'd asked about everyone's lives. Nada? she said, leaving the best to last.

Marko ran a hand through his hair. They're getting married – she and Kasim. He smirked. Already talking about kids – reckon it's their duty to repopulate Sarajevo.

Kisha laughed. Too right it's their duty, she said and took a tray of chestnuts out of the oven.

She flipped them into a bowl, covered it with a towel and sneaked a look at him. When are you going to get busy, lover boy?

Aw, who'd want a joker like me? He played with the matchbox on the table. Miki's got a girl – can't play tricks like we used to, though. Scar gets in the way. And smiled softly into a long-past of teenage fun. So? he said, shaking his shaggy hair back to the present. Anyone here for you?

No. I've got a lot on my mind. Guess I'm just not interested ...

Yeah, I know what you mean.

They sat inside their own thoughts, the sound of cracking and peeling chestnuts filled the small void held aloft by kitchen light.

So, she said, stopping to suck a torn fingernail underlain with gunk. What's in the bag?

You sure?

As I'll ever be.

She cleared a space of chestnut debris and reached over to the rubbish bin under the sink, all the while listening to the noise of crinkly plastic and the rustled extraction of contents.

She took her time turning back to the table. Three books in a pile, a thin envelope.

The last books before the gas came back on, he said.

No! You made it through that long?

Well, he shrugged. We knew they were your faves so we burnt everything else we could find – shoes, scraps of carpet, even cut up the tyres on Plato's Beetle. That was pretty disgusting. Plus we were at the front a lot, or in barracks, or at Plato's. Nada and Kasim even moved back up to Alifakovic. When it got quieter, he footnoted.

Three books. Three which remained – Hesses she had squirreled to the bottom of the last tottering tower. *Narcissus and Goldmund* had been sacrificed, *Steppenwolf* as well, a few more. She couldn't remember in which order they'd been placed. But three survived. *Siddhartha*, *Demian*, *Journey to the East*.

I work in a bookshop.

Yeah? How about that. All those books.

Mmmm, been there a couple of years now. She cleared her throat. Haven't wanted to pick up any old favourites, though. I read new stuff now. Her eyes misted and she noted her tinny laugh. I can't believe how special it is to hold these again!

A quantum of together-life flashed through her head, resurrected by the sight of grubby paperbacks.

Phew! she said. I think I need another drink before I can go on. And sent the shot down fast.

She picked up the envelope – light as goosedown, as a snowflake returned to the sky. *To Ki-*, she read. *The Letter I Said I Would Never Write*.

Her throat was thick with refluxed brandy. Where did you find this?

Marko fumbled with the matchbox again. In behind the boiler in the bathroom. After the electricity came back on and Susu got cleaning. His pause was long. I guess he never told you.

She shook her head, couldn't trust herself to speak. But it welled by itself, a sudden cloud-burst of tears, and she screamed: Why? Why did this have to happen? Why do I have to go through it again?! Why is he doing this? Now!

She banged her head on the table. Down-down-down. Cracking a heart already stoned and ritually bled. Bang-bang-bang. Till she only felt its pain, till she only saw white light.

Marko shunted his tin-legged chair around the table, scraped it across the floor, sent razor cuts down her back. Marko came, and hugged her tight.

The night was long.

She cried, he sang: *Kisha pada trave raste ...*

Not the way they had learnt in school, upbeat and full of childhood joy, but the slow melancholy of lament like the day at Samir's grave, his voice a baritone mandolin.

Come home, Ki-, he said.

I can't. Can't.

Why? He stood up and paced the small room. Is this place home? This stinking sanitised hovel too perfect to be believed?

He kicked the chair and it tipped. Loss clanked through her head.

Stop it! she cried. Her hands over her ears. Stop! There is no home. Anywhere, for any of us!

Sarajevo – he began.

They killed it! she screamed. They fucking slit her throat! We have no home – no here, no there, no anywhere! OK? she shouted. OK?

Silence seeped through and into them, heavy, stale, grainy with dust.

It doesn't end when you leave Sarajevo, she tried. You don't leave, so you can't live. Don't you see? Once I was Yugoslav. Now I'm nothing!

Then come home, damn it! Come home!

They were two frantic children caught on different plateaux and she couldn't see to the bottom of the gorge.

Each night, Ki- there's a glass for you and one for Samir! Each night we sit and toast you in your other worlds!

He picked up his chair, came and sat before her, took her hands, his face an inch from hers.

Do you remember the dream? he said. Before it all began? Do you? How you crossed the bridge to the other side and I stayed?

She nodded.

I had another dream, Ki-, after you'd gone. You walked back across the bridge. You came home to us. He looked at her steadily. Without that dream, I'd have gone mad.

I never had a dream like that. Her voice drifted across the gorge, a monotone of matter-of-factness. And she stood up, took the remnants of brandy into the big room and retired to the couch.

Marko walked over to the bookshelf, tilted his head to read the spines. You've got some good stuff here, he said. The Hesses will feel right at home.

His eyes moved to the top shelf. Hey, I remember this! And he took down her notebook, flipped it open. We used to write down the crazy things we heard people say on the tram in here!

She was at his side in one fluid movement, the book whipped from his hand, and back to the couch where it trembled in her lap, still open.

Dark storm clouds gather

But they do not signal war

It's already come.

Marko sighed. I need to get going, it's late.

He walked over. Hesitated. Take care, Ki-, he said to her hair, kissed softly the top of her head.

She listened to him close the door, listened to his footsteps echo in the stairwell, listened to the deep bass note of the front door shut behind him, the crunch of his shoes through gravel, the clank of the gate swung to.

She did not move, could not. Held fast there, in an enclosed and well-guarded space, where all she could do was listen.

(Three)

The weather bureau was correct – wind, driving rain, a cold front coming through. She listens to it the whole night through, a solid sheet of water which leaves the sky, all the tears of years spilt out in a singular act of heavenly cleansing. Has not slept, only slept-walked to the kitchen where she looks out on the storm's debris at first light, sodden leaves in a courtyard of decay, a sea of fragmented mush.

I only cried once today, she says again next day of the permanent welling and falling of a stream from an unblinking eye, but eventually sleeps, drifting in and out of dreamscapes. No longer able to block their entry by sluice gates no longer functional, dreams vivid with colour and sound overtake her senses, each a surprise, each as cryptic as the last.

In one, she walks in an industrial area of town along a long busy street carrying Baba's pink scroll. A van pulls up under a motorway flyover. More vans pull up and a Gypsy camp takes shape. She watches a man and woman talk before the woman leaves to go shopping, walking right past her. She feels the touch of curly hair brush her cheek, hears the swish of full skirts in her ear, catches the scent of sticky perfume on the air.

The scroll is heavy, too heavy for a mere sheaf of parchment, too heavy to carry. She places it on the ground in front of her when the man comes over. He is a large man, broad, with light skin, sandy-brown hair. His eyes so blue! Is he really a Gypsy? But with earring, waistcoat and baggy trousers, she trusts the dream image and apologises for intruding. It isn't often she meets Gypsies in this town, she explains, and makes to leave, reaching for the scroll at her feet.

Gone! Disappeared. No, not Baba's scroll!

The Gypsy calms her frenzy, tells her to kneel on the ground. He will help her find it. But the pavement has turned to sand, deep shifting sand. The weight of the scroll has sent it far deep! She scrabbles about, randomly, ineffectively – sifting and sorting nothing from nothing.

Again, he speaks calmly from blue-blue eyes. Quiet your mind, he instructs and plunges his hands deep in the sand. Ah, he says, and guides her hands into the same deep dive. Her fingers close around the cylinder, she lifts the scroll free, feather-light once more.

Her relief short-lived as she tumbles into the next dream – now she climbs a steep street to a group of blindingly white houses. By the side of the road on a

marble stupa, an ancestral tomb inscribed with hieroglyphs, sits a man playing the accordion who invites her into his home.

We want to know what you think of us, he says, and shows her into the kitchen of one of the houses where his family sit about a large table – several generations sharing a coffee, discussing small things. Till a phone rings.

It's for you, says a woman to Kisha.

Come over, says Nada. I've made baklava!

I can't. I'm here, and you're there.

But you are here, Nada insists. You've come back!

Only in a dream, and I'm visiting this dream family, not you. It's only fair I should stay.

Well, how about I put the baklava in the fridge and you take it out on your side – OK?

It makes no sense but Kisha goes to the fridge while the family sit at the table, nod, smile, show their white teeth. Yes-yes, they say. This is how it's done.

Indeed, the baklava is in the fridge but when she tries to grasp it, her hand passes right through. Only a mirage, and she goes back to the phone.

See? I told you it wouldn't work.

Oh yeah, says Nada. I forgot that family died.

Kisha turns back to the table and watches them disintegrate before her eyes. Although he's no more than grit on the breeze, accordion man speaks loud in her ear:

This is how it always ends. In dust.

No more sleep. No more dreams. Who is the blue-eyed Gypsy? Who is accordion man? She gets up and goes to sit at the kitchen table while the sky cries on. Willing herself to silence, a silence not permeated by thought, she lights a cigarette, her silence cradled by the crackle of tobacco, by the gap between in-draw and out-breath.

Sudden it is – a voice breaks the silence.

Azra, it says.

She turns sharply, but no one is there and her trembling hand trickles ash to the floor as the voice calls again.

Azra.

I'm sorry, she croaked into the neighbour's phone. I must have the flu or something.

I'm sure it's the sudden change in weather. Tobias' voice rumbled down the line. Stay where you are and get better – I can manage for a bit.

Can I bring you anything? asked the neighbour as she shuffled out and across the landing in thick woollen socks. Soup? Tea?

Kisha shook her head. You're very kind but I'll be fine. She coughed and closed the door.

She shivered on the couch, registered each aching bone, threw a blanket about her shoulders, pulled on a second pair of socks. And then lay down coiled about a cushion, trying to reconstruct the past hours, days, since he had come with debris, and left without it, since Rilke's fall had gone very slowly past her. Debris which sat on an upturned cardboard box in the corner and stared at her.

Yes, she could place the books on the shelf to converse with their fellows, tell tales of horror from a burning world. Or no – should she read them as if she were there, not here, and after reading, burn them? Finish here what should have been finished there? What about the letter? A slim horizontal plane housing a single sheet. How could she pretend it never existed? Should it burn with the books, but unread?

Not knowing what to do, she placed a candle on this cardboard altar from the otherworld, lit it each night, night after night, watching these fallen warriors return from the dead to shapeshift in the light.

Becoming. Becoming.

(Intermezzo)

The chorus now speaks:

We know Kisha doesn't like to wake to the dark of winter days and see our shadows slow-slide up the wall, confirming our presence all night at her side. We know that's why she sets the alarm for eight, to roll over slowly, pillow hugged to her belly, and prepare to push through the barrier which says: *Don't get up today.*

The stone is heavy on her chest, but she pushes through, rises, takes her first step to banish the dark with cigarette – coffee – cigarette – coffee. The ritual fits snug as a glove, like day draining to night, darkness following light, as inevitable as siege itself it seems. But we also know that night fades to day and light banishes dark. She need only wait some months for the world to shed this mantle, re-wake after a winter-dark sleep.

While she waits, Kisha walks by the lake on a day leaden-cold, steely-skied, on a day of no shadows. Still she senses our presence. Still she sends her hand into the fog to be swallowed by the other side. The other world is always there, within reach it seems. Ah, but not quite. There is a density to her form which roots her to this place, no matter how close her scouts come to our knowledge.

By the upper lake, far beyond the reaches of the city, she crunches and splashes through snow-muddy paddocks on her way to a shore-side chapel. Tiny it is, a mere pinprick on the landscape, yet sturdy enough to host spire and bell, and a plaque remarking a millennium of prayer. The door is locked. Understandable. In the middle of a paddock, in the middle of winter, at the end of a godless winter-dark century. Sleet-filled clouds hip-hug the frozen hills. There are clouds of unknowing in the face of the water. Driftwood and mushed leaves line the gravel beach. No wind disturbs this plane.

A thought rises at random in her frozen landscape, a thought shunted up from the lake's depths. These must be the halcyon days, she thinks, when the god of the winds is silent. The thought thin, unfleshed, no more than a fragment, of high school Greek and schoolgirl sighs, of the myth of true love beyond the grave and winds stilled across a winter-dark solstice.

Her thought remains frozen in the stillness of the moment, of the space, till a kingfisher rips through the air and pierces her silence with his sharp-pitched

call. The water shadow-ripples and she steps back from the edge, re-traces her steps across a snow-muddy paddock. While we watch.

Each night Kisha lights a candle on the shrine to her past. Baba's scroll has joined the tableau, and she salutes the Lady with a double-shot.

Maybe you'll have some ideas what I should do with my life, she says. But don't ever tell me to open the letter. And she points a finger at the inscrutable face.

I'll re-read the books though, she offers. Nothing bad ever comes from reading Hesse, and she reaches for the brandy bottle, lights a cigarette, and begins with *Demian*.

Sinclair sits, sketches, sits, sketches, communes with the face he has sketched – a god-image arisen from half-serious scrawls:

This face had some message for me ... it was making some demand ... appeared to know me as a mother, as if its eyes had been fixed on me my whole life ...

The candle on her cardboard altar sputters, wavers, suddenly flares. She looks up into the eyes of the Lady. No longer a sketch but the icon itself floods her memory. Baba's hand made those eyes. Baba's hand knew the light which cuts through winter-dark.

In the dark of a winter night she dreams of a man, a man tall and slim who walks at her side, who turns to her and smiles in a way which seems familiar. A beautiful man, he has luminous skin, dark but aglow. He is older in years, but seems to exist in a sort-of ageless ever-now. She can't explain it.

After some silent nights spent walking, he speaks with her, explains the rules of their liaison – gradual, like the slow dance of courtship newly engaged.

We can walk together, he says, but not touch until we reach the other side. He thinks she needs a chaperone but as none appears, asks if she is willing to try it alone. Perhaps he can manage but isn't quite sure.

This is my first time too, he confides.

Swift, the crossing, breath in, breath out. On a busy sidewalk in a place of swirled colours, he draws her to him and she doesn't resist. Leaning back

against a wall, he opens his shirt, takes her hand, brings it to his chest and she touches honey-brown skin, dark downy hair, touches him.

She buries her face in the solidity of his return, her ear to his breathing heart. A promise made is a promise kept, no matter how many centuries shuttle hence and forth. Still she is amazed.

I did a bit of reading, he shrugs. Asked around the old hands. Shows her the ring still wedded to his finger.

Yes, she understands the logic. The promise attached to the ring and the ring to the earth. Forged of rock and metal, an embodied artefact. She tries to take the logic further and wake herself from the dream.

But he shakes his head. It doesn't work like that, Ki-

Slow tears slip from her eyes.

Shhhh, he hushes, his voice the river's song as he wipes her tears away. I'll be back. You know that now.

She watches him fade to shadow, melt away into mist-risen, and wakes slowly, her hand held to the place he had touched, no tear upon her cheek.

Our work is drawing to a close, our watching work no longer required. For he has come. And will stay. Beyond her winter-dark.

Beyond Siege

(One)

What I think you need is a holiday, said Tobias.

Holiday. The word had not figured in her vocabulary for years. Either there immersed or here immersed, in a slow plod of days-marked-days-passed, her body, mind, all marched to the functional, a refrain she knew by heart:

This is all she is – tss-tst

This is all she is – tss-tst

This is all she is – tss-tst

(One time fill: Repeat at will)

This is all she is – tss-tst –

She rattled her head to dislodge the beat. Perhaps he was right – a holiday to jump-start step-change, removed from the everyday to restore a belief in fantasy.

Yes, she said, without thinking further. Yes.

The last time she'd been on holiday – it must have been the summer of '91. When she and Samir –

She breathed deep, took the memory further – a visit to Split and further up the coast to the Istrian beaches collided with war in Croatia. They suffered before we did, she thought, no irony lost in repeat performance. And in homage to their suffering we went to a Greek island instead.

Crete, yes. They rented a car, visited secluded villages, picnicked in meadows by abandoned farmhouses, wandered olive groves and citrus orchards in a rustic hinterland, admired frescoes in medieval churches, visited the museum in Heraklion, bought a book on iconography for Baba.

Yes, she remembered it all. They spent nights beneath a sky awash with stars reflected in the mirror of the sea. Clear nights, where the moon, once risen, plumbed ocean depths to emerge atop the crest of shore-bound waves.

What if we've got it wrong, she said during a late night walk to the lip of rock above the cove. What if it's all back to front and the universe is actually the sea and the sea up there in space? So that each day we're going for a swim in space.

She worked through the proposition and said: I float, I'm weightless in the water, gravity doesn't bear me to the ocean floor. Beneath the surface there's no air to breathe. I could just as easily be out there, a speck in the universe,

rather than a speck here. So perhaps here is really there, and there is really here! She nuzzled into his shoulder.

Or there's no here or there, Samir pointed out. Only is. He stretched out on the grass and sighed. In the end does it matter?

No, she laughed and smoothed the hair from his forehead to kiss away his disinterest.

Yes, a fine memory of holiday. Freed from the everyday, freed for speculation, wonderment anew at the things about. But –

I'd love to take a holiday, she said to Tobias, but I don't have enough money saved.

His eyes twinkled. Something stirred behind but nothing she could make out.

Surely you have enough money for food over the next week or two.

Well, yes, of course. But that's entirely different. A holiday –

Perhaps your finances could stretch to a train fare? A bus ticket?

What? I suppose so.

She furrowed her brow, narrowed her eyes. What is this? Are you making fun of poverty? She thumped a book down on the desk. If I say I don't have enough money for a holiday, then I –

Alright-alright, he said, holding up a hand. My charade is too obscure. He smiled gently, reeled her back in.

I have a small cottage in the province of Ticino down on our border with Italy, he explained. I plan to visit next weekend, open the house up after the winter, tend the garden, that sort of thing. If you would care to join me, I could show you the ins and outs of the house, the village and region and you could stay on for a week or two.

What about the shop?

Oh, he chortled. I'm sure I can manage on my own for a fortnight. But you need to see the place first. It's very remote, very silent. Perhaps it won't suit you.

He said she'd need hiking boots and a good warm waterproof. The Mediterranean side of the Alps was still steep mountain country, granite-slashed, escarpment-rich, and with high snow-capped peaks.

They closed the shop early the following Friday and joined the weekend exodus out of the city. Towns glided smoothly past, motorway exits to odd-named locations flashed once and were gone. The lush green of freshly-dunged

meadows stayed longer in her mind, fields of wildflowers a study in gentle living. Soon enough the tunnel approached, the cutting through the chain of the Alps that had conquered the massif once and for all.

Come on, said Tobias, as the next exit loomed. We will pretend we still relish the journey and take the pass, and arrive in the south the old-fashioned way rather than burrowing toward it like blinded moles.

Peaks surrounded them like successive waves in a jagged blanket. Kisha saw the sword of Zeus carve narrow valleys with a sideways flick, gouge southward strokes for the flight of rivers and heard the water's sigh spring from deep in the mountains: *Take me home, home to the sea.*

DH Lawrence journeyed this way, Tobias was saying. Can you imagine? He walked it! And when he reached the pass and saw the south, he immediately felt its Mediterranean *Stimmung* – its voice.

She stared out the car window. Nothing looked the same in the Swiss south. All was stone. The houses and barns – roofs of stone, walls of stone, floors of stone. Stone. All stone. But they couldn't eat stone. So terraces were laid, crops sown, all edged with sturdy stone walls.

The village was perched above the valley road, high over a fjord-thin lake. They took a path up past the church, between high walls draped in mossy shadows, sunlit ferns. He showed her the plaque honouring a famous writer. They stood beneath a gnarled chestnut dedicated to a renowned poet. He told her about all the creative souls who had exiled themselves to this place, to sit in silence, catch the whispers of the wind.

They call this place a *Dichter Dorf*, a poets' village, he said.

Which is why you came?

He inclined his head. I suppose so. Even though a humble bookseller – I'm a reader, not a writer.

There can't be one without the other.

True. This seems to be a place which demands respect for artistic pursuit – an engagement with the aesthetic, regardless of form.

A spirit, you mean?

Yes, he said eagerly. Do you feel it?

She didn't answer. How to describe the gathering dusk, the misted veil she slipped through once the churchyard was forded? How to acknowledge the echo of boots on cobbles as she climbed the stone steps, each foot placed firmly, solidly, audibly after the other along a path's slow unfurl? How to explain

the stab to her heart when his cottage appeared – Casa della Madonna, he said – and she saw the imprint of fresco on the wall beside the door, almost crying aloud at the thought of Baba’s fireside?

It is still, she volunteered at last.

The German word – *Die Stille* – had found seamless translation in this place of language pure.

Tobias’ eyes crinkled into a smile. It’s what they all wrote – here they found *Die Stille*, that which quiets body, mind, soul, that which inspires and frees us for creative exploration. We cannot create in noise, with distraction. All senses must be quieted, so that what lies beneath can be called forth.

He showed her to her room, the one built into the attic with its tiny balcony, iron-railed. She looked out onto the heavy granite roofs of village houses below, the church tower with its terracotta clock face. Beyond, on the far side of the valley, were thick-forested slopes sheeting the ridge and a peak called Ruscada, her sturdy backbone snow-covered, while beside her, high above the village itself, a jagged peak – della Croce – watched over his frescoed Madonna.

Over bowls of minestrone, eaten on their laps before the fire, he saw how she observed the Madonna statue in her deep-red niche.

You know, I’m not particularly religious, he said, but she belongs to the house, like the fresco on the wall. It’s a part of the spirit of this place, of pious devotion to the will of a higher power, regardless of what I personally make of such cultural anachronisms. Who am I, an interloper brought up on Enlightenment thinking, to challenge such commitment? I owe these traditions my respect if not my believing devotion.

Nevertheless, he chuckled, stirring his soup, I’m not totally immune to her effect. It never fails to gladden my heart to round the corner and be welcomed home by her gentle face on my wall.

Kisha opened her mouth to speak. She wanted to tell of Baba and her belief in the icon – to heal, to listen, to transform. She wanted to tell how it calmed her to think of Baba’s faith when nothing else could calm her. She wanted to tell, to explain that she felt this cottage was like a container, a repository of similar calmness. Just being in this space, cocooned in the strength and silence of stone, seemed to bring her home to Baba’s quiet certainty in the ways of the universe.

She wanted to tell, she truly wanted to. And her mouth stayed open long as she wondered how to begin this journey to tell the everything of her existence. The scaffolding she had constructed was all wrong. It would have to be taken down and dismantled, with much banging, hammering and shattering of iron. Begun again.

She wanted to tell, but couldn't. And placed a spoonful of soup into her open mouth.

(Two)

Kisha woke to the sound of activity downstairs, the fire being lit, kettle on the stove. Looked out to a blue-painted sky, a white-topped mountain, deep green forests and steel-belted ridges. Slowly, very slowly, she extracted herself from the view to smells of fresh-brewed coffee, chestnut honey, and burnt toast.

Never mind, she said. Under butter it won't look quite so black.

He had already planned their day. We'll head up to the end of the valley – I'd like to show you the baths.

It was a slow journey along the ribbon of road which hugged the valley wall hundreds of metres above a whitewater gorge. They left the car at the village on the border and continued on foot to the ruins of a medieval thermal on the Italian side of the river.

The bathing tubs were carved from granite, water flowed from a spring deep in the mountain. Hit by two avalanches earlier in the century, no one had thought it wise to invest in restoration. Nevertheless, some hikers arrived by another path and quickly stripped in the chill air before submerging into the sole remaining warm pool.

They picnicked by the river. Tobias spread fresh goat's cheese onto olive bread while a half bottle of merlot cooled in the stream. The path doesn't end at the border, he said, pointing up the valley. This has been a well-trod route for centuries. And he showed her a gravestone dating from the early 1940s – a boy of only 22.

I thought Switzerland was neutral? she said between bites.

Yes, which meant we were a place of asylum for those fleeing war. This lad was a Partisan escaping Mussolini's Fascists, but not as lucky as some – Nazis shot him even though he had already crossed onto Swiss soil.

She didn't break the rhythm of her chewing at this news, but wondered vaguely what had happened to her moral outrage gene as she listened to a distant cuckoo – after the koo, always the cuck, over and over. Did it ever tire of being a metronome? Time stopped or slowed or hiccupped, but all of a sudden her wine was finished.

It's time we walked up the hill, he said.

After an hour's steady climb, Tobias pointed to a farmhouse on the ridge.

They offer soup, he said. And more of that delicious cheese.

They crossed a meadow through a flock of long-horned goats with tufted beards and Kisha squinted at a *Sentieri* marker beside the barn which offered five alternate routes.

Which way home? she said.

All ways could be the right way. Some just take a little longer than others.

She stared into the cryptic hole he'd cleaved wide from a simple question.

Or, he continued, we could take none of the paths and be like the medieval Zen master who said: *Having no destination, I am never lost.*

She took a vertiginous step into the void but he grabbed her arm and smiled serenely.

Come on, he said. Low blood sugar. I think you need that soup.

There were things Tobias seemed to understand without knowing, like the books in his cottage which offered *Sentieri* markers to her journey, like the small anecdotes he told into a space within her reach.

I once read of a Cambodian monk who brought hope to refugees displaced by the Khmer Rouge, he said now over soup. All he did was walk through the forests and jungles on what he called *pilgrimages of truth*. Through each village he passed, he chanted: *Hate can never be appeased by hate; hate can only be appeased by love.* He built hut-temples in the refugee camps, handed out photocopies of the Buddha's message of love. Such a simple thing but most difficult in the circumstances.

But not impossible, she pointed out, revisiting Baba's dying advice.

No indeed, he said. Most difficult, but certainly not impossible.

You have Basho here, she said, looking through the books on his shelf.

Oh, you like haiku? He sipped his wine. I find it an absolute delight. It commands no more than the length of a breath yet requires complete commitment to observation.

He came over to the shelf and pulled down another volume. In a way, this place helps me understand the principle behind the form, he said. Solitude grants me the peace of mind to witness nature's hush and translate it into a brief assemblage of words. I like the thought that haiku captures an image and frames it for future contemplation. Much like a work of art.

He paused, smiled. Basho said it's about learning to listen as things speak for themselves. At the very least it does wonders for my memory.

Memory. Yes. The last haiku penned there.

*Another day of nothing –
except death and pain,
flesh shredded by steel.*

The first one noted here.

*People on the tram –
bored summer voices betray
nice lives of nothing.*

None had followed on a path she had no wish to follow. Yet thought now about the memories she wanted to re-witness – the view from her attic bed, for instance, and began to re-read Basho's *Narrow Road* to kick-start her pilgrimage.

Kisha walked past tablets of stone, past Hesse aphorisms in the museum of his Ticinese home:

A poet's duty is not to show the way but above all to awaken yearning ... I attempted to find out and to say what is common to all religious creeds and all forms of human devotion, which is above all national differences, and which can be believed and revered by every race and every individual ...

She read the lines, felt tears well. It didn't help us in Sarajevo, she told her mentoring spirit. We were poor innocent fools whose yearning was awakened, who believed as you did. We sat and read your books while ignorant pigs split our world, wrought chasms between kin, bulldozed our feeble cries for peace.

Are you OK? Tobias found her in front of a faded photograph of the writer in his favourite gardening hat, wide flannels and a beatific smile.

Sorry, she mumbled. Need some fresh air.

She went down to the courtyard where a trickling fountain soothed raw nerves. Knulp the tortoise munched lettuce at her side and after a time wandered off on a route as meandering as his namesake's, as seemingly aimless as hers, but at peace, content in his world populated by hutch, bowl of water, dish of lettuce – small miracles which appeared whether asked for or not. And so Knulp plodded on, each footfall measured, counted. Of one, two, three and four, before the ring song began again.

The journey itself is home, said Basho.

Tobias looked out a window of the tower museum to where she sat

chatting to an oblivious tortoise. It was the season of snow-melt and her progress would be slow, he knew. As intermittent as Pizzo Ruscada's dislodging ice cap, it was weather-dependent. Some days were cooler or cloudier. Yet on others, like now in Hesse's home, a wide warm sun sent rivulets rushing over the lip of the peak.

Spring came late to the top of Ruscada. This, he knew. But when the thaw started, when the melt-waters flowed, it would go on. Till complete.

(Three)

He left her down in the town by the lake and rejoined the motorway north while she made her way back up the valley on the yellow community bus. The driver nodded as she produced her ticket, and greeted locals by name in their language of choice – Italian, French, German. She could tell by the guttural Swiss-German he spoke with some of his cargo that he had come from the north, had left home to re-surface here at some stage of his life.

Home – the word attacked her at every turn. Home sat, a truculent child in a dingy corner of her mind, fixing her with its pout. When would she stop thinking like a refugee – homeless, stateless – and like a migrant? The bus driver had made the transition – translating a past into a present, a transaction written as clear as the tanned happiness on his face. He had found his sun.

But where was her sun? Not Sarajevo – this other, different Sarajevo which wasn't home, yet full of the memories of home lost in her scarred walls, scarred bodies, scarred souls.

She stared down into the gorge as the bus wound its way up the valley and thought of all the things she should have said to Marko. About home. That it wasn't especially attached to Sarajevo or her sense of Yugoslav principles, or for that matter her Bosnian Serb label under the new world order, one of the supposed bad guys. None of this was fundamental to what it was to be her, what it was to be home.

She plumbed the gorge, its thin knife-slit of river twisting, turning, frothing, flowing, plunged deep through the layers of what defined her sense of home, tried to set out the sequence of events, pinpoint when she'd lost her way, broken mooring, swept free of her anchor and been set adrift on a sea as fraught with dangers as any no man's land. The deeper she plumbed, the more she saw how home was seamlessly woven into those she loved. Lost, gone, and she with them, swirled in eddies below surface rapids, bruised by boulders tossed by gods into the stream.

She pressed the button, got out at her stop, and began the slow climb up to the village.

Why had it stood unharmed since the 16th century and her town had burned on a pyre of 20th century hate? Why was her town on a fault line of human suffering and this valley rent by nature knew only human peace?

Samir had said: *There's no point asking why.* But still she did. Still her mind tried to make sense of the senseless, tried to unpick the threads of tangled tapestries, their colours and shapes all wrong, discordant to an aesthetic eye. And tried to pry behind the scree slopes of past avalanche slips to a time before now, before anyone or anything was now. Was there ever peace on earth? Ever stability? Ever a moment, an eyeblink of unchange? Were all seismic shifts beyond control whether nature- or human-induced?

She trudged up the path with her backpack of whys, crossed the bridge over a torrent cascading down from the ridge, passed another, no more than a dry gully some days before. The weather was warming. The high snows were melting.

Water rushed in her ears. It would go on. Till complete.

(Four)

He had shown her how to build the fire – all flues open, a pyramid of small sticks to begin and the glass door slightly ajar until a good flame had taken hold. She needed to watch for when the time was ripe to feed in a larger log and close the door, close down the flues, one by one, to ensure the oven stayed on task, to fully combust its contents.

To all this she had listened as he instructed and now performed it each evening as ritual, brought it into her body, sensing the fire's readiness to penetrate the next level. She listened to the gentle tap of expanding metal, a log's random crackle and hiss of complaint. But mostly she listened to silence, of flame licking log, lovers creating new life, the energy of two into one. Each now and then she enjoined their embrace, brought her hands close to the granite stones which clad the slender oven, brought them as close as she could to share in the desire they radiated. As close as she could, without melting her wings.

Perhaps she had been aware of this loving union between flame and book. But because it had never been remarked – brought up from her thoughts and onto an external plane, spoken about with Samir or preserved as haiku in her notebook – she could not now be sure. Yet recorded the memory-image, here in this place, long past as it was:

*In this tiny stove,
fire has translated words
into afterlife.*

There was another fireplace in the cottage, the original beneath a wide heavy mantel, flared chimney, copper pots and cracked pans hanging from hooks over a grate no longer used. But the scent of four hundred years of polenta bubbling, chestnuts roasting, bread baking, encircled her in the memories of this place. Four hundred years of sitting about on milking stools or upturned buckets, the tap of pipe in hand, the scrape of poker through coals, the rubbing together of chapped blackened fingers by ruddy-faced farmhands returned from the field, wrapped her in the weft of a glowing fireside.

She looked at these objects which remained to steward the return of flown souls. When new custodians honoured the rituals of their hearth, why would they fly too far? Perhaps they circled Pizzo della Croce each day, high on the

thermals, before slipping in through walls come evening to sit again by the fire and share their myths.

Sarajevo's souls could not return, she thought. Who would or could reconsecrate a martyred Library? Or the mosques, churches, homes, schools that still contained their suffering? No peaceful souls lay in their rubble. No calm fireside awaited them each evening.

She was back in the space of the perennial why, throwing four hundred years of peace in hand-hewn stone into sharp relief against Baba's altar of crumbled dust. And with shoulders hunched and head hung low, her footsteps sounded a death knell up the stairs and into bed.

She did not heed Samir's voice: *No more whys*, did not heed Baba's advice: *Ask the Lady*. Just flopped into bed, hugged a pillow to her aching gut, curled herself tight into a ball, and stared at the patient stitching which hooked mountains into the lining of a star-bright night.

All night Kisha keeps watch as she is watched, all night she feels the Earth slip while the moon remains steady. Only toward dawn does she acknowledge: *Once more I have slipped*. Less than an instant – no more remarked by her eye than the beat of a hoverfly's wing, no more noticeable than the slippage of the Earth beneath her feet – and she is down in it again.

She doesn't know where to begin – to sift and sort, confront and reject, interrogate and analyse, rearrange to best fit. How to counteract the slippages, render them redundant, remove the obstacles which send her stumbling, fumbling about an unlit room and a library full of catalogue drawers labelled: *Do Not Touch?* Where should she begin in this process of unravelling herself? Pulled like an umbilical chord too far stretched and attacked by blunt bloodied knives, a tangle of wool lies on the floor at her feet. Who, what will reel her back in, catch her before she slips, cradle her even when she does?

Help me! she cries.

The moon has made her arc through the sky, clouds hugging her full-bodied form this whole night through, but as the Earth slips again, she is tugged free of her blanket and shines in through the glass to infill the room and bathe the girl on the bed in white light.

Into this space comes a memory, of a day in the midst of searing pain when she saw sunlight touch canola fields, gold upon gold, creation patchworked in a sea of young wheat-green.

When did I forget? she had thought that day. When did I forget the beauty of this world?

Now the moon reminds her that she did indeed forget. Now the moon whispers: *You must remember.*

(Five)

Can I help?

Tobias looked up from under a broad-brimmed hat. Of course, he said, as long as you know a weed from a flower.

It was the front garden bed which posed the problem. See this? he said. It's a day lily. And he showed her the spreading tubers of its rhizome.

They just keep multiplying, he said. And get so matted and tangled. It's a damn endless task, and he sighed.

Let me, she offered. I promise to have the whole bed cleared by the time I leave.

Done, he grinned. Unless that means you plan on staying till summer?

The plot was five metres by one, the rhizomes a tangled web to a depth of some twenty centimetres. It looked manageable until she hooked the fork into a clump of earth and the battle began. Cunning, these tubers, survival flowed in their very sap. A disciplined military, a colonial order, she could find no beginning or end to the root systems. They seemed to conquer everything in their path.

She sat back on her heels, hands red raw, sweat on her brow, looked up to della Croce's cliff face. Cracked and chipped, furrowed and frowning, it was a regular contributor to the garden. Slivers of stone smashed over millennia lay hidden in the dirt to tear at her nails and scrape skin from her knuckles.

A voice entered her reverie, Samir in one of his literature classes:

I swear the earth shall surely be complete

To him or her who shall be complete,

The earth remains jagged and broken

Only to him or her who remains jagged and broken.

But there has to be more to it than that, she thought, prodding at a fresh tangle of rhizomes. Perhaps della Croce's jaggedness, its brokenness, is its completeness. Perhaps to smooth all the edges off all the surfaces of the world isn't the point.

I'm jagged, I'm broken, she thought. Does that mean I can't be complete? Aren't we all constantly being transformed by the tectonic plates moving beneath the surface and carving watercourses through our scars?

I think you're taking his words out of context, said Samir. Write an essay on differing perspectives in Walt Whitman's poetry and hand it in on Monday.

Forget it, she humphed. I've got weeding to do. And felt his warm kiss upon the cheek of memory.

Hours later, she finally wrapped blistered hands around the chill of a beer. An empty garden bed lay before her, rhizome-reduced. She watched clouds slow-skid the sky, shape-shifted by silent winds, and spotted a twin-cloud, hands and feet conjoined, a perfect O of blue space at their centre.

Never mind the wind which caught them at their task, spreading wide their misted wings. Their yogic stance could not be broken and the O, with its tunnel of clear light beyond, stayed. Even as the sun dipped behind the ridge, the twins caught pink now by dusk, these guardians of the way stayed tight-wrapped round their O. And she waited until they melted into evening blue, wondering: Does the path remain when no longer seen?

She went to bed with the question still on her lips and dreamt of the village from a time before now, from a time of no paths between cottages, only grass and the rare stone marker. Nevertheless she is in the selfsame cottage, knows it to be the same although no Madonna graces her outer wall, although she sleeps on a mat by a crackling hearth.

Suddenly she is called to a celebration at the church and skips down the hill to join a procession through the graveyard. She sees accordion man astride a gravestone of granite, this time with a guitar, calling everyone to join their merry troupe. She thinks she recognises others as well, but can't be sure as they fade in and out of focus. Everyone claps and laughs, sings and cheers. Such a party!

A dark night but the way lit by gentians, precious deep-throated flowers line the path, tiny bulbs filling their blue hearts, skin translucent from an inner glow. Kisha follows the troupe along a twisting turning route while a joyous chorus sings loud in her ear. After a time, she stops, follows no more. At peace with her decision, she farewells the merry-makers as they move off through a clear-lit tunnel to beyond, shared voice like swirled mist to her ears:

*Successfully have we stood our watch
And celebrated in her presence.
Yet the time has come to take our leave,
And return to that place etched in gentian blue.
Ready to arise when called afresh,
We silent shepherds of earth-bound souls.*

(Six)

Footsteps. She hears footsteps – the echo of her own, perhaps, or footsteps out of memory, the memory of one who walks ahead or behind or beside. Footsteps from the darkness of a curfew-lit night, feet which stand fast in their silence before suddenly arriving from a shadowed doorway.

Ah yes. Military police. A torch in her face. She instinctively shields her eyes.

Good evening. The voice kindly enough. Papers?

She fumbles in her bag, asks the officer to direct his torch therein.

Why are you out? A logical question.

She hands him a sheaf of documents. There was a prisoner exchange at the bridge. We needed to stay late to settle the newcomers at the centre.

He nods and wishes her a safe journey home. Take care up ahead, he says. There were reports earlier of a sniper working the street.

Footsteps. The soft tap reaches her ear a moment or so after she presses heel to pavement. Yes, her own. But they sound like someone else's, as if she herself is the ghost, followed, protected, by an angel among the living. Step by step, tread by tread.

Here, in the silence of the village, she feels it more – to be watched over, looked after, shadowed, accompanied, by something as simple as the sound of tramping boots. And finds it strange, how in mystery films, footsteps are always an ominous sign.

Not the sum of her experience – footsteps a comfort, an aid. If she could hear her own footfalls, she had survived another day. Never possible to hear her own breath or feel her heart's beat, both held in suspension by the crack of gunfire or thump of rocket launcher. Only footsteps convinced her of life.

Kisha climbs the steps through the village, along narrow paths between high stone walls, slowing her footfalls to catch each percussive echo, each fulsome note. Slowly she walks, to catch the call of life from her companion of the way. T-tap, t-tap, t-tap, arising from an audible shadow.

She stands before the bookshelf. Even Tobias reads *The Wasteland*. But tries not to flinch, pushes through her border.

Who is that on the other side of you?

Has Tobias seen? she wonders. Does he know?

Perhaps, says Samir, hooded, in a brown mantle, leaning over her shoulder to where a finger traces heart-spoken words. But don't worry. I'm sure he can keep a secret.

The wind announces itself from down in the valley – high trees herald it first, the ones up and behind on the forest fringe, ash and beech a surging sea of branches and fresh leaves. The oaks merely rumble and turn over in their sleep. Too early, they complain, wake us in a month. While the chestnuts trill, giggle, lift their skirts for boys to peek.

Now the wind arrives where she sits, where she waits, braced for Eliot's dance.

Speak, wind, speak! she calls into the sky. Tell of the things you've seen, the places you've been, how you rush through valleys and slide over ridges, how you ricochet off the cliffs you greet.

She laughs out loud as the wind speaks through others. Their voices bring its news – rustled leaves, swirling dust, the scent of lilac, before her cheek is kissed.

Speak through me too, wind! she cries, gulps its brisk taste and pushes it out into the world again. Translating language pure as laughter warmed by joy.

This place where Hesse sought refuge in the Swiss south, he said. Above a lake, it seems, but in sight of the Alps.

He closed the book and passed it down to where she sat on the floor, cataloguing an inventory of the entire collection before committing them to flame, to burn night-bright like tiny stars.

She wrote: *Hesse, H. Klingsor's Last Summer* on the sheet of paper, and looked up for the next entry. A long process made longer as he thumbed pages and read out favourite quotes, as they discussed this or that plotline, character or perspective, as they separated the books into piles marked for first burning, or later, after re-reading. Long, over many days and nights, and it continued intermittently as they re-ordered piles over passing months. But there was time. In between everything else, there was always time to read.

It had been his Christmas gift, the full catalogue of texts, each writer's name, each volume's title a doorway to memory. All neatly typed on an old Olivetti she had found in the cellar, on the backs of essays she had found in a box – essays on Tolstoy, Selimovic, Andric, Dizdar, the remainder fuelling their Christmas feast, canned humanitarian fish in macaroni-without-the-cheese.

She remembered the silence in the space of her gifting. Silence as he untied the hair ribbon which held the pages, silence as he ran his finger down the list, page after page, silence as he re-folded them with care, secured the ribbon, walked to the small backpack by the door which held all their essentials, and placed it within. Silence, as he returned, held her in his arms, and kissed her untied hair.

She had leafed through *Klingsor's Last Summer* when he passed it to her that day, read the back cover blurb about his home in Ticino in a village above Lago di Lugano. Knew now what Samir had suspected. His flight into exile from a Germany hell-bent on war had not been in vain. He had found his place of exile, a place infused with *Die Stille*.

The book had gone on the reading pile but like so many thereon had remained unread, *Klingsor's Last Summer* Samir's last winter, and so she bought it at the museum.

Is that all you want? asked Tobias.

It's the only one I haven't read, she replied while the woman at the counter stamped it with a seal in which his signature winked out at her.

For you, Samir.

I know, he said, cupping her heart in his hands. I know.

Es bleibt nichts als Lesen.

She surfaced from the memory, looked down at the book wet with tears in her hand, and decided to walk HG's pilgrim's path. To lead this frightened hull of a man out of siege.

(Eight)

Kisha read further in the text all day to prepare for the journey, saw how HG zittered and worried, trapped in a series of monologues each the length of a breath or micro-thought – a day-by-day recounting of weather, food, fog, a stone wall which had tumbled into his vegetable patch, brief snatches he had read in this volume or that.

On and on it went. Each sentence, each querulous comment led him further toward his brink. HG's mountain was indeed about to come down – his dam break, his catchment flood. She saw all his detritus in the text, pus-filled and pungent, knew how his demons took hold. And watched him busily fill an old canvas rucksack, trembling with angst.

She held out her hand. I'll come with you. It'll be alright. We'll go together. OK?

They followed the path up and out of the village to the chestnut forest and beyond. Pulled from civilisation's orbit, time crossed and stilled, she gently guided HG into a silence backgrounded by the rush of melt-water. A rusted bridge leapt the wide creek and led toward a farmhouse before the path veered and they began to climb steeply through a thick forest of chestnut and beech.

The rustle of leaves – the sudden flight of a deer. A snorting growl – a wild boar herding her piglets. The sharp cry of blue jay, the whistle of hunting buzzard, the hammer-tap of woodpecker, HG's breath in her ear. And her own boots the percussive beat to a tuning fork within.

*Here, in the forest,
tramping boots fill the traces
stamped by echoed-time.*

Finally they pulled free to an alpine meadow of ruminating goats. She trailed her fingers across sun-warmed backs and patted coarse hides, then crossed the flock to a clutch of stone barns and a small shrine to Madonna, fresco-cracked, plaster-cleaved. HG needed a breather, but soon enough they continued to the ridgetop, a row of self-seeded oaks running along its spine and a clump of silver birch at its furthest point. Here they picnicked beneath leaves of recent unfurl which fluttered in the breeze like Buddhist prayer flags.

There! HG pointed over to the pass. We need to follow this slope around the mountain to reach it, and then make our way down into the next valley.

She looked up at della Croce from this new perspective. It stood at the end of a long unwieldy ridge, like a breadknife in need of smoothing to a more uniform blade.

The mountain hasn't come down, she said.

No, he pouted. Not yet.

They reached the pass and the *Sentieri* which showed the way down to the next valley. But the sign offered other possibilities, and HG hesitated.

Do you still want to escape the siege? she prodded.

What siege? he flustered.

Kisha grinned, had waited for just this moment in the text to propose an alternate end. Alright, she said. Let's choose another path.

Once more they began to climb, heading for the summit of a different mountain. This one had a grassy saddle, a gentle cap smoothed by an Ice Age glacial sheet which, HG informed her, once stretched from far in the north all the way to Milano. Nevertheless, he was less than happy about the route she'd chosen.

Why are you doing this? he wheezed as they stopped to look for red and white way markers in the density of forest below the crest.

Why? he asked again as they clambered over rocks and tree roots, skirted mounds of huge red ants, stubbed toes on hidden risks, and slipped on mossy outcrops.

Why? his teeth gnashed as they crawled on all fours across great sheafs of stone, broad-backed as breaching whales, only the red and white stripes painted fore and aft convincing her they hadn't strayed from the path.

Why?

There is no why, Kisha said. Only is. And climbed the last of the slope, up and into air.

As he hobbled toward her, she pointed to the whole interconnected web of mountains and valleys which surrounded them, a rumped quilt spreading in any, all directions – peaks and troughs, wave upon wave of foam-capped ridges, each and every watershed gravity-pulled to the sea.

Look, she said. You were never cut off. You were part of this endless tangled rhizome all the time.

He humphed, grumbled, shrugged. It was only a story, he mumbled.

Kisha looked over to where Samir stood on the edge of a cliff of memory, studying the small segment of a river's mammoth journey more than a thousand metres below. Only a story? she asked.

He turned and shed the hood of his cloak.

Isn't that what we all are? he grinned.

A century later or before, still to come or long past, Kisha stopped at the bridge on the way back down to the village while HG continued on. He had to see about his dinner.

We spent a pretty day, he admitted. But you forgot to tell me – how is dear old Tito?

She laughed at his retreating back, lay down by the creek in the wake of unbounded mountain time and floated in pools of infinite space. She spread her fingers across the faces of boulders which shaped and hugged its flow, curve-softened by millennia of seasonal grift, of water shifting granite from its path in foaming joy.

Remember Smetana? Samir said and hummed the refrain of his beloved Moldau.

This creek, too, knew its passage by heart, repeating a symphony in four movements afresh each year – springtime's roar, summer's steady stream, autumn's murmuring cargo of red-gold leaves, winter's burble beneath a sheet of cracking ice. The tape looped, the thread sewn, in out, over under, round about, and in between.

Give me a haiku, Ki-, he said after they were brimful of dreaming the myth onward.

She rested her head against his shoulder and studied the scene before her. Of white water flipping over grey-green stone, of silver-brown light snuggled into deep pools, of musty backwaters filled with tannin-rich leaves.

She sketched what she saw with pencil on paper in words ripe with colour and taste.

And said after a time of scribblings and crossings-out:

Still life won't stay still.

Winter's broken branch

in springtime's glittering stream.

(Nine)

She made a last round of the garden, watered the small punnets of hope instructed to guard against rhizome incursions, cleaned the house and climbed the stairs to the attic to farewell her view.

Afternoon sun bathed the bed and spotlighted a column of dust in suspended nonchalance. Dust. After all her cleaning, dust!

Plain to the eye in the shaft of light but no doubt, at sun-shift, new dust would be revealed, and she sat on the bed, wrapped in sunlight and dust, tiny specks bobbing about her with the random delight of a bottle floating at sea, adrift, with no thought of destination. Yet arriving somewhere, eventually, to tell stories of the journey, of life itself as a speck of dust.

She sat and wondered: What's the difference between me and a speck of dust?

Is that a trick question? asked Samir.

She ignored him, thought: Does dust have memory of where it's been or plans of future bright? Does dust know anger, frustration, fear, pain? Disappointment? Love? Does dust know love? Her brow furrowed at that one.

I'm serious, said Samir. Are you doing this on purpose?

Perhaps we should drift, she wondered. No plans, no future, no memory, no past. Just a string of todays where everything is revealed in its true light and true measure, the siege simply a breeze which skittered us about, our whims unheeded as much as these innocent specks.

Ah, said Samir. But here's a thought – is it better to be aware of this or not? Is it better to be an enlightened speck of dust or are we just as blissful (or not) by the turns of fate as an ignorant speck? None of us knows our destiny, where our message-in-a-bottle bobbing on a vast and trackless sea will beach us, what hazards we'll face in the stream, which rocks will bruise and scrape or slice us to shreds as we're carried past. It all just happens. So what sort of speck would you rather be?

He spread his arms wide atop Pizzo Ruscada and parted the clouds of unknowing which clung to the peak, wind-shifting them with an invisible breath. Now she could see him full in the kiss of the sun.

I'll take enlightened, she grinned.

He laughed, whooped his joy. This is how it ends, Ki-. And how it begins. At the end of a journey of no end from a big bang before beginningless time. Never without the hope that a spark will pierce us, illuminate us, enlighten us, we humble specks of dust.

Love! he cried aloud. Love! That's the spark!

And she couldn't help but agree as he conjured an image of billions upon billions of radiant dust stars, a universe of twinkling dust fireflies, all filled with the light of love.

(Intermezzo)

The chorus now speaks:

Last logs crackle on the fire downstairs. An owl hoots from the church tower. Mountain water cascades via the washhouse below the church before tumble-turning on. We have finished our watch, but still we may tell of what we see, what we hear.

Kisha lies in silence, her ear tuned to the silence, the real silence. The low hum (or maybe thrum is a better word, she thinks) of all life simply going about the business of living, generated by all the souls of the world – the souls of the ten thousand things as the Buddhists liked to say – simply breathing. Nothing more than a breath is needed – inhaled, exhaled, over, over – to enjoin the thrum of life.

Silence, she thinks, is the sound of my soul breathing. And listens on till its shape is revealed. It is the surety of the O in the care of cloud-twins, the soft-woven warmth of a butterfly's cocoon, the diamond-hard strength of the mountain at her back.

Into this surety, she closes her eyes and glides down to the washhouse to watch the melt-waters flow. Indeed she wants to join the waters, flow with them to the sea. But there is the business of getting back to work, taking the bus, the train north – what should she do?

A message in a bottle, that's what she'll do. Write a message and send it in her stead. A message carried all the way from here to there, down into the gorge, slapped against boulders, rumbled over stones, but unbreakable, this dream bottle.

She watches it head off into the basin of the four rivers to make its way into the fjord-thin lake and bob inexorably south until taken up by the Po, further, further, her message channelled into the lagoon and current-directed into Venezia's Grand Canal where a passerby fishes it out.

He sits on the quayside, lights a cigarette, studies the cork stuffed in the bottle's throat, the yellowing paper within. Curious, no doubt, but wary about the consequences of unlocking its content. He remembers the fate of poor Roderick the Goth, knows his history well. So continues to sit while vaporetos chug past, their wake sending gondola-ed tourists to regret their three-course lunches, and grins into a tableau of cursing and hurling.

He finishes his cigarette, thinks: Alright, I'm ready. And extracts the cork.

A finger inserted, carefully it tightens the scroll and brings it out into the air, into the light, unscathed. Slowly, slowly, so it does not tear, he unfurls the fragile note.

At one time, her message would have said: *Help*. But now it simply says: *Hello*.

Kisha smiles into her dream, the passerby turns toward her.

Samir's eyes, dark, depthless, flooded with golden light. Hello, he says. Hello.

The Seventh Wave

(One)

Kisha sits in the midst of a shipment from an art and design publisher. It has taken some time, but Tobias has finally relented to customer and employee pressure to extend his stock offer and complement the old and well-loved with the shock of the new.

She opens the boxes as if it were Christmas, sorting through shredded paper until she finds the volumes shrink-wrapped in plastic. Joseph Beuys, Gerhard Richter, several international names, a survey on Swiss artists of the last century. After putting an exemplar of each on the floor beside her for later browsing, she gathers the remainder and takes them to a table near the front of the store. Perhaps she will re-arrange the window display to catch the beauty of the Kirchner cover, the paradoxical frailty of the Giacometti.

Now to a second, smaller shipment, a single box housing a new publication on the art of Byzantium. She leafs through the book, each page hosting a memory-image of home, of frescoes, altarpieces, icons, all in full colour gloss. She searches for a Lady like Baba's lost treasure. But none appears.

Closing the book, she hugs a memory close. Of a scolding from her teacher for ... she can't remember what. But remembers telling Baba, remembers mumbling and looking at her toes.

What did you do?

Nothing! She's just an angry old hag and I hate her!

Mmmm, shall we ask the Lady what she thinks?

Oh – how she trembles before the icon, feels the Lady look into her heart.

Silent, their communion, but into it comes a cough from the chair behind her. Well? What did she say?

Her cheeks burn, now, to hear her whispered response again. She didn't say anything, Baba.

Well, that's strange. Because I heard something. I heard the Lady say: Listen to your heart. Baba pauses. So what does your heart tell you?

More silence, more fidgeting, but finally she admits: I should do my homework.

Baba sits back. There, you see?

But it wasn't my heart saying it! It was my tummy – all squirmy and sad.

Baba hugs her. Damp breath kisses her hair. Yes, she says. Sometimes our heart strings tug in funny places.

Tobias comes into the room from the back office. Ah, a new shipment, he says. What have we here?

He lifts each exemplar in turn while she cradles memory in her lap till finally he reaches down to collect the Byzantine book from her.

Good, it's arrived. He'll be very pleased.

Who?

Herr Bueller. He ordered it in specifically and it seemed a grand opportunity to make a box of it.

He scans the shop. I think we should bring all our books on Byzantine art and iconography into the one area, don't you?

Look here, he says, taking down from a shelf a volume on the church frescoes of Crete, its cover torn and binding frayed. This is a seminal text, very difficult to come by these days. I'd even forgotten I had this.

He flicks through the pages, mumbling as he goes: I think a new display is in order. The new book's our diva, all the second-hand and antiquarian the chorus.

Alright, I'll get started.

No – take this one over to Herr Bueller first. Charming man, he'll appreciate a personal delivery. It's over in the Augustinergasse near the church. I'll draw you a map.

She makes out an invoice, wraps the book well, and pops it into her bicycle basket. Off she rides, morning chill on stockinged legs. At Bahnhofstrasse, she walks the bike up a cobbled side street, down a narrow lane and across a wide church square. Tucked away in the far corner she finds his small storefront between a jeweller and furniture maker.

It looks locked, and dark within, but that only serves to highlight gilt frames, silvered borders, the sticky sheen of lacquer over richly-coloured tempera. She tries the door, sees movement, and the shadow of a large man looms to unlock the grill.

Herr Bueller?

I'm closed. Won't open till after lunch.

Tobias sent me. I've brought your book.

Oh excellent! He claps pudgy hands together. Come in, come in. And waves her past his long black beard, moving aside so she can squeeze through

the narrow entrance and descend the several steps into his compact shrine to Orthodoxy. She hands him the package and wanders the gallery while he unwraps his prize.

Beautiful, beautiful ... when I saw the review –

Calming to be in her own culture again, she fingers the cloths, studies the forms of the saints on their slim cypress boards. But stops short in front of one, something she recognises, or thinks to recognise.

St George. Baba's St George.

She begins to shiver. No, it's not possible. And turns, walks to the other side of the small room. The gallery owner sits and talks into his beard, her progress between worlds goes unnoticed.

Veils part to hasten her journey between heaven and earth and she is tugged back to stand before the framed board. There can be no mistake. It is Baba's St George, red-robed, astride a white horse, lance at the ready for the black demon at his feet.

Where did you get this? The voice which emerges is not her own. Deep, guttural, the growl rises from low in the gut, from a peat bog of festering past.

The icon seller looks up, taken aback. The voice has filled the room, swept freshness from the air. His chair squeaks in protest as he rises and crosses territory to where it lurks.

Ah yes, he squints. St George. Serbian Orthodox. Probably 18th century – they didn't do much beaten metalwork before then.

Kisha clears her throat, tries again. Did you acquire it yourself or through a third party?

Again the squint at the icon before he turns to survey her high Slavic cheekbones. I would need to check my records. Are you interested in it?

She nods, not trusting the voice from within.

Just a moment.

A pause in the script, a space opened by his departure, a silence in which her thoughts freefall. What would she do with this knowledge? This – any – knowledge? What?

Yes, he says into the space, receipt book open, a sweaty leather tome in the palm of his hand. Yes, a sad story. He closes the book with finality. The Balkans indeed is a sad story.

She looks expectantly into the space, the dark which grows lighter the longer she waits, as if for dawn to break. Staring into the smudged horizon, she

discerns change, a thin gap widens and cautiously she waits, between day and night, between one and the other, between what was and what will be.

A man came into the gallery one day, he says, widening the gap. Over two years ago according to the record. Apparently he was part of the peacekeeping mission in Sarajevo, and he came to have several icons valued. It seems people sold them in the struggle to survive or to pay the price for papers to escape. Of course, he shrugs, it's always possible they were stolen from a church. A lot of looting went on as I understand.

He coughs. I remember him saying he had no idea what they were worth, just that he had paid what people asked, said it turned his stomach to see how others haggled. Their bellies were warm at night.

Well, he sighed, his good turn was returned tenfold as the saying goes. This St George is quite a stunning piece of art.

You said he had several?

Yes but the others were in very poor condition, just small scraps of wood. Worthless, really. No more than souvenirs.

Kisha nods, turns away. The ever-percolating bile rises as she sees again the run-down street stalls and Samir's outrage, the newspaper headlines accusing UN forces of abusing their privileges. She swallows the past, the fate of St George overriding all memory.

You know nothing more?

No. He looks her full in the face and admits: Sometimes I don't want to know. I only want to hear enough to convince myself the story is genuine, that I am not in receipt of stolen goods or such. A bitter laugh shakes his frame as he turns away. But who ever knows the truth?

I need to know, she thinks. Then –

Do you still have the contact details for this peacekeeper?

Of course. That's my insurance if the law comes knocking.

Would you be willing to give me that information?

He hesitates –

Please!

A tremulous arc crosses time and space. She drops her voice to a whisper and says into the intersect: I would like to buy it.

This new voice catches her by surprise but it too has come from somewhere, arising from somewhere deeper than a fetid peat bog.

He looks at her sharply. It's very expensive.

She waits for the price to enter the space, closes her eyes, takes a deep breath. Will you keep it for me – on deposit?

Herr Bueller sighs. Think about it. A young girl like you? If you still want it in a week, we will discuss terms.

She sat up late that night at the kitchen table with pen, paper, and the meagre account of her savings. Had been saving up to escape, but from what? A place, a time, a memory, an inheritance? She bit her fingernails down to the quick but nothing added up – on paper, in her head.

The only place anything made sense was her heart, a place which said: *He needs to come home. You cannot leave him homeless, stateless, lonely and alone.*

She didn't wait a week, went back next day, received the peacekeeper's address in return – a Frenchman working in Geneva.

These details are very old, Herr Bueller warned. He could have moved on since then.

Her hand shook, but she dialled the number and a receptionist answered. Yes, he still worked there. No, he wasn't available now.

Can I call back?

Yes.

When?

In an hour. Your name?

He won't know who I am.

I need your name and what business you have.

Kisha Mirvic, she recited. Sarajevo.

Her hand shook more when she called the second time.

Saturday, he agreed. The café near the station.

The train rushed past farms, hills, valleys, lakeshores and mountainscapes in its requisite three hours. She found the café, sat at a table, ordered coffee, lit a cigarette. Chewed nails which had nothing left to chew.

Miss Mirvic?

He had been sitting nearby, closeted behind a newspaper.

Forgive me, he said, extending a gloved hand, but I'm usually quite wary when someone mentions Sarajevo.

They exchanged pleasantries, remained guarded, circled the obvious. He would only say he'd left as a medical evacuee.

My hands were severely burned, he said.

To her questions, he gave the same answers as the gallery owner.

But can you remember the St George? She described its features. I can't imagine you found it on a market stall.

He took a small notebook from his pocket, leafed through pages of photographs of different artefacts. Do you mean this one? he pointed.

Yes!

He turned the page. This is where I bought it.

Kisha looked into the face of a grimy ragged crone squatting by the side of a muddy track. A cloth-covered cardboard box displayed her few meagre items, including St George.

Oh my God!

Patrons turned from their pastries, books, conversations, while her wide eyes searched the man's scarred face.

I always keep a record, he said. I don't want to be accused of being something I'm not. I paid double what she asked. She was starving.

He turned away, fixed his eyes on a passing tram.

We were on our way back from the airport with a shipment. There was no way she would have made it to the distribution point, no way she would have been able to stand in line for hours. She was much too frail.

Kisha hiccupped, sniffed, blind to the tracks her tears cleaved.

There was another, he said.

The next jolt.

It was hidden inside her shawl.

He turned back from the window. I offered her more, but she wouldn't show me. Just hugged it to her breast like armour.

He stirred the dregs of his coffee. I did what I could, gave her money, gave her food. She was so grateful, said it would help protect the lady. He shook his head, took a last sip of cold coffee. Poor thing was delusional.

No. No.

And she is gone. From here to there. From now to then. From Baba to Azra. From home to home.

(Two)

She rides the bus in from the airport, doesn't know where to look – at the shattered remnants without or within? Nothing hides scars, not even the glass and steel of the brand new and re-built, mirrored panels reflecting pain onto pain at every turn.

Is it intentional? she wonders. A by-product of transition? Or merely poor architectural design?

Flying in, she had looked out on green hills, fields, small villages. Gentle spaces, the ones of longer-than memory. Till the gash to the mouth, white gravestones a hillside-wide. Heart-slashed, no warning of turbulence ahead, it brought her hard back to where she'd been, to where she'd come. And it continued when she spotted the Hercules on the runway apron awaiting its clearance to leave – the flash of orange light, the slow grind of propellers.

Now she sits on the bus and tears still prick, but she doesn't turn away from what she sees, listens to the voice which keeps her steady.

Easy, it says. Go easy.

She walks along Vaso Miskin which will probably be renamed like everything else, forging new identity from the debris of old, and passes the place where she cradled Baba's head. The shell craters have been inked in red enamel. *Sarajevo Roses*, they are called.

She crosses the market which suffered a worse fate after she'd left. When she'd been there, but still here – numb in a foreign land around the centre's television set with her drop-ins, weeping, keening, sight fixed on the haiku forming in her head.

*Barbecued fresh meat –
crackling and sizzling
human served today.*

No. She won't let memories distract her from task, lets the past wash and lap her shore, surrenders to the ocean's breath – in-out, in-out – and asks Hesse to steady her nerves:

Magic exists in each beginning to protect and nurture the life within.

She closes her eyes to the memories of massacre, climbs Hesse's steps, aged and well-trod even before he found *Die Stille*. And now she too places one foot in front of the other, settles each into the soft-worn grooves of centuries of wayfarers, each of whom had a story.

Kisha not the first to trip on the steps, to stumble on a climb long and hard. Not the first to be slapped in the face and sent tumbling back down into the pit. But she begins again, each time recalling the fern fronds and shy flowers that edge her staircase, the damp mossy crevasses that fringe her path, the wisteria that spills over like a curtain of beads.

Eyes closed, all this she sees, and footsteps in the shadows she hears. As he walks with her, step by step, tread by tread. T-tap. T-tap. T-tap.

At the café by the river, she sits in the sun, orders coffee from a boy in an apron and looks over to where a second waiter is busy at another table. His face is fuller now, but the hair just as shaggy, which he unconsciously sweeps out of his eyes on his way over.

You made it after all, he grins.

She lights a cigarette, sits back and smiles, hair dark amber in the sun.

(Three)

Can you do it? she asked the stonemason, handing him the short text.

Of course, he said, pursing his lips to the handwritten page. When's the memorial?

She shook her head. Nothing big. Just a few friends – next Friday I thought.

Alright. He called to his apprentice. Go with her.

They left the small workshop on the edge of Bascarsija, crossed the bridge at the Library ruin, and climbed the steep hill of Alifakovac, up marble-edged steps to the cemetery where he lay. The boy dawdled, chewed gum, kicked a stone. The day was warm, June, and the sun hot overhead.

She wended her way through the graves. Some had headstones pointing the way to paradise but most were marked by the simple wooden paddles and hurried scratched names of wartime destitution.

Here, she called, pointing to Samir's patch of earth, his mound smoothed, weathered. Indeed, the whole place had become a meadow with undulating hills and dales, all green, save for the paddles, grey-worn, hiding in the long grass, and the occasional marble slab, stark-white and pure.

Friday. She stood beside the fresh-made headstone on a perfect blue-skied day and looked into the memory of when they had lain him in the grave. It didn't disturb the peace of the moment, in fact was part of the moment and she unlocked the container in which the memory lay and said:

See? See what it has become, this place? See who we have become?

Her memory slipped out of its catalogue drawer, came and stood beside her and looked around the small group. Nada and Kasim, hands held, heads bowed, her growing belly a shared life in-between. Marko, Miki, Jasmina and Haris. Plato and Susu, Farid skipping a day of school.

Kisha read the gravestone epitaph aloud, explained how she had forgotten the texts of Basho until these last months when a chance encounter had brought her home to an old friend. And short speech at end, she fell silent at the sight of a sea of death which had become a hillside meadow.

Nada shifted the silence, took her hand and said: Come on. Time for a coffee.

It's OK, you go ahead. I'll catch up.

Her eyes followed their progress down the steep path of smooth steps, Nada with a hand under her belly, the other on Kasim's shoulder, the others slowly behind. And she sat down beside him at last.

Here he lay in the shade of a young linden that someone had planted, some family or other whose loved one slept nearby, a young linden which would one day grow tall. The cool of hillside breeze lifted its leaves, and in its song, its gentle rustle, she could hear the contented sighs of those it shaded.

Now she heard further, to the cathedral bells chime the hour, to the muezzin's call to midday prayer, to the trams rumbling along Obala, the complaint of their wheels at the Library turn. She could hear all the city, see all the city, from here as clearly as this young tree – a young tree whose roots threaded underground, through, down, across and around the bones, the flesh of the dead returned to earth. She followed their journey, saw how tightly the dead were woven into the shared sustenance of a single tree, Samir peaceably, meditatively performing his task. In death, in dust, growing new life.

She took the letter from her bag, opened it, laid it in her lap, flattened bent edges. Yellowed and blotchy from the watermarks of time, after so many years, indeed it was time. Her memory was ready, her self settled and calm, they would read it together. It would be alright.

Dearest Ki-

I know I said I would never write such a letter. I know I made fun of your letter (whatever happened to it, by the way?), but light fun, you know that – just so we wouldn't remark the grim reaper standing too close beside the mattress in the hall, his scythe sharpened, his rattly breath obscured by the sound of the river or explosions or any other of a million sounds (except birdsong, I know, the birds all flown) that we would rather admit than his own prophetic presence.

So yes, I know I said what I said, but here is clear evidence to the contrary.

The feeling, the compulsion to write this letter only came up recently, unexpectedly at that. Perhaps because the days stay bleak when we expect – no, desperately will! – spring to arrive. Our hopes may be lifted by brighter mornings, later sunsets, but she's still a way off, flouncing her coloured skirts in another marketplace, giddily dancing to some lusty pastoral symphony – at a friendlier latitude, a gentler altitude, in an altogether more amenable place, I'm sure.

So the days stay bleak and we wait, steeped in views of bare hills and gunmetal grey skies. Maybe our melancholy even turns to fear. Oh no! we think. Spring won't be able to break the siege – the conspiracy is complete, seasonal rites are doomed in Sarajevo this year!

I guess you can hear my sigh from wherever you are reading this. I guess you know I sit in the gloom, no kandilo lit, and think these morbid thoughts. So why commit them to paper? Because I dream that one day when all this is over, we can open this letter together and laugh at my silly thoughts on a cold March morning that the siege could submerge us in winter-dark forever.

So why am I still writing if I think we'll open this letter together some time in the future? Simply to cover the other possibility – that you open it alone, because I have an idea for the epitaph on my grave. See, I was looking through your book of haiku. You know the one – Basho's. And as he wandered across his land, wrote his little gems, I wandered through my thoughts.

Strangely, we both arrived at the same place – a battlefield from an earlier time, its scars all but hidden. Who knows how long it took the seasons to start up again after the endless winter of pain he wrote about? But they did, for this is the poem he came up with:

Summer grasses –

All that remains

Of warriors' dreams.

Do you remember the day you showed me that haiku? Do you? It was a moment in time and I missed it. But today I was given a second chance and suddenly my melancholy is gone. Suddenly I see beyond. This will end some day. And all that will remain is a memory (for a while), a history book (for longer) but more permanently, Basho's summer grasses. In all the millennia of setting suns, rising moons, seasons coming, going, births, deaths, loves lost and found, this is only a brief interlude, a slight hiccup in the flow. Our dear Chetniks are simply an intermezzo performance. How sadly, sadly deluded they are, and how blissfully, blissfully relieved I am.

Yours. Ever.

S.

She sat by the grave half-smothered in meadow blossom, looked up at the epitaph etched in fine swirled script, wondered how long till it too would be cloaked by tall grasses. And, re-folding the letter, she kissed its crumpled hide, placed it back into her bag.

Once, she remembered, Samir had said how well she knew him, as if from the inside out. Proof when no proof was needed in the shade of a young linden tree.

See? he said, nudging her arm.

Alright, she replied. Alright, it's true.

She laid her head on his shoulder and shared a moment of energy translated to matter before his smoky shadow melted back into her heart.

(Four)

Kisha walks down to the water's edge, to the make-shift camp re-formed at Ildija where Azra lies on a rickety lounge staring into the folds of river.

She's been waiting for you to come, her daughter says as they cross the field toward a line of young poplars along the riverbank, replanted on the site of their sacrificed brothers. She's been waiting for you to come so she can leave.

I know, she sighs. I'm sorry it's taken so long. And shrugs. I guess I'm not as good at reading the signs as you are.

Lydia smiles, tucks her arm through Kisha's. Once you trust, the signs come harder, faster. She laughs. Sometimes it's hard to keep up! We could all do with a bit of Azra's stamina.

A wasted arm rises in greeting, and she kneels beside the lounge, kisses the withered cheek of a gnarled fruit tree, the hand which holds hers twig-thin, nothing more than skin and bone.

Here you are at last, she smiles. Come, greet the Lady. She's been waiting such a long time. She unwraps the shawl in her lap and sunlight leaps from silver.

She had forgotten the eyes, the singular beauty of her eyes. *What do you hide behind your mask?* Demian had asked. But the thought flips on to another memory – how she studied the walls of a tiny chapel in Crete, torch held to a fresco's face.

Look at the eyes, Samir! she'd said. Don't you think they're like Baba's Lady?

Her bright-eyed eagerness met a teasing reply. Next you'll tell me you're going to study art history and prepare detail treatises on iconographic writing through the ages!

She returns from reverie to stroke Azra's hand and trace a finger over the Lady's silver plating. It is chipped, cracked, its lustre tarnished and stained. But still whole, still brimful of light.

You know so much about the ways of the world, Azra.

There isn't much to know, child.

But how does it work? The magic?

Shhhh, she hushes. No questions. There are no answers. Just trust that it is as it is and the way will open, you'll see. Now take the Lady home, child. She's been waiting such a long time.

Kisha nods and starts to rise, but Azra suddenly clutches her arm. I almost forgot, she says. How's that pretty man of yours?

She opens her mouth to speak but the Gypsy has already taken up her hand to hear the news herself.

Ah, she squints. How lovely. Gives her hand a generous squeeze. You've made it through this nasty business together.

But –

She turns the hand this way and that. And you'll always be together! Good, very good.

Kisha laughs, shakes her head. Are you sure you don't need glasses?

Fading eyes twinkle. Love, child! What always was always will be. No silly Chetnik can kill love. Now let an old lady rest. Baba's waiting.

She cradles Azra in her arms, smooths her hair and hears her deep sleeping breaths drop to a whisper, drop again.

Till her next waking hello. In time.

(Five)

They sit around a café table in the park by the river. Marko hops over every now and then for a cigarette and a chat between customers.

Plato nudges Kisha and points out a sweet-faced girl beneath the sole surviving plane tree hugging the riverbank. She's always here, drinking coffee after coffee just to see his smile.

Next time Marko arrives –

Go on, ask her out before the poor girl goes bankrupt.

Or ODs on caffeine, Susu laughs from beside the carousel where Farid has enjoyed his umpteenth ride.

Here, says Kisha, drawing a gift out of her bag. See if this will entertain you at the table for a while.

She passes him a small bottle of bubble mixture sourced from a supermarket shelf. He glows with delight, unscrews the lid, draws out the plastic stick which finishes in a perfect O, and blows his first string of bubbles straight across the table. Soapsuds explode into random cups.

Bravo! Marko cheers. More sales!

Kisha watches a small boy's joy repeated over, and over again. As his parents clap and laugh, as Nada pats her belly, as Kasim's kiss brushes her cheek.

Each time a perfect O encircled by angels' wings lifts heavenward toward its perfect end. And she finds herself scribbling haiku in her head to honour this particular still point in a turning world. Observing at finger click, at shutter speed, a moment frozen in space and time.

*A boy's sweet bubble
holds so many rainbow dreams
in an empty bowl.*

(Six)

She stands at the window of the bookseller's shop, stands there as she has all the years until now looking in on a tableau marked serene. Sees it not as at the beginning but as they have transformed it over time, complete with second chair, a low table beside, reading lamp a little removed and a leafy fig bringing life to still life. All bathed in the glow of old books loved long.

Tobias has company, it seems. She can't see the other man, his back is toward her. But still she taps the window glass to announce her homecoming, and smiles wide to see his energetic wave. The man turns at the noise, Herr Bueller in his long black beard.

What a coincidence! he says. I just popped in with St G.

Her joy hits a wall. That's not what we agreed. I don't have the money.

Yes, yes. But I'm heading off for a while, you see? Time to put everything into storage, go and see the rest of the world before it runs away.

George has a home now, he says as if it's a truth self-evident in a courtroom of law. I can't put him in a box when he's got someone to go to.

But –

Tobias exits the discussion stage-right. I'll make tea, he proposes to no one in particular.

We'll talk money when I get back, Herr Bueller suggests. I'm sure you'll be here when I return.

Which is when?

He throws his hands up to heaven. Well how am I supposed to know?

Her brain feels as if it has been tumble-turned in a washing machine one too many times. Too much, too sudden. But she sits him down, steadies herself, returns to the moment, and says:

I want to show you something.

The Lady rests on the table before them. Her silence envelopes the room.

Extraordinary, he whispers after a more-than-lengthy pause.

You can see how she's damaged, Kisha says. Is there a chance to restore her?

Herr Bueller shrugs. Either that or take her back to the original.

What does that mean?

He fixes her with a benign expression. It means we rip this silly silver off.

What?

She is back in the washing machine, stunned by the Swiss Army knife he retrieves from a pocket – never leave home without one, he says – to prise shell from pearl. A delicate operation, he talks all the while.

The bas relief is late in any case, 19th century I'd hazard a guess. They took to doing a riza in silver or sometimes gold to preserve the icon, leaving the faces and hands exposed to enable veneration. It's better to shed the skin, have a look at what's underneath. Give her a new cloak if you think it's worthwhile.

She holds her breath. Fear rises in her throat. What if he ruins her? Loses her light? How could she ever look into those eyes again? Into Baba's memory, Azra's?

Metal on metal, a tinkling fall to floor. A small coin, dislodged from hibernation, rolls free which she retrieves without acknowledgement.

Ah, but wait.

Extraordinary, he breathes.

The Lady lies naked within their sight, an explosion of highly-coloured egg tempera freed of her humbling corset.

Cretan, most certainly. There's a look of 14th or 15th century about it, but I can't date it for sure. Unusual though, this Melkite touch.

This what?

His finger hovers over the surface of thick-lacquered wood, sketching in space what his words describe.

The faces on Melkite icons weren't angular like the Greeks or Russians produced. Everything was more rounded, more realistic. More natural, don't you think? And the skin colour, eyes. He shakes his head. Definitely Middle-eastern.

He shakes his head again and frowns. But there's no evidence of their production until the 18th century when local icon writers who studied in the east set up their own workshops at home and varied the script to take account of their experience. So this is most unusual. Its age doesn't match the manner of its translation.

Look, he points. Even the vines around the edge.

He squints close to the board's surface. Pomegranates?! he exclaims. Extraordinary!

And I have never seen the veil rendered in such a quantum of gold leaf before. Perhaps the borders, the stars. But the whole? It gives her a light which is more than ethereal. More, much more ...

His murmurs drift into deep thinking breaths as he turns her over gently, tenderly. Points to the Arabic script on her back. See? I'm right.

But isn't that Greek? And she points to a few squiggles beneath the trail of calligraphy.

Mmmm, Kiria. Which means our Lady. The Arabic probably repeats it.

She has seen something else. In the opposite corner is a small circle of alternate colours, light-dark conjoined. What's this? she asks.

He squints at the cypress board again. Mmmm, he says, and retrieves a magnifying glass from another coat pocket.

Once more, Extraordinary! explodes from his forest of beard. How fundamentally unusual!

She takes the magnifying glass and the Chinese symbol of the ying and the yang, the eternal Tao, looms up. Nested fishes, each hosting a spot of the other's colour. But their purity is marred, scratched it seems.

No, he says into her wordless question. I fancy there's something scripted into each shape. And not the same thing in each, but different. I can't make it out though. Too small and faded.

Still, he sighs as he places the icon on the table, sits back and scratches his chin, I must say it goes to making the piece an incredibly unique artefact. How on earth would an icon writer in 14th century Candia know anything about Taoist symbology for heaven's sake?

He pauses, then turns to her.

You know, I think you should forget about re-silvering. This war's been a blessing. It's brought her back to the beginning.

(Seven)

I'll make a fresh pot of tea, says Tobias when they are alone with the Lady.

Kisha studies the slim board in her hands. How did you arrive in our family? she wonders.

Any knowledge has melted into Baba's shadow, but still she imagines a journey rich and long – involving those who have held her, who have whispered their prayers and pain in her sight.

Many scars mark her flesh, a multitude of injuries over centuries are mapped on her skin, hosting memories made. But the light in her eyes seems as alive now as when first written – like a spark had leapt from the writer with which to conceive her afterlife.

She finds herself wondering about the iconographer, what else he may have written and infused with his love.

From the doorway, the rumble of boiling kettle faint in his ear, Tobias remarks a nuance of light begin to grow in the room. Indeed, as soon as she arrived, he thought to see a light in her eyes where before had lurked shadow. A light now working to infill vast halls of memory while she sits and contemplates an icon in her lap.

Tobias knows nought of the journey, remarks only the light in green-amber eyes. Yet all at once his thoughts are tugged to a Moroccan lamp he has at home, its delicate mosaic of green-amber glass.

He had found it in a market in Salé. The funny town of Salé with its wicked bazaar on a day he crossed the river in search of a madrasa of medieval fame.

In a leering merchant's stall he had found the lamp, a simple souvenir of precious memory-made – of a single candle's glow in the madrasa's central hall. A single candle which could floodlight the breathtaking beauty of sacred space like a firefly illuminating a night-dark cave.

Come on, he says, tea brewed and poured. You deserve the big chair for a change.

She doesn't need to be asked twice, hops over and into crumpled old leather, arranging herself squeakily in holey pink socks.

She looks around the shelves from this new perspective, at the incarnate spirits of a plethora of myths in their containers printed and bound.

Looks further, to where kindness sits in the visitor's chair quietly filling his pipe.

And finally smiles into the face of loving-kindness on the table, the one she has brought home.

All return her gaze, hushed, expectant. Knowing that now has arrived, the moment when before becomes past.

Settled into a time before time, a place before now, ready to exist, ready to be told. By the one in the storyteller's chair.

References

- Adams, D 2009, *Life, the Universe and Everything*, Pan Books, London.
- Arendt, H 2007, 'Introduction', in W Benjamin, *Illuminations*, Schocken Books, New York, pp.1-55.
- Armstrong, G 2009, 'A little trick of the mind', *Five Dials*, No.5, pp.16-22, viewed 30 September 2010 < http://fivedials.com/files/fivedials_no5.pdf>
- Armstrong, K 1999, *A History of God*, Vintage Books, London.
- Armstrong, K 2005, *A Short History of Myth*, Canongate, Edinburgh.
- Arnold, J 2007, *Practice Led Research: A Dynamic Way to Knowledge*, Rock View Press, Melbourne.
- Atwood, M 2002, *Negotiating with the Dead*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Bakhtin, M 1981, *The Dialogic Imagination*, University of Texas Press, Austin, TX.
- Bassnett, S & Lefevere, A 1998, *Constructing Cultures: Essays on Literary Translation*, Multilingual Matters, Clevedon, UK.
- Bateson, G 2000, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Beckett, S 1989, 'Worstward Ho', in *Nohow On*, John Calder, London, pp.99-128.
- Benjamin, W 2007a, 'The task of the translator', in W Benjamin, *Illuminations*, Schocken Books, New York, pp.69-82.
- Benjamin, W 2007b, 'Theses on the philosophy of history', in W Benjamin, *Illuminations*, Schocken Books, New York, pp.253-264.
- Ben-Shir, D 2007, 'The endless search: writing as a way of being', *New Writing*, vol.4, no.3, pp.188-204.
- Bergson, H 1991, *Matter and Memory*, Zone Books, New York.
- Bhabha, H 1994, *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, London.
- Bifo, 2008, 'Alterity and desire', in S O'Sullivan & S Zepke (eds), *Deleuze, Guattari and the Production of the New*, Continuum, New York, pp.22-32.
- Brook, P 1998, *Threads of Time*, Counterpoint, Washington DC.
- Calvino, I 2009, *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*, Penguin Classics, London.

- Charlton, NG 2008, *Understanding Gregory Bateson: Mind, Beauty and the Sacred Earth*, State University of New York Press, Albany, NY.
- Chatwin, B 1988, *The Songlines*, Penguin, London.
- Chodorow, J 2006, 'Active imagination', in RK Papadopoulos (ed.), *The Handbook of Jungian Psychology: Theory, Practice and Applications*, Routledge, London, pp. 215-243.
- Colyar, J 2009, 'Becoming writing, becoming writers', *Qualitative Inquiry*, vol.15, no.2, pp.421-436.
- Conquergood, D 1985, 'Performing as a moral act: ethical dimensions of the ethnography of performance', *Literature in Performance*, vol.5, no.2, pp.1-13.
- Conquergood, D 2002, 'Performance studies: interventions and radical research', *The Drama Review*, vol.46, no.2, pp.145-156.
- Conquergood, D 2006, 'Rethinking ethnography: towards a critical cultural politics', in DS Madison & J Hamera (eds), *The Sage Handbook of Performance Studies*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, pp.351-365.
- Corbin, H 1998a, *Alone with the Alone*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ.
- Corbin, H 1998b, *The Voyage and the Messenger: Iran and Philosophy*, North Atlantic Books, Berkeley, CA.
- Cormack, R 2000, *Byzantine Art*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M 1996, *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention*, HarperCollins, New York.
- Cwik, AJ 1995, 'Active imagination: synthesis in analysis', in M Stein (ed.), *Jungian Analysis*, 2nd edn, Open Court, Chicago, pp.137-169.
- Dallet, J 1984, 'Active imagination in practice', in M Stein (ed.), *Jungian Analysis*, Shambhala, Boulder, CO, pp.173-191.
- Davidson, RJ 2006, 'Emotions from the perspective of Western biobehavioural science', in A Harrington & A Zajonc (eds), *The Dalai Lama at MIT*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, pp.141-150.
- Daw, K 2004, *Acting: Thought into Action*, Heinemann, Portsmouth, NJ.
- de Certeau, M 1988, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, University of California Press, Berkeley, CA.
- Deleuze, G 1988a, *Foucault*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.
- Deleuze, G 1988b, *Bergsonism*, Zone Books, New York.
- Deleuze, G 1995, *Negotiations: 1972-1990*, Columbia University Press, New York.

- Deleuze, G & Guattari, F 1993, *The Deleuze Reader*, Columbia University Press, New York.
- Deleuze, G & Guattari, F 1994, *What is Philosophy?* Verso, London.
- Deleuze, G & Guattari, F 2004, *A Thousand Plateaus*, Continuum, New York.
- Denzin, NK 1997, *Interpretive Ethnography: Ethnographic Practices for the 21st Century*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Denzin NK & Lincoln, YS (eds) 2002, *The Qualitative Inquiry Reader*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Derrida, J 1985, 'Des Tours de Babel', in JF Graham (ed.), *Difference in Translation*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY.
- Donkor, D 2007, 'Performance, ethnography and the radical intervention of Dwight Conquergood', *Cultural Studies*, vol.21, no.6, pp.821-825.
- Duffy, J 1995, 'Reactions of two Byzantine intellectuals to the theory and practice of magic: Michael Psellos and Michael Italikos', in H Maguire (ed.), *Byzantine Magic*, Dumbarton Oaks, Washington DC, pp.83-98.
- Eastmond, A & James, L (eds) 2003, *Icon and Word: The Power of Images in Byzantium*, Ashgate, Aldershot, UK.
- Eco, U 2001, *Experiences in Translation*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto.
- Eliot, TS 1944, *Four Quartets*, Faber&Faber, London.
- Emerson, RW 2003, 'Fate', in RW Emerson, *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson, vol.vi*, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, pp.1-27.
- Forster, EM 2005, *Aspects of the Novel*, Penguin Classics, London.
- Gallbach, MR 2006, *Learning from Dreams*, Daimon Verlag, Einsiedeln, CH.
- Gambling, A 1986, 'The drover's de facto', in S Johnson & M Roberts (eds), *Latitudes: New Writing from the North*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia.
- Gambling, A 2011a, *The Taste of Translation: A Triptych*, unpublished manuscript.
- Gambling, A 2011b, *Reflective Journal 2008-2011*, unpublished manuscript.
- Gray, RT 2009, 'Sebald's segues: performing narrative contingency in *The Rings of Saturn*', *The Germanic Review*, vol.84, no.1, pp.26-59.
- Hamill, S (ed.) 1999, *The Essential Basho*, Shambhala, Boston.
- Haseman, B 2007a, 'Tightrope writing: creative writing programs in the RQF environment', *Text*, vol.11, no.1, viewed 30 May 2009, <<http://www.textjournal.com.au/april07/haseman.htm>>.

- Haseman, B 2007b, 'Rupture and recognition: identifying the performative research paradigm', in E Barrett & B Bolt (eds), *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry*, IB Tauris, London, pp.147-157.
- Helminski, K 2000, *The Knowing Heart: A Sufi Path of Transformation*, Shambhala, Boston.
- Heron, J & Reason, P 2008, 'Extending epistemology within a co-operative inquiry', in P Reason & H Bradbury (eds), *The Sage Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice*, 2nd edn, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, pp.366-380.
- Hirsch, E 2002, *The Demon and the Angel: Searching for the Source of Artistic Inspiration*, Harcourt, New York.
- Hoeller, S 1989, *Jung and the Lost Gospels*, Quest Books, Wheaton, IL.
- Hoerni, U 2009, 'Preface', in S Shamdasani (ed.), *The Red Book: Liber Novus*, WW Norton & Co, New York, pp.viii-ix.
- Holy Bible* [n.d.], 16th C, King James Version, The University Press, Oxford.
- Hooks, B 2000, *All About Love: New Visions*, The Women's Press, London.
- Huskinson, L (ed.) 2008, *Dreaming the Myth Onwards: New Directions in Jungian Therapy and Thought*, Routledge, London.
- Huxley, A 2009, *The Perennial Philosophy*, HarperCollins, New York.
- Irigaray, L 2002, *The Way of Love*, Continuum, London.
- Ison, R 2008, 'Systems thinking and practice for action research', in P Reason & H Bradbury (eds), *The Sage Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice*, 2nd edn, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, pp.139-158.
- Jaffé, A 1983, *The Myth of Meaning in the Works of CG Jung*, Daimon Verlag, Zurich.
- Jaffé, A 1989, *Was CG Jung a Mystic? And Other Essays*, Daimon Verlag, Einsiedeln, CH.
- Johnson, S & Roberts, M (eds) 1986, *Latitudes: New Writing from the North*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia.
- Jung, CG 1995, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, Fontana Press, London.
- Kerouac, J 2008, *Wake Up: A Life of the Buddha*, Viking, New York.
- Krishnamurti, J 2006, *Inward Revolution*, Shambhala, Boston.
- Kristeva, J 1991, *Strangers to Ourselves*, Columbia University Press, New York.
- Kundera, M 1988, *The Art of the Novel*, Faber&Faber, London.

- Kyburz, M, Peck, J & Shamdasani, S 2009, 'Translators' note', in S Shamdasani (ed.), *The Red Book: Liber Novus*, WW Norton & Co, New York, pp.222-224.
- Lao Tzu 2008, *Tao Te Ching*, Tarcher Cornerstone, New York.
- Lorca, FG 1998, *In Search of Duende*, New Directions, New York.
- Lovelock, J 2000, *The Ages of Gaia: A Biography of our Living Earth*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Macquarie Dictionary & Thesaurus*, 3rd edn (revised) 2001, Macquarie University Press, Sydney.
- Madison, DS 2007, 'Co-performative witnessing', *Cultural Studies*, vol.21, no.6, pp.826-831.
- Maritain, J 2007, *Bergsonian Philosophy and Thomism*, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, IN.
- Massumi, B 2004, 'Translator's foreword: pleasures of philosophy', in G Deleuze & F Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, Continuum, New York, pp.ix-xx.
- Mathews, TF 2006, 'Icons and the religious experience', in ST Brooks (ed.), *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557), Perspectives on Late Byzantine Art and Culture*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CO, pp.2-19.
- Mattoon, MA 2006, 'Dreams', in RK Papadopoulos (ed.), *The Handbook of Jungian Psychology: Theory, Practice and Applications*, Routledge, London, pp.244-259.
- Mertus, J, Tesanovic, J, Metikos, H & Boric, R (eds) 1997, *The Suitcase: Refugee Voices from Bosnia and Croatia*, University of California Press, Berkeley, CA.
- Nancy, J-L 1996, 'The Deleuzian fold of thought', in P Patton (ed.), *Deleuze: A Critical Reader*, Blackwell, Oxford, pp.107-113.
- Nimkulrat, N 2007, 'The role of documentation in practice-led research', *Journal of Research Practice*, vol.3, no.1, pp.1-8.
- O'Sullivan, S 2008, 'The production of the new and the care of the self', in S O'Sullivan & S Zepke, *Deleuze, Guattari and the Production of the New*, Continuum, New York, pp.91-103.
- O'Sullivan, S & Zepke, S 2008, *Deleuze, Guattari and the Production of the New*, Continuum, New York.
- Oates, JC 2003, *The Faith of the Writer*, Ecco, New York.
- Olney, J 1999, *Memory and Narrative: The Weave of Life-Writing*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

- Parris, JM 2008, 'The mandala as a visual "third space" for work with trauma survivors: an approach to data collection', *Creative Approaches to Research*, vol.1, no.2, pp.71-86.
- Peck, MS 1978, *The Road Less Travelled*, Rider, London.
- Pentcheva, BV 2007, 'Epigrams on icons', in L James (ed.), *Art and Text in Byzantine Culture*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp.120-138.
- Poole, KR 2007, 'In search of paradise: time and eternity in Alfonso X's cantigas 103', *eHumanista: Journal of Iberian Studies*, vol.9, pp.110-128, viewed 30 May 2009, <http://www.ehumanista.ucsb.edu/volumes/volume_09/Articles/4%20Kevin%20R%20Poole%20Article.pdf>.
- Reason, P & Bradbury, H (eds) 2008, *The Sage Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice*, 2nd edn, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Richardson, L 1994, 'Writing: a method of inquiry', in MK Denzin & YS Lincoln (eds), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, pp.516-529.
- Salverson, J 1996, 'Performing emergency: witnessing, popular theatre, and the lie of the literal', *Theatre Topics*, vol.6, no.2, pp.181-191.
- Sayer, M 2008, 'The Drivers' Wives', *Southerly*, vol.68, no.2, pp.193-209.
- Schacter, DL 1996, *Searching for Memory: the Brain, the Mind and the Past*, Basic Books, New York.
- Schön, D 1983, *The Reflective Practitioner*, Basic Books, New York.
- Schulz, J 2006, 'Pointing the way to discovery: using a creative writing practice in qualitative research', *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*, vol.37, no.2, pp.217-240.
- Schwartz, LS (ed.) 2007, *The Emergence of Memory: Conversations with WG Sebald*, Seven Stories Press, New York.
- Sebald, W 1998, *The Rings of Saturn*, Vintage, London.
- Selimovic, M 1996, *Death and the Dervish*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, IL.
- Sermijin, J, Devlieger, P & Loots, G 2008, 'The narrative construction of the self: selfhood as a rhizomatic story', *Qualitative Inquiry*, vol.14, no.4, pp.632-650.
- Shamdasani, S (ed.) 2009, *The Red Book: Liber Novus*, WW Norton & Co, New York.
- Slattery, DP 2008, 'Oedipus at Colonus: pilgrimage from blight to blessedness', in DP Slattery & G Slater (eds), *Varieties of Mythic Experience: Essays on Religion, Psyche and Culture*, Daimon Verlag, Einsiedeln, CH, pp.161-188.

- Slattery, DP & Slater, G (eds) 2008, *Varieties of Mythic Experience: Essays on Religion, Psyche and Culture*, Daimon Verlag, Einsiedeln, CH.
- Sonenberg, J 2003, *Dreamwork for Actors*, Routledge, New York.
- Spearing, AC (ed.) 2001, *The Cloud of Unknowing and Other Works*, Penguin, London.
- Springgay, S, Irwin, RL & Wilson Kind, S 2005, 'A/r/tography as living inquiry through art and text', *Qualitative Inquiry*, vol.11, no.6, pp.897-912.
- Spry, T 2001, 'Performing autoethnography: an embodied methodological praxis', *Qualitative Inquiry*, vol.7, no.6, pp.706-732.
- St. Pierre, EA 1997, 'Circling the text: nomadic writing practices', *Qualitative Inquiry*, vol.3, no.4, pp.403-418.
- Stanislavsky, KS 2004, *An Actor's Handbook*, Routledge, New York.
- Stivale, CJ 1998, *The Two-Fold Thought of Deleuze and Guattari: Intersections and Animations*, Guilford Press, New York.
- Ten Eyck, B 2002, *Dramacoach 1.0 [CD]*, In Public Art Consultants, Melbourne.
- Underhill, E 1995, *Mysticism*, Bracken Books, London.
- Vincs, K 2007, 'Rhizome/Myzone: a case study in studio-based dance research', in E Barrett & B Bolt (eds), *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry*, IB Tauris, London, pp.99-112.
- Watson, N & Jenkins, J (eds) 2006, *The Writings of Julian of Norwich: A Vision Showed to a Devout Woman and A Revelation of Love*, Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park, PA.
- Webb, R 1999, 'The aesthetics of sacred space: narrative, metaphor, and motion in "ekphraseis" of church buildings', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, vol.53, pp.59-74.
- West, C 1997, 'Foreword', in J Mertus, J Tesanovic, H Metikos & R Boric (eds), *The Suitcase: Refugee Voices from Bosnia and Croatia*, University of California Press, Berkeley, CA, pp.xv-xvi.
- Whitmont, EC & Perera, SB 1989, *Dreams, a Portal to the Source*. Routledge, London.
- Wick, O 2001, 'Mark Rothko, "a consummated experience between picture and onlooker"', in O Wick (ed.), *Mark Rothko*, Fondation Beyeler/Hajte Cantz Verlag, Ostfildern-Ruit, DE, pp.22-35.
- Wild, WH, Hooton, JW & Andrews, BG (eds) 1994, *The Oxford Companion to Australian Literature*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Woolf, V 1985, *Moments of Being*, Harcourt, New York.

Yoffee, N (ed.) 2007, *Negotiating the Past in the Past: Identity, Memory and Landscape in Archaeological Research*, University of Arizona Press, Tucson, AZ.

Yu, JE, Moon HK & Kim, HC 2008, 'Proposing rhizomatic systems methodology: extending Churchman's pragmatism to post-structuralism', *Systems Research and Behavioural Science*, vol.25, no.2, pp. 291-303.

Zourabichvili, F 1996, 'Six notes on the percept', in P Patton (ed.), *Deleuze: A Critical Reader*, Blackwell, Oxford, pp.188-216.

Appendix 1: The Taste of Translation: glossary, citations and references

Panel 1: Laleima's Story

Glossary

al-Andalus	The Arabic name (meaning land of the Vandals, the Goths) for present-day Andalusia, Spain's southern province.
Alcazar	Fortress or castle.
Albaicin	Medieval Moorish quarter in Granada, beginning on the riverbank below the Sabika hill on which the Alhambra stands, its labyrinthine alleys rising up the hillside opposite.
Alhambra	Present-day Spanish name for the Nasrid palace above the city.
Allah	Arabic name for God.
Almori	A herb and spice paste to flavour dishes.
Astrolabe	Astronomical instrument used for locating and predicting the location of sun, moon, planets and stars for navigation, surveying and time-keeping.
Acquiea Real	Canal coursing the Alhambra medina, from which all water is sourced for its fountains and pools.
Baraka	Blessings.
Barca	Salon in Alhambra used for meals.
Black Death	One of the deadliest pandemics in human history, peaking in Europe between 1348 and 1350.
Caliph	King, sultan – used interchangeably in the text.
Cantigas	Sung verses, in the troubadour tradition.
Concubines	Women of the harem – slaves or voluntary who were not officially married to the sultan.
Convivencia	Spanish word for peaceable relations between cultures.
Dais	Floor-level lectern at which one sits on a cushion to write.
Dhikr	Remembrance of God – a meditative chant used by Sufis.
Dinar	Gold coin dating back to the earliest days of Islam.
Diwan	A collection of poetry.
Djinn	Spirits.
Eunuch	Castrated male slave in the service of the harem.

Fass	Bowl.
Feija	Tribe of the central Anti-Atlas mountains in Morocco.
Ferrane	Public bakery.
Fqih	Spiritual healer, medicine man of the tribe.
Gazelle	Arabic word for deer – hence its use even in a Spanish geographic context.
Generalife	Summer palace and country estate of Nasrids – across the gorge from the Alhambra, it bordered the forests of the royal hunting grounds.
Ghazal	A poetic verse in couplet form.
Hadith	Sayings of the Prophet – narrations arising from his words and deeds.
Haik	Over-wrap or cloak, decorated with protective symbols.
Hajj	Pilgrimage to Mecca.
Hamмам	Bath-house – including steam rooms.
Harem	Meaning forbidden or sacred, it refers to the women’s household, restricted to men.
Infidel	One who does not believe in religion – in the context of this text, one who does not share the religion of the other’s Faith.
Jalousie	Window design which includes wooden shutters – in Moorish lands these were patterned with stars or geometric shapes.
Khubz	Arabic flat bread.
Lute	Medieval form of guitar.
Maghreb	Literally the land where the sun sets behind the sea – now centred around present-day Morocco.
Madinat al-Hamra	The red palace, seat of the Nasrid dynasty of the kingdom of Granada.
Madrasa	Islamic educational institution, school.
Medina	Inner-city, old town.
Merinid	Dynastic Berber rulers of the Maghreb (Morocco) from the mid-13 th century until the 15 th century.
Mezquita	Spanish word for mosque.
Mexuar	Hall which hosts the Council of Justice.

Mirador	Literally scenic look-out in Spanish – in this case referring to the palace rooms/turrets which offered views over the kingdom and gardens.
Mozarab	A non-Muslim who has grown up in a Muslim culture.
Nasrid	Dynastic rulers of the kingdom of Granada from 1232 to 1492, the last Moorish dynasty in Spain.
Patio	Enclosed courtyard within the palace complex, usually with fountain or pool at its centre.
Peoples of the Book	All those who share the monotheistic faith in one God, descended from the Hebrew tradition – therefore, Jews, Christians and Muslims. Described as such in the Holy Qur'an.
Prophet	Muhammad, who transcribed the Holy Qur'an in the 7 th century.
Pyxide	Small jewellery box, usually with domed lid.
Qasida	A form of poetry from pre-Islamic Arabia, usually more than fifty lines in length, and panegyric in nature – praising a king or his works.
Ragusa	Present-day Dubrovnik, Croatia.
Rawda	Garden, also cemetery – with their cypresses and myrtle groves, a cemetery garden is a popular place for picnics and recitals.
Royal Hayr	Nasrid hunting park in hills above Generalife.
Sabika	Ridge above Granada on which the Alhambra is built.
Scheherazade	The narrator of the <i>Tales of the Arabian Nights</i> (also known as <i>The Thousand and One Nights</i>).
Scimitar	Sword with a curved blade.
Simorgh	Great spirit bird from Attar's Conference of the Birds.
Stela	Tombstone.
Sufism	Inner, esoteric, mystical branch of Islam – a non-dogmatic tradition of devotion universal in nature.
Sultan	King, caliph – used interchangeably in the text.
Suq	Market or bazaar.
Surah	Chapter of the Holy Qur'an.
Tagine	Moorish dish named after the heavy clay pot in which it is oven-cooked and served – the pot has a conical lid.

Tannur	Cylindrical clay oven used in cooking and baking.
Teteria	Tea salon.
Tiraz	Embroidery, usually with a geometric patterning of motifs or Qur'anic inscriptions involved, replicating the mosaic tilework of Moorish design.
Tuareg	Berber tribesmen of the western Sahara.
Vega	Wide plain of rolling grasslands, meadows.
Velebit	Mountain range separating Croatia's Dalmatian coast from the interior.
Zambra	Form of dance, usually bare-foot with finger cymbals – now evolved into a flamenco style.
Zina	Adultery, crime punishable by stoning.

Citations and References

Central to this text has been the quoting of verses from the pens of masters. In addition to citations from the Holy Qur'an and the Holy Bible, the following publications were used as source material for the poetry, Sufi and Chinese Taoist wisdoms contained herein:

Attar (1120?-1200?):

Attar, F U-D 1984, *The Conference of the Birds*, Penguin Classics, London.

Avery, K & Alizadeh, A (eds.) 2007, *Fifty Poems of Attar*, re.press, Melbourne.

Hafiz (1320-1389):

Hafiz 2006, *I Heard God Laughing*, Penguin, London.

Ibn Arabi (1165-1240):

Ibn Arabi 2001, *Contemplation of the Holy Mysteries*, Anqa Publishing, Oxford.

Sells, MA 2000, *Stations of Desire: Love Elegies from Ibn Arabi and New Poems*, Ibis Editions, Jerusalem.

Rabi'a (717-801):

Helminski, CA (ed.) 2003, *Women of Sufism: a Hidden Treasure*, Shambhala, Boston.

Rumi (1207-1273):

Barks, C (ed.) 2003, *Rumi: The Book of Love*, Harper One, New York.

Helminski, CA (ed.) 2003, *Women of Sufism: a Hidden Treasure*, Shambhala, Boston.

Helminski, K (ed.) 2008, *The Pocket Rumi*. Shambhala, Boston.

Lao Tzu (circa 500BC):

Tzu, L 2008, *Tao Te Ching*, Tarcher Cornerstone, New York.

Poems by other writers were sourced from the following texts:

Alfonso X 13th C, 'Song of the Monk', in Kulp-Hill, K (ed.) 2000, *Songs of Holy Mary of Alfonso X, the Wise: a translation of the Cantigas de Santa Maria*, Arizona Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Tempe, AZ.

Fitzgerald, EJ (ed.) 1996, *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, Axiom Publishing, Adelaide.

Franzen, C (ed.) 1989, *Poems of Arab Andalusia*, City Lights Books, San Francisco.

Gorton, TJ (ed.) 2007, *Andalus: Moorish Songs of Love and Wine*, Eland, London.

Metioui, O 2000, *Misticismo: Musica Sufi Andalusi* [CD], Pneuma PN200, Madrid.

Núñez, JA (ed.) 2007, *The Alhambra and Granada in Focus*, Ediciones Edilux, Granada.

Paniagua, E 2000, *Poemas de la Alhambra* [CD], Pneuma PN203, Madrid.

Paniagua, E 2003, *Wallada, Ibn Zaydun: una Historia de Amor y Poesia* [CD], Pneuma PN500, Madrid.

Wimmer, T 1995, *Sephardic Romances* [CD], Naxos LC5537, Vienna.

Meanwhile, many references assisted in my creation of this work of imagination. Although completely imaginative in its conception, storyline, and the voicing of its different characters, the action occurs against a backdrop of historical fact.

For example, while the main protagonists, Laleima and Sébastien, are imagined, they are set into the drama of the Nasrid and Castilian courts of the 14th century, as documented by historical texts.

The following reference materials therefore provided background information on the life and times of historical figures such as Muhammad V, his courtiers Ibn al-Khatib and Ibn Zamrak, as well as the historiographer Ibn Khaldun, together with events recorded about the Nasrid court at that time. This

included consulting information about the works of scientists and philosophers they themselves quoted, such as Averroes and Maimonides, as well as the poetry of masters such as Ibn Arabi, Hafiz, Rabi'a and Rumi. Yet, as with many historical documents from the medieval period, embellished detail is lacking – a name here, a date there, an anecdote told, a rumour suggested. This latter refers to the claim that al-Khatib died by the hand of Zamrak in his prison cell in Fez, amongst others.

It is important to note that my research was limited to English language publications in the main – works in Arabic and Spanish are undoubtedly more extensive than the volumes cited herein, nevertheless many of the works I consulted included translations from their own source texts – for example, the verse written by al-Khatib while he awaited trial in Fez.

However, as a work of fiction, my intent was never to replicate historical accuracy, simply to provide context relevant to a fictional story which demanded to be told – my desire, throughout, has been to weave into the weft of history, voices which could give form to the whole. The context provided by the following readings, therefore, was as important to my imagining of the 'whys' and 'wherefores' of penned laments or court intrigues as for a reader's comprehension in entering this world.

- Ansari, S 1996, 'The Islamic World in the Era of Western Domination: 1800 to the Present', in Robinson, F (ed.), *The Cambridge Illustrated History of the Islamic World*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp.90-121.
- Attar, F U-D 1984, *The Conference of the Birds*, Penguin Classics, London.
- Avery, K & Alizadeh, A (eds.) 2007, *Fifty Poems of Attar*, re.press, Melbourne.
- Baker, CF 2007, *Qur'an Manuscripts*, The British Library, London.
- Bartlett, R 1994, *The Making of Europe*, Penguin, London.
- Benjamin, W 2007, *Illuminations*, Schocken Books, New York.
- Bilgin, Y 1997, *Le Concert de Nanterre* [CD], Media7 LC7861, Paris.
- Burckhardt, T 2001, *Mystical Astrology According to Ibn 'Arabi*, Fons Vitae, Louisville, KY.
- Burton, R 1927, *The Kasidah of Haji Abdu El-Yezdi*, Elkin Mathews & Marrot, London.
- Chaudhuri, KN 1996, 'The Economy in Muslim Societies', in Robinson, F (ed.), *The Cambridge Illustrated History of the Islamic World*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp.124-163.
- Crone, P 1996, 'The Rise of Islam in the World', in Robinson, F (ed.), *The Cambridge Illustrated History of the Islamic World*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp.2-31.

- de la Cuesta, IF & Lara, F 1993, *Canto Gregoriano* [CD], EMI Odeon CMB5652172, Madrid.
- Delgado, L. 2000, *El Hechizo de Babilonia* [CD], Nubenegra LC12703, Madrid.
- Dennis, L & L 1992, *Living in Morocco: Design from Casablanca to Marrakesh*, Thames & Hudson, London.
- Fitzgerald, EJ (ed.) 1996, *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, Axiom Publishing, Adelaide.
- Fletcher, R 1992, *Moorish Spain*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London.
- Franzen, C (ed.) 1989, *Poems of Arab Andalusia*, City Lights Books, San Francisco.
- Ghosh, A 1984, *In an Antique Land*, Granta Books, London.
- Goethe, JW von 1914, *West-Eastern Divan*, JM Dent & Sons, London.
- Gorton, TJ (ed.) 2007, *Andalus: Moorish Songs of Love and Wine*, Eland, London.
- Haddawy, H (ed.) 1990, *The Arabian Nights: based on the text of the 14th century manuscript edited by Muhsin Mahdi*, W.W. Norton & Co, New York.
- Haeri, SF 2004, *The Thoughtful Guide to Sufism*, O Books, Winchester, UK.
- Hafiz 2006, *I Heard God Laughing*, Penguin, London.
- Hambly, GRC (ed.) 1998, *Women in the Medieval Islamic World*, Macmillan, London.
- Harrison, RP 2008, *Gardens: An Essay on the Human Condition*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Helminski, CA (ed.) 2003, *Women of Sufism: a Hidden Treasure*, Shambhala, Boston.
- Helminski, K (ed.) 2008, *The Pocket Rumi*, Shambhala, Boston.
- Hintzen-Bohlen, B 1999, *Andalusien: Kunst & Architektur*, Könemann, Köln.
- Hofmann, F (ed.) 1998, *Andalusische Ansichten*, Winfried Jenior, Kassel, DE.
- Irving, W 1994, *Tales of the Alhambra*. Granada, Ediciones Miguel Sanchez, Spain.
- Irwin, R 1996, 'The Emergence of the Islamic World System 1000-1500', in Robinson, F (ed.), *The Cambridge Illustrated History of the Islamic World*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp.32-61.
- Irwin, R 2004, *The Alhambra*, Profile Books, London.
- Khair, T, Edwards, J, Leer, M & Ziadeh, H (eds.) 2006, *Other Routes: 1500 Years of African and Asian Travel Writing*, Signal Books, Oxford.
- Korolnik, A & M 2002, *The Colour of Henna: Painted Textiles from Southern Morocco*, Arnoldsche Verlag, Stuttgart, DE.
- Lorca, FG 1986, *Diwan des Tamarit – Diván del Tamarit*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main.
- Lowney, C 2005, *A Vanished World: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Medieval Spain*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Maalouf, A 1984, *The Crusades Through Arab Eyes*, Al Saqi Books, London.

- Mackintosh-Smith, T 2002, *Travels with a Tangerine: a Journey in the Footnotes of Ibn Battutah*, Picador, London.
- Maurières, A & Ossart, E 2001, *Orientalische Gärten – Inspirationen für die Gestaltung*, Christian Verlag, Munich.
- Menocal, MR 2002, *The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews, and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain*, Little, Brown & Co, New York.
- Metioui, O 2000, *Misticismo: Musica Sufi Andalusi* [CD], Pneuma PN200, Madrid.
- Moore, T 2004, *Spanish Steps*, Jonathan Cape, London.
- Musallam, B 1996, 'The Ordering of Muslim Societies', in Robinson, F (ed.), *The Cambridge Illustrated History of the Islamic World*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp.164-207.
- Museum with No Frontiers 2002, *Andalusian Morocco: a Discovery in Living Art*, Electa, Madrid.
- Negus, G 2003, *The World from Islam*, Harper Collins, Sydney.
- Núñez, JA (ed.) 2007, *The Alhambra and Granada in Focus*, Ediciones Edilux, Granada.
- O'Shea, S 2006, *Sea of Faith: Islam and Christianity in the Medieval Mediterranean World*, Profile Books, London.
- Paniagua, E 2000, *Poemas de la Alhambra* [CD], Pneuma PN203, Madrid.
- Paniagua, E 2003, *Wallada, Ibn Zaydun: una Historia de Amor y Poesia* [CD], Pneuma PN500, Madrid.
- Parkinson, S & Jackson, D 2006, 'Collection, Composition, and Compilation in the Cantigas de Santa Maria', in *Portuguese Studies*, Vol.22, No.2, Modern Humanities Research Association, London, pp.159-172.
- Poole, KR 2007, 'In Search of Paradise: Time and Eternity in Alfonso X's Cantigas 103', in *eHumanista: Journal of Iberian Studies*, Vol.9, University of California Press, Santa Barbara, CA, pp.110-128.
- Radio Tarifa 1995, *Rumba Argelina* [CD], BMG LC0116, Madrid.
- Ramzy, H & el Tachuela, R 2003, *Flamenco Arabe* [CD], ARC Music Productions LC05111, West Sussex, UK.
- Richter, J & Stürtz, A 2005, *Andalusien*, Verlagshaus Würzburg, Würzburg, DE.
- Robinson, F (ed.) 1996, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of the Islamic World*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Robinson, F 1996, 'Knowledge, its Transmission, and the Making of Muslim Societies', in Robinson, F (ed.), *The Cambridge Illustrated History of the Islamic World*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp.208-249.
- Schimmel, A 1997, *My Soul is a Woman: the Feminine in Islam*, Continuum, New York.
- Schneider, S 2000, *Wonnestunden aus 1001 Nacht: Gesundheit und Wohlbefinden aus dem Orient*, Mosaik Verlag, Munich.
- Seeling, C & Korda, C 2002, *Moroccan Gardens*, Feierabend Verlag, Berlin.

- Seguin-Tsouli, M, Rauzier, MP & Amiard, H 2001, *Zu Gast in Marokko*, Christian Verlag, Munich.
- Stewart, D 1975, *Alhambra*, Verlag Kunstkreis, Luzern, CH.
- Stone, B (ed.) 1971, *The Owl and the Nightingale; Cleanness; St Erkenwald*, Penguin Classics, London.
- Vernoit, S 1996, 'Artistic Expressions of Muslim Societies', in Robinson, F (ed.), *The Cambridge Illustrated History of the Islamic World*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp.250-290.
- Vílchez, CV 2004, *Arab Baths*, Los Libros de la Estrella, Granada.
- Wimmer, T 1995, *Sephardic Romances* [CD], Naxos LC5537, Vienna.
- Zrihan, E 1998, *Ashkelon – Moroccan Mawal* [CD], Piranha Musik LC7717, Berlin.

Panel 2: Cantigas de Santa Maria

Glossary

Agia Aikaterini	Saint Catherine
Agios Antonios	Saint Anthony
Agios Georgios	Saint George
Anchorite	One who withdraws or retreats
Camino	Pilgrim's way
Candia	Present-day Crete – in medieval times, the capital Heraklion was also referred to as Candia
Cantiga	Song – verse sung in the troubadour tradition
Censer	Holder for incense used in religious ceremony
Cruciform	Architecturally like a cross
Egg tempera	Paint made by mixing powdered pigment with egg yolk and vinegar
Eleousa	Theotokos icon in tender mercy style
Gesso	Primed base of marble dust, water and hide glue
Glykophilousa	Theotokos icon in sweet-kissing style
Gnosis	Knowledge of a spiritual or mystical nature
Hesychast	A hermit who practices inner prayer
Iconostasis	Icon screen between nave and sanctuary in church
Katholikon	Principal church of a monastery
Kardiotissa	Theotokos icon 'of the heart'
Kiria	Our Lady, the Virgin Mary

Koliva	Boiled wheat sweetened with honey and raisins, traditionally eaten at an Orthodox funeral
Madinat	Palace
Makaria	A fish meal traditionally eaten at a memorial service
Maphorion	Holy veil (mantle) of the Virgin
Mirador	Scenic lookout
Narthex	Entrance portico of church
Nave	Central hall of church
Panagia	The All-Holy, one of the titles of the Virgin Mary
Postulant	A candidate for admission into a holy order
Ragusa	Present-day Dubrovnik, Croatia
Rocco al Mare	Venetian fortress of Candia
Romiti	Roma, Gypsies
Santa Maria	Saint Mary, mother of God
Santiago	Saint James, whose relics are in Santiago de Compostela, destination of the Camino
Theotokos	mother of God
Triptych	Three-panel painting, usually hinged, used in Christian altarpieces since at least the Middle Ages
Vega	Wide plain of rolling grasslands, meadows

Citations and References

Lines from the following works are quoted in the text:

Alfonso X 13th C, 'Song of Discomfort', in Kulp-Hill, K (ed.) 2000, *Songs of Holy Mary of Alfonso X, the Wise: a translation of the Cantigas de Santa Maria*, Arizona Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Tempe, AZ.

Alfonso X 13th C, 'Song of the Monk', in Kulp-Hill, K (ed.) 2000, *Songs of Holy Mary of Alfonso X, the Wise: a translation of the Cantigas de Santa Maria*, Arizona Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Tempe, AZ.

Anon 2rd C, 'The Gospel According to Thomas', in Layton, B (ed.) 1987, *The Gnostic Scriptures*, SCM Press Ltd, London.

Anon 14th C, 'The Cloud of Unknowing', in Spearing, AC (ed.) 2001, *The Cloud of Unknowing and Other Works*, Penguin, London.

Holy Bible 16th C, King James Version, The University Press, Oxford.

Holy Qur'an 1974, Quran Publications, Rabwah.

- Lorca, FG 1986, *Diwan des Tamarit – Diván del Tamarit*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main.
- Machado, A 1982, *Antonio Machado: Selected Poems*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Pai Gomez Charinho 13th C, 'Song about the Pain of Love and Sea', in *Cantigas D'Amor: Songs of Love*, viewed 30 March 2010, <<http://portugal.poetryinternationalweb.org>>.
- Rilke, R.M 1995, *The Book of Hours*, University of Salzburg Press, Salzburg.
- Roi Fernandez 13th C, 'Song Against The Sea', in *Cantigas D'Amor: Songs of Love*, viewed 30 March 2010, <<http://portugal.poetryinternationalweb.org>>.
- St John of Sinai 6th C, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, viewed 30 March 2010, <<http://www.serfes.org/orthodox/divine.htm>>.

And with thanks to the following authors and their texts for contributing to my understanding in the development of this work of imagination:

- Alexakis, A 2001, 'Was There Life beyond the Life Beyond? Byzantine Ideas on Reincarnation and Final Restoration', in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, No. 55, Dumbarton Oaks, Washington DC, pp.155-177.
- Brooks, ST (ed.) 2006, *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557): Perspectives on Late Byzantine Art and Culture*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CO.
- Carr, AW 2002, 'Icons and the Object of Pilgrimage in Middle Byzantine Constantinople', in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, No. 56, Dumbarton Oaks, Washington DC, pp.75-92.
- Clucas, L (ed.) 1988, *The Byzantine Legacy in Eastern Europe*, Columbia University Press, New York.
- Constantinides, CN 2001, 'Byzantine Gardens and Horticulture in Late Byzantine Period', in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, No. 55, Dumbarton Oaks, Washington DC, pp.87-103.
- Cormack, R 2000, *Byzantine Art*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Crowe, DM 1994, *A History of the Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia*, St Martin's Press, New York.
- Dennis, GT 2001, 'Death in Byzantium', in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, No. 55, Dumbarton Oaks, Washington DC, pp.1-7.
- Donia, RJ & Fine, JA 1994, *Bosnia and Hercegovina: A Tradition Betrayed*, Columbia University Press, New York.
- Eastmond, A & James, L (eds.) 2003, *Icon and Word: The Power of Images in Byzantium*, Ashgate, Aldershot, UK.
- Fraser, A 1992, *The Gypsies*, Blackwell, Oxford.
- Gersetel, SEJ 2001, 'Art and Identity in the Medieval Morea', in Laiou, AE & Mottahedeh, RP (eds.), *The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantium and the Muslim World*, Dumbarton Oaks, Washington DC, pp.263-285.

- Hetherington, P 2001, *The Greek Islands: Guide to the Byzantine and Medieval Buildings and their Art*, Quiller Press, London.
- Hoeller, S 1989, *Jung and the Lost Gospels*, Quest Books, Wheaton, IL.
- James, L (ed.) 2007, *Art and Text in Byzantine Culture*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Kalokyris, K 1973, *The Byzantine Wall Paintings of Crete*, Red Dust, New York.
- King, KL 2003, *The Gospel of Mary of Magdala: Jesus and the First Woman Apostle*, Polbridge Press, Santa Rosa, CA.
- Maguire, H. (ed.) 1995, *Byzantine Magic*, Dumbarton Oaks, Washington DC.
- Maguire, H 2002, 'Paradise Withdrawn', in Littlewood, A, Maguire, H, Wolschke-Bulmahn, J (eds.), *Byzantine Garden Culture*, Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, DC, pp.23-35.
- Pagels, E 2003, *Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas*, Random House, New York.
- Poole, KR 2007, 'In Search of Paradise: Time and Eternity in Alfonso X's Cantigas 103', in *eHumanista: Journal of Iberian Studies*, Vol.9, University of California Press, Santa Barbara, CA, pp.110-128.
- Rakic, S 1998, *Icons of Bosnia-Herzegovina*, viewed 30 March 2010, <http://www.rastko.rs/rastko-bl/umetnost/likovne/srakic-ikone/srakic-ikone_bih_e.html>.
- Sevcenko, NP 1999, 'The Vita Icon and the Painter as Hagiographer', in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, No. 53, Dumbarton Oaks, Washington DC, pp.149-165.
- Spearing, AC (ed.) 2001, *The Cloud of Unknowing and Other Works*, Penguin, London.
- Talbot, A-M (ed.) 1996, *Holy Women of Byzantium: Ten Saints' Lives in Translation*, Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, DC.
- Talbot, A-M 2002, 'Byzantine Monastic Horticulture: The Textual Evidence', in Littlewood, A, Maguire, H, Wolschke-Bulmahn, J (eds.), *Byzantine Garden Culture*, Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, DC, pp.37-67.
- Talbot, A-M 2002, 'Pilgrimage to Healing Shrines: The Evidence of Miracle Accounts', in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, No. 56, Dumbarton Oaks, Washington DC, pp.153-173.
- Tong, D (ed.) 1998, *Gypsies: An Interdisciplinary Reader*, Garland, New York.
- Velkovska, E 2001, 'Funeral Rites according to Byzantine Liturgical Sources', in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, No. 55, Dumbarton Oaks, Washington DC, pp.22-51.
- Vikan, G 1982, *Byzantine Pilgrimage Art*, Dumbarton Oaks, Washington DC.
- Webb, R 1999, 'The Aesthetics of Sacred Space', in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, No. 53, Dumbarton Oaks, Washington DC, pp.59-74.
- Wortley, J 2001, 'Death, Judgement, Heaven and Hell', in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, No. 55, Dumbarton Oaks, Washington DC, pp.53-69.
- Zenith, R 2004, *An Unsung Literature: Galician-Portuguese Troubadour Poetry*, viewed 300310, <<http://portugal.poetryinternationalweb.org>>.

Panel 3: Kisha's Story

Citations and References

Lines from the following creative works are quoted in the text:

Britton, D (ed.) 1980, *A Haiku Journey: Basho's Narrow Road to a Far Province*, Kodansha International, Tokyo.

Dickinson, E 1924, 'Wild Nights', in *Completed Works*, viewed 30 March 2010, <<http://www.bartleby.com>>.

Eliot, TS 1944, *Four Quartets*, Faber&Faber, London.

Eliot, TS 1962, *The Waste Land and Other Poems*, Harvest, New York.

Frisch, M 1979, *Der Mensch erscheint im Holozän*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main.

Hesse, H 1958, *Extract from a Letter to a Persian Reader*, viewed 30 March 2010, <<http://www.hessemontagnola.ch>>.

Hesse, H 1969, *Demian*, Grafton Books, London.

Hesse, H 1973, *Klingsor's Last Summer*, Picador, London.

Hesse, H 2002, 'Stufen', in *Die Gedichte*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main.

Lawrence, DH 1933, 'Bavarian Gentians', in *Last Poems*, Viking Press, London.

Lorca, FG 1998, *In Search of Duende*, New Directions, New York.

Ovid 1st C, 'The Story of Ceyx and Alcyone', in *Metamorphoses XI*, viewed 30 March 2010, <<http://www.classics.mit.edu>>.

Rilke, R.M 1995, *The Book of Hours*, University of Salzburg Press, Salzburg.

Roi Fernandez 13th C, 'Song Against The Sea', in *Cantigas D'Amor: Songs of Love*, viewed 30 March 2010, <<http://portugal.poetryinternationalweb.org>>.

Selimovic, M 1996, *Death and the Dervish*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, IL.

Ueda, M 1982, *Matsuo Basho*, Kodansha International, Tokyo.

Whitman, W 1900, 'A Song of the Rolling Earth', in *Leaves of Grass*, viewed 30 March 2010, <<http://www.bartelby.com>>.

And with thanks to the following authors and their texts for contributing to my understanding in the development of this work of imagination:

Historical/Cultural References

Andric, I 1990, *The Development of Spiritual Life in Bosnia under the Influence of Turkish Rule*, Duke University Press, Durham, NC.

Cooper, P 2001, *Gypsy Magic*, Random House, London.

- Crowe, DM 1994, *A History of the Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia*, St Martin's Press, New York.
- Donia, RJ 2006, *Sarajevo: A Biography*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, MI.
- Donia, RJ & Fine, JA 1994, *Bosnia and Hercegovina: A Tradition Betrayed*, Columbia University Press, New York.
- Prstojevic, M 1993, *Sarajevo Survival Guide*, FAMA, Sarajevo.
- Fraser, A 1992, *The Gypsies*, Blackwell, Oxford.
- Glenny, M 1996, *The Fall of Yugoslavia*, 3rd edn, Penguin, London.
- Mahmutcehajic, R 2007, *On Love in the Muslim Tradition*, Fordham University Press, New York.
- Malcolm, N 1994, *Bosnia: A Short History*, Macmillan, London.
- Mertus, J, Tesanovic, J, Metikos, H & Boric, R (eds.) 1997, *The Suitcase: Refugee Voices from Bosnia and Croatia*, University of California Press, Berkeley, CA.
- Tong, D (ed.) 1998, *Gypsies: An Interdisciplinary Reader*, Garland, New York.
- Wachtel, AB 1998, *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation: Literature and Cultural Politics in Yugoslavia*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA.
- Wachtel, AB 2006, *Remaining Relevant after Communism: The Role of the Writer in Eastern Europe*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Wachtel, AB 2008, *The Balkans in World History*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Aesthetic Accounts

- Andric, I 1992, *Bosnian Chronicle*, Harvill Press, London.
- Andric, I 1995, *The Bridge over the Drina*, Harvill Press, London.
- Du Preez Bezdrob, AM 2004, *Sarajevo Roses: War Memoir of a Peacekeeper*, Oshun Books, Cape Town.
- Galloway, S 2008, *The Cellist of Sarajevo*, Atlantic, London.
- Goytisolo, J 2003, *State of Siege*, Serpent's Tail, London.
- Jergovic, M 2004, *Sarajevo Marlboro*, Archipelago Books, New York.
- Kadare, I 1997, *The Three-Arched Bridge*, Arcade, New York.
- Karahasan, D 2010, *Sarajevo: Exodus of a City*, Connectum, Sarajevo.
- Lowe, P 2005, *Bosnians*, Saqi Books, London.
- Mattingsley, C 1993, *No Gun for Asmir*, Puffin, Melbourne.
- Mattingsley, C 1995, *Asmir in Vienna*, Puffin, Melbourne.
- Mattingsley, C 1996, *Escape from Sarajevo*, Puffin, Melbourne.
- Mehmedinovic, S 1998, *Sarajevo Blues*, City Lights Books, San Francisco.
- Mostar Sevdah Reunion 2007, *Emina* [CD], buybook, Sarajevo.
- Najljepse 2000, *Sevdalinka 10* [CD], NP Music, Sarajevo.

Rahmanovic, AM 2010, *Black Soul*, Connectum, Sarajevo.

Selimovic, M 1996, *Death and the Dervish*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, IL.

Softic, E 1995, *Sarajevo Days, Sarajevo Nights*, Key Porter Books, Toronto.

Velickovic, N 2005, *Lodgers*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, IL.

Winterbottom, M (director) 1997, *Welcome to Sarajevo* [DVD], Miramax Warner Bros, USA.

Zbanic, J (director) 2006, *Grbavica* [DVD], Dogwoof Pictures, UK.

Appendix 2: Second-Person Text included in Panel One, Laleima's Story

When you were small, and a girl child at that, you could not come to your father in his throne room, the Hall of the Ambassadors as it was called, a place of celebration, public office, high officialdom.

But this is where they brought you this night. For in your father's grief, it was here that he had come. No courtiers, no prying eyes, at night only shadows and memory, where he could sit upon his throne, surrounded by Qur'anic inscriptions, surrounded by the Nasrid motto:

La ghalib ila Allah – There is no victor but God.

Yes. Before you were brought to him, after he had left her cold and bruised flesh, he wept and lamented the cry of his ancestor. No one could cheat mortality, not even his Beloved.

Now he weeps afresh when they say you kissed the lips of death, but holds you close and, soon enough, sleeps himself.

Moonlight streams in through the high latticed windows to dapple your faces in shades of rose. Your journey through the passage of night this night is fringed by stars, stars set into the ceiling of a high domed hall, seven heavens on the path to Paradise – the first made of emeralds, the second of red pearls, the third of rubies, the fourth of white silver, the fifth of gold, the sixth of white pearls and the seventh of brilliant light. Crowned by Paradise itself, in which are buried the roots of the tree of life to sustain the stars and galaxies, the all of an infinite universe.

You wake. It is dawn. Father's beard has tickled your cheek and brought you up and out of your dreams of life to the reality of life.

Dawn, and the sun rises, throws light into the hall, while in the dome, each of the heavens explodes in colour. The greens of the emerald heaven, the reds of the rubied, the clear light and gilt edges of the silver and gold. The sunlight grows more solid, insistent on entering. The room is alive with jewels amassed, mosaics splashed with shafts of joy. All shadows are banished, the dark of death sent skating.

All this you see as you wake from your dream – the colours, the sparkles, the twinkling stars, reflecting the glory of Allah's kingdom, right here where you are. You wriggle and tug at Father's beard, shake his shoulder in your excitement to bear witness, to share this new knowledge.

Look Papa! Till he wakens to your bubbling joy. Look now! Mama has arrived in Paradise. She is greeting us from the kingdom of Allah!

(Gambling 2011a, p.18-19)

Appendix 3: Report of Dreamwork in relation to Panel Three, Kisha's Story

Overnight Samir appeared very strongly in a dream. At the time of the dream I did not know it was him. I was asleep, in the dream state and then suddenly walking beside me was this man, tall, taller than any man I have known intimately before. He was brown, tanned, dark hair, brows, eyes, his teeth white. But he didn't smile with his teeth. Only his lips and his eyes. He was walking beside me, turned toward me, smiling down at me. He was dressed in a loose collared shirt. I couldn't help thinking how beautiful he was for an older man. The implication was that he was older in years than the dream-me at that time (but looking circa mid-30s).

He said we could walk, be together, but not touch till we got to the other side. We were in an Islamic setting. There was a mosque, I remember. He went in to pray and I waited outside. I should have had a chaperone, he said. But none appeared. There was an intimation that we shouldn't be together, that there were parts of himself which were kept separate to me. I didn't ask questions in the dream, it was just how it felt.

Then we crossed over to this 'other side'. It was suddenly like a London street. There were the red buses, it was noisy, all bustle. We were on a street and here it was OK to touch, to be together. He drew me to him, leant with his back against a wall and opened his shirt. Another shirt (or jumper) he placed over his head like a hood, or kind of shroud. It was to escape attention. Even though we were on the other side, he didn't want to be recognised. He opened his shirt, and his skin was brown, honey brown, and his chest hair short, not shaved but not curly or wiry, more like a soft down that I felt beneath my fingertips. That's how I knew he was tall, taller. The fact that I buried my face in his chest. I reached only to there. The top of my head up to his neck or beneath his chin at the most.

There was a ring. I can't remember when I saw it first. But it was a very strong image. A ring with a large stone on his little finger. A single stone like a diamond ring I have. But clearly not that ring. Just a sense that it looked similar. The ring was always present whenever I was with him. By this stage in the dream, I was starting to question things. Who was he, why a dream with this as the theme/motif, the ring etc? I began to become semi-wakeful, and in this half-conscious state, it hit me like a shock. This was Samir. Samir, the first time he

has appeared to me. Not conjured from imagination (I had not given any thought to his 'representation' at that stage), but here he was fully formed before me. Someone I had never seen before. Just like the gypsy presented himself with the scroll (an earlier dream reference), now Samir had appeared with his ring. In later fragments, there was an apartment where we met, somehow our discussions were about space, the design of space, for thinking, reflecting, the emptiness needed to explore the infinite. I understood he was an architect and wanted to share this information with me.

(Gambling 2011b, journal entry 24/04/09)

Appendix 4: Lorca's *Duende* as an expression of Embodied Knowing

In Panel Two, *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, the Song of the Gypsy helps steward (or sing) the icon into existence. Her conversation with El Crucio, the Sad One, is conducted as follows (Gambling 2011a, p.205):

Wholly awake or asleep, a desire stirs you. I feel the gift in you, it hums and shimmers in your hand like the duende of a dancer –

It is alright! I hastened as he tried to tug away. I know the duende – I too know the daimon's spirit which rises up and sets the feet to spin or the voice to cry out in deep song. It knocks. Loud, louder still, does it not? You feel it knock? There will be no peace until you surrender, until you bring her to your dance.

I smiled and repeated: The duende knocks.

He watched me closely.

You are a writer, I said, weaving words between lands. Your duende knocks loud in your hand to write from the book of your heart, the most sacred land of all.

I have no truck with words, he said. His eyes seemed to bore through mine, so certain was he.

But you must! I said in my own certainty. The time has now come to dance with your duende and bring forth what is written on your heart.

Did you not hear me, woman? No words will I again write!

I sighed and pointed to the palm of his hand, traced a finger across the grit trapped in its creases and folds, tried to explain this great thing to him another way.

The duende within you seeks release. As the wind works upon sand, so must you write. Only then will you find peace, when you bring her to your dance.

Her?

Yes. Her.

In 1933, Federico Garcia Lorca wrote a lecture titled *Play and Theory of the Duende*. In it, he articulated the embodied knowing which infused his work, drawing on flamenco and Gypsy *cante jondo* (deep song) to explain his proposition: "I have heard an old maestro of the guitar say, "The *duende* is not

in the throat; the *duende* climbs up inside you, from the soles of the feet” (Lorca 1998, p.49). Lorca (1998) writes that “one must awaken the *duende* in the remotest mansions of the blood” (p.51); it “requires a living body to interpret [it]” (p.54), arising, as it does, from “the fertile silt that gives us the very substance of art” (p.49).

It is a place I call the fecund swamp and in deep song, Lorca (1998) believes, “love is stronger than death” (p.21), a personal truth I share and have interrogated in the triptych.

To place the foregoing in context, I felt a kinship with Lorca the moment I discovered at the start of my research into Laleima’s world that he was a native Granadan and had written a *diwan* in homage to Andalusia’s Moorish past. This served as a catalyst to my reading of his sweeping *Gypsy Ballads* which then led to his biography and the tragic fact that his execution by Franco troops in 1936 echoed his own *Lament for Ignacio Sanchez Mejias* from two years before. The reader will therefore find a nod to Lorca’s spirit in each panel of the triptych, not least because my own Woolfian “moment of being”⁸⁵ had hit like a sledgehammer at the same synchronistic hour⁸⁶.

As with everything discovered during the conduct of this project, none of these rhizomatic interconnections was known in July 2000 when Laleima crossed my path in the Alhambra. Like Woolf and her shocks, it was a circular dance toward meaning, circumambulatory reflections probing the experiences of kindred artistic spirits for my own knowing to *become*. In this way, I stumbled across Hirsch’s (2002) text *The Demon and the Angel* where he notes that “Lorca wrote from the body, which he trusted as [...] the vessel of our

⁸⁵ In her essay *A Sketch of the Past*, Woolf (1985) describes these “moments of being” as sudden shocks “embedded in many more moments of non-being [...] a kind of nondescript cotton wool” (p.70). Such a moment is always followed, she finds, “by the desire to explain it [...] it is or will become a revelation of some order; it is a token of some real thing behind appearances; and I make it real by putting it into words. It is only by putting it into words that I make it whole” (Woolf 1985, p.72). Suffice it to say that the triptych has made the particular moment of my vision, my Deleuzian “event” (Deleuze & Boudas 1993, p.78), cathartically whole.

⁸⁶ Concluding the Report of the First Witness “in a time before time, in a place before now” (Gambling 2011a, p.7), which prefaces *Laleima’s Story*, the witness notes, in looking back on a photo of herself: “Each time she looks, she remembers the face of her watch, the jolt in observing its fact of time stilled. For she had been where she had been, seen what she had seen, at five in the afternoon” (Gambling 2011a, p.9).

transformation [...] Lorca invariably located the body as the source – the site – of our unconscious understandings” (p.13-14)⁸⁷.

Finally, the circle was complete – Lorca, my beginning, had returned me to the beginning, gifting me the word, a Spanish word at that, to explain the phenomenon whereby the ancestral voices of his land could arise in him through embodied practice. In the same spirit, I gifted the word to the Gypsy to help her engage a sullen El Crucio and, as he and I both discovered, when the *duende* speaks through the practice of embodied knowing, we will always find a way to write.

⁸⁷ According to Hirsch (2002), Rilke likewise described experiences of the *duende* force where “lines burst out of him [...] came to him unbidden, and in the strongest possible contrast to the preceding ones”, where something “permeated the membrane between the inner and outer worlds, mystically touched a greater unity” (p.43). Not surprisingly, therefore, there are also nods to Rilke in the triptych.