

NOTHING CAME FROM WALKING

Surviving Encounters with the Spirit of Death
Conor McKenna

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Preface

This book is about a journey taken over a period of a month on the Maltese island of Gozo, and concerns the frightening inner and outer events that preceded the writer's awareness of having cancer. It has been written as a living process; a moment by moment experience of a haunting reality that is a battle between life and death. On the last day of his break from ordinary life, at the airport before leaving, the first physical symptoms of an aggressive prostate cancer appeared. The many unusual experiences described within are of an underlying dreaming reality intermingled with the ordinary world that eventually would manifest as the real physical illness called cancer. The experiences of the writer and the methods used within throw light on the following questions: is there a connection between physical illness and dream-like impressions? What are the subtle inner conditions that may precede or create serious physical illness? Can one reverse illness through working at a subtle physical level?

This book provides a map for the traveller who is interested in detachment, self-love and freedom, with illness itself being the cartographer. It will be of help in

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understanding the underlying nature and cause of mental and physical illness. The journey will take you through other worlds where you will meet with phenomena that can create pitfalls and perils, joys, thrills and transformations - and death.

Healing is a team effort, including not only the identified patient, but also close family, friends, and all practitioners of the healing arts that one bumps into in the journey through illness. Healing is a complicated process involving allopathic medicine, life styles, the many alternative approaches, and not least the awareness applied to the interface between the physical body and subtle inner pre-physical events of an acausal nature described within – we need them all. It is the direct interaction with the dreaming aspect of symptoms, as detailed in the following pages, that the writer believes has saved his life (and who is, at the time of publication, free of the physical symptoms called cancer).

This book is about change and transformation and is therefore written mainly in present time and in an experiential way: it does not rely on theoretical explanation

but direct experience in the moment. Some readers may wish to have theoretical perspectives through analogy first. In which case, please turn to the postscript at the back of the book; otherwise continue reading from here. The contents, although outlandish at times, are not analogous but real events.

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Confrontation

People everywhere, rushing, heading in all directions, strangers passing through a foreign country, gleaming shops with marble floors, the hush of carpeted noise pervading the atmosphere. I'm in the bright exciting world of potential that is international land, I'm in London Gatwick Airport at 6 a.m. and full of excitement at the beginning of a sabbatical from my life. I can hardly wait; I'm like a child at the start of a new adventure. Hardly contained jumps of joy keep bursting up from inside, I've never in my life taken a step such as this. A song comes to me in the midst of this air of anticipation: "Signed, sealed, delivered I'm yours". This song line would still be buzzing around my head three days later. I feel that this persistent song has a message for me. *Who do I belong to? Who belongs to me in this time?* Before long I'm in the air and my dream has been created. At 11.30a.m. I arrive in Malta airport and into the joy of hot sunshine, and in October too – at home they shiver now. It's a hassle, however, when I discover that my suitcase is still in Gatwick, I would have to wait until 4p.m. the next day to receive it. Eventually, I leave the airport to be met outside by a pre-arranged taxi that took me to the ferry. After a crossing of forty minutes, I

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am in another waiting taxi on the island of Gozo; at last, ten minutes away from my destination on an eight and a half hour journey.

I get to the apartment in Marsalforn, Gozo, my home for the next month, and immediately have a walk around the harbour. The hot, sunny day, which would become the norm for most of the duration of my stay, was beautiful, but my mood had taken a dive. From the unbelievably optimistic heights of early morning anticipation, I descended into the total opposite. Sitting having a late lunch on the sea front, I looked at the bathers and strollers aimlessly hanging around. *What have I done?* Life on holiday appeared so boring. I see some people looking for something - anything - to do; others lazing around reading to fill the long day; a few trying something new like going on boat trips or diving; others floating in the water; but everyone appearing disconnected, adrift and anything but happy. The whole thing is pathetic - humanity vainly trying

to stay alive. How meaningless it all is. Here I am in “paradise” as a result of an insidious push of imagination grown and nurtured in a miserable climate. Indeed, I’ve spent years dreaming of coming away on my own like this - and this is what it’s all about, hellishly empty and indulgent.

Having got up at 4a.m. to catch my flight that morning I decided to return to my apartment thinking that my mood had something to do with being tired. Perhaps I needed some sleep to see things in a better light? I slept soundly for about an hour and awoke to the full wall-to-wall nightmare. The same feeling came back but much more shocking: my heart sank to its lowest ever. A wave of *What...have...I...done?* hit me. I just couldn’t believe it. *I’m not rich enough to do this; I can’t afford to come away and then live a meaningless existence for a month; how selfish to do this and then hate it when you’re here.* I am utterly distraught, just can’t believe that I have to stay in this limbo for a week, never mind a fortnight and as for a month, I keep getting piercing shocks all over my body when I think about it. Despair and depression undressed itself so

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completely in full view of my eyes that a terrible reality stood there naked - I feel like a parasite on paradise.

I got up, made a cup of tea and dragged myself to the balcony overlooking the bay. I cannot tell you how miserable I feel, I’m in a perfect position up here on the third floor with views across the harbour but it means nothing. I watch, with total disgust, groups of swimmers below moving around like the shoals of fish beneath them, all suspended above a sea bed of sand and the turquoise rocks of the Mediterranean, while the emptiness weighs heavier than ever. At one and the same time I’m both sinking inside with the weight of it all, and also, I’m an insubstantial empty shell with the life energy drained out of me. After a couple of long hours of this awful state a thought caught my attention. It was hardly noticeable at first, but something relieved me a little. In the midst of these disconnected feelings and depression, I noticed that I didn’t have the old crutches and habits that I have in my life back home; the old doings that keep me distracted from this dreadful emptiness. At least something more real could be here in the midst of this meaninglessness. There is no TV, no eating at certain times, no relationship dynamics. Work is left behind with its daily trains of habitual thought and behaviour. No goals too, nothing to attach to. There is something about these thoughts that is relaxing, something about looking directly at them that enables me to use steel in my eyes to perceive the world. Somehow, I have

connected with a pure state of beingness rather than the forms that hitherto sustained me.

I swing back, however, into my heavy mood. The steel turns into quivering jelly as it suddenly feels that the relief was just some flimsy glimpse of something intangible.

I am again enveloped by guilt and regret, guilt about coming here, guilt about not earning, guilt about wasting time, guilt about laziness, guilt about guilt - guilt, guilt, guilt. I hit rock bottom so hard that there's nowhere to go but sit there, suffering with the distress of it all. And yet after some unknown time, I again pick up a different feeling; a little glimmer of hope in the midst of this

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suffocating cave. I'm getting a sense of meaning related to the disconnectedness again, there is a weird inkling of freedom lurking somewhere in the midst of all this banality.

I'm feeling a confrontation with my own reality as I gradually stop my normal world; a confrontation with emptiness which is strangely tangible. I actually get the sense that in the space created from stopping my normal world, something of the miraculous could happen. And again, as a little hope rises the opposite crashes in like some enormous wave. It would indeed take a miracle to help me as the lightness is suddenly lost and I'm left again in this dark, dank hole.

The next day I have to wait in the apartment until 4p.m. My suitcase is somewhere in Gatwick, over Europe or at Malta airport. I'm in three-day-old travelling clothes and in this hot climate, too. People are working on it but I can't ring out, the phone doesn't work that way; and I can't go out in case they ring me. This predicament is simply a part of the whole scene of despair, one chord in a slow, clanging, depressing symphony. Antonio, the letting agent, eventually rings to tell me that my case is on the helicopter between Malta and Gozo and will be here by 3.45p.m. – Phew, clean clothes at last!

I take the opportunity to hitch a ride with Antonio up to Victoria, the main town of the island, and get relief from “paradise.” Thank God, a working town where people have things to do with meaningful connections, not floating around like drifting kelp damned to desperate happiness. Step one: you have your ordinary life and familiarity; step two: you cut it off by going on holiday, going to prison, losing your job, becoming ill, disabled or whatever; step three: you either go backwards if you can to the familiar way in step one, or forwards into the unknown, whatever that is; or you stay in limbo at step two. I have no idea how I will fare with any of these during the next twentyseven or so days.

In Victoria I hire a bicycle.

“You pay me one pound fifty a day, I give you bike”.

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“How many lire is that?” I ask.

“Lire is pounds here,”

This is obviously a legacy of British rule. There is still much in these Maltese islands that retains a British stamp.

“Okay, great, do you have lights for it?”

“No need, you have reflectiers, car see you with reflectiers.”

“What about the police?”

“Police no problem but don’t get drunk, you might hit car, dat no good.”

His hand makes a weaving motion; his mouth makes a smile as he studies me from under his eyebrows. I try to contain my own smile, after all I’m depressed, but I can’t, I like his way. He’s an old rogue; a street psychologist that could get me a hire car, a scooter, a bicycle and probably a donkey if I wanted one - at the ‘right price’, of course.

I ride around this hill-top town trying to get familiar with its layout and find out where the shops are; after all, I’m here for a while. The centre of Victoria is small with many of the main shops dotted around the very narrow side streets; streets wide enough for a donkey but not a car - cars don’t bend. I am after one particular shop, one that sells televisions. I want to hire a TV so that I can blank out the train of incessant, miserable thoughts and leave the floaters and good-timers swimming under my balcony to wrestle with limbo – I want to go back to step one. I find out that I have to get a cable connection installed into my apartment to get English language stations but, in my depressed state, it appears too expensive. So it’s back to confrontation with myself and step two. Who wants boring TV anyway?

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Empty Habit

That night, my second full day over, I went to bed about 11p.m. still burdened with feelings of hopelessness. I soon fell asleep and almost immediately had a very disturbing dream. I dreamt that I was standing in the corridor here in this apartment in almost total darkness, and the scary bit was that I could see a man with a hood over his head coming towards me. I froze in fear but he kept coming and then to my shock, he walked right through my skin and into me. What a ghastly, horrible nightmare, knowing that something has entered one’s body; the feeling made me shudder with fear and disgust. I woke up still shuddering and somewhat panicked. I wondered who had entered me, what evil quality had taken possession of me? Most of the next day I thought about this dream;

however, in such a situation you would want to do more than just think about it; you would use everything you have to penetrate the meaning, otherwise you would obsess about it – I would. Better to possess a dream than be possessed by it is my thinking, and after all I have plenty of time. By the afternoon I decided to get into it and re-play the events, hoping to get some idea of what it was all

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about and perhaps find a connection to my mood. I decide to stand in the hallway in the position that I was in in the dream. I re-entered the experience by imagining the dark figure coming towards me. I see him coming forward and my body feels the reality of the event, responds with streams of energy running up and down my back - horrible. Emotionally, I am back in the dream. In the dark hallway, I let the figure keep coming and slowly, in imagination, let him enter me. The waves of energy increase as I feel his dark, elusive presence. I hold this feeling for a while, but notice that I'm still really in my normal identity; still feel like myself, so he can't really have occupied my identity. I have a new idea. I try switching to become him - feeling like him might give me his perspective. Taking courage in my hands, I go to the point at the end of the corridor where he came from. Supporting the feeling that I am in a different body, I walk slowly towards the normal me with eyes closed to simulate darkness even more.

Walking, I notice that I feel like I am an old monk shrouded in a black habit with the hood up over my head. A powerful presence fills me as I walk but there is no physical body here; the habit is empty. There is awareness within the habit but it is the awareness of emptiness, which is not "nothing", it's a sort of awareness that's not attached to anything – a cool, neutral, penetrating sort of awareness. In any case, the certainty is that I am an invisible monk. As the monk, I approach and enter my own body and a big thing happens. The exercise that had begun to make a difference really turned into a flesh and blood transformation. At that moment an emptying, a falling happens from my whole body and all my concerns simply drain out: guilt, fear, worry, trying, regret, attacks, emptying, all emptying, unplugged and washed down some drain – gone, relief, utter relief. From a thinking person I've become direct reality, there's no other way to say it – I am what is. There is an impulse almost immediately to open my eyes and turn around. My body tingles as it turns slowly to face the lounge and on out

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through the window to Marsalforn in bright sunlight. All

remains empty, but it is an amazing emptiness that is full of joy. It is a shattering moment with deep intimacy, there is contact with the soft beating heart, with tender flesh and there is the joy and overwhelming love for humanity outside.

The world has transformed. Being empty, I can now penetrate the essence of life and appreciate its dance. I feel in the middle of life's relationship to itself and at the same time, remain lovingly detached to the ordinary world. The people outside that had depressed me so much, such as the 'floaters', or the tirades of regret that I flung at myself, are now gone. The floaters in the bay are still floating, but now I feel only love as I look at them. I am without thought for the future or memory of the past; I'm simply empty and free. The miracle that I longed for and desperately needed has happened. Life has become a gastronomical delight; a light and airy soufflé served up for a beginner's mind and I'm hungry. Reflecting later, I could see that this monk represents the same emptiness that I felt on arrival here, but I'm living in it rather than suffering from it; possessing it rather than being possessed by it.

To realise the full potential indicated by the excitement at the beginning of my journey to this island, I had to go through the depression and the loss of my normal identity. In the midst of that awful state I got glimpses of awareness that valued the predicament I was in; I knew that I was material being used for a work in creation. Those glimpses also revealed an almost zero state of mind that was creating reality anew. The communication between the artist and the material is a vital one, for it is the material's place to submit to the momentary act of the artist – the material being, in this case, one's identity. When your desire to succeed fails, for instance, then through the pain of disappointment you may realise that you are not the creator of your life, and at that moment one can submit by letting go and staying aware of the unknown.

The awareness between these two parts is a moment

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more astounding than I can speak of, perhaps involving something of how the universe was created in all its form and beingness. The shaman works at this point; she works with the material and the creator, allowing herself to be shaped into different realities. Shapeshifting, indeed, is but the process between the artist and the material. All this made me feel it was time to move; time to get on the road and walk; time to create; time to be unresponsive – the days of reaction have gone.

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Habits and Robes

I arrived here on Wednesday and now it's Saturday morning. I'm cycling to Victoria on a glorious day. I want to change the bike because it sounds like a flock of cackling geese waddling up the road; people turn around wondering what the heck's coming. I'm starting to think that the bike is talking to itself in goose language. I listen as the front wheel goes "ih, ih, ih" and the pedals go "eek, eek, eek" and then another mysterious sound from somewhere inside the front shaft which goes "gwaak, gwaak, gwaak" as I make constant tiny adjustments to my balance and direction. It sounds like a real conversation and I wonder how I can take part. However, I suddenly wake up as I realise that the bike sounds the way I did in my dreadful mood – constant discordant thoughts that drive you into depression. I decide to ignore it, drop it; I take no notice of it as I peddle on, better in the bike than in me; can't wait to rid myself of it.

It's C36° according to my cheap thermometer and it's mostly all up hill from Marsalforn to Victoria. You go up

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to Victoria from everywhere and down from Victoria to everywhere.

"Wat the matter, bike no good?"

"It's too noisy, it's too squeaky; I want to change it for a newer one."

"You come back Monday, I give you better one. Want car instead?"

I thought later that I wished I'd invested in public transport rather than his bicycle. I discovered that 15 cents can get you to anywhere on the island from Victoria and the buses are everywhere. By the way, cents are cents but liras are pounds.

Xlendi, pronounced Shlندی, the real point of my journey today, was a further six kilometres beyond Victoria, thankfully all down hill. I eventually got there in one piece after traversing the worst road surface I've ever been on. It sounded like some predator had got among the geese and was trying to bite their heads off. It wasn't only the road surface that was the problem. In my short while here I've discovered that everyone drives on one side: the shady side; unless, of course, it's too bumpy, in which case they all drive on the smooth side. Driving on the smooth or shady side is easy to predict but this is Malta - island driving - and what you can't predict is which drivers will swerve back and forth from smooth to shade, dodging the potholes. A taxi man vividly described the Maltese driving. "They drive like savages" he said, while cutting up someone on a roundabout, causing the other driver to sit on his horn till his eyes popped out. "See what I mean,

savages?”

Anyway, I got there safely and realised that I've been in Gozo for four days now and I haven't even been in the sea yet, so here I go.

Except I didn't go; the tide was all the way in, the water was very choppy, and there was the little matter of my fear. I'd come from the sheltered side of the island with

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calm waters to find that these are dangerous snorkelling conditions. I sat there on the quay feeling somewhat disappointed and deflated. I would have a hard slog back up the hill in front of me in this heat, so I decided to sit for a while. Close to me on the quay I saw an attractive middle-aged Japanese lady chatting up a good-looking 18-year-old Maltese boy. She was definitely flirting with the determination of someone on a mission. *Good for her, I hope she's lucky.* I'm sure he'll have a good education, hope he appreciates it. Japanese: politeness; etiquette; tiny steps in long tight skirts; bowing in respectful retreat - the world must have gone topsy-turvy. After an hour or so I eventually got up and started the long trek up the hill. The heat was shattering - walked most of the way. Arriving in the town, I sat on a bench in the main square and promptly fell asleep. I fell asleep probably due to the heat, the mechanical nightmare and a wakeful night. I awoke in a sort of stupor; caught between a squidgey thing and a soft place; mouth hanging open and slumped sideways. I was in a so-called power nap that wouldn't let go. Somehow a 'tour' of about thirty Russians had appeared and were standing right above me looking down at the vagrant. *Strange, I can't be in Russia.* This was the tour's gathering point it seems, and their guide was counting heads, making sure all were present. With the guide satisfied, off they all trotted to another site, some looking back at the dribbling curiosity still half-upright on the bench.

I slowly came around and eventually sat there enjoying the sun. Soon a few priests walked past and then more came until black suits above me almost blocked out the sky. It must have taken this priestly line, walking four or five abreast, forty minutes to pass. I had read that there was an international Catholic event here and that there would be something like a thousand priests attending. Well, here they all are close enough to smell the sweat. There are black faces, brown faces, white, yellow, all sorts. Some have whisky noses, some are smokers, some could be coke sniffers, but unlikely. There are large, rotund shapes with big necks and bellies; there are long, short and

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square ones. The old are here too, with their walking

sticks, hearing aids and Sherpas, intermingling with the sprightly young who seem to exhibit a balance of restraint and eager holiness. The various colours of tunics, jackets and spiritual continence are worn with assuredness; some representing high office and others ordinary priestliness. No empty habits of the kind I'm involved with though.

There are Maltese - my eyes tell me that; there are Americans - my ears tell me that. Identifying badges indicate Irish; British; German; Italian; French; Spanish; Swedish; assorted countries of Africa – Nigeria; Gambia and others. There are Japanese; Australians; Chinese, and some from India; Singapore; Thailand and Mauritius. They all process slowly, bunching, stopping or inching forward; tourists of God, sight-seeing in a land that has utter trust in them. Procession is part of their calling; part of their daily routine; they do it like masters. All life is passing here, all life, that is, except women. It seems a woman can bring the Son of God into this world but she is barred from helping people transcend it. Must be something to do with periods or snakes...

On they go. Twenty minutes have gone by and still they pass. They come from the church off to the right beyond the square, process through the square, across the zebra crossing and up to the citadel high above the town. There is no pushing on this path; two thousand years of certainty have crafted this behaviour. There are no fighters here; nobody is likely to hit out, no fast jabs, no rough and tumble. No women and no Shamans either – eagles; wolves; tigers. No, this path is orderly, polite and predictable. You wouldn't expect to find shape-shifters here; indigenous behaviour has long been banished. The mostly black line continues to file past, some acknowledging me, others observing me, most ignoring me. Two thousand years passing by, one ancient role filled by a thousand different bodies; nationalities; races. I was young with these people, I remembered; they used to hit the young in a nasty way, but they meant well.

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Eventually, all the priests passed and later the other tourists emptied out and the square quietened down except for some children playing. I sat there for a long time enjoying their fun. Night eventually fell and I decided to walk home wheeling my flock of geese, quieter now, as I'm not sitting on them. It is warm as usual and I'm wearing old sandals, a short sleeved shirt with its rucksack attached and my old dusty brown shorts. The cicadas are pulsating and scratching, the high pressure in the night air pings like a silent bell in the scent-laden atmosphere. As I walk down through the dimly lit streets and into the dark countryside, I

feel safe. No fear of robbery or any trouble generally from people. Cars stop to see if I'm okay, looking to help or to give me a lift.

Strolling on I find myself reflecting on safety. The community here is healthy; a man can look at children with delight. Back home there is an atmosphere that hangs heavily, almost clangs with suspicion; high pressure of a different order. There you can no longer enjoy the innocence of children in case you are thought to have some devious motive - and some do. Here children can be enjoyed and loved for who they are. It's as simple as that, a different atmosphere; healthier. I could ride my bike but I didn't want to go anywhere so I walked on alone by the light of the moon, reflecting, warmly pondering, and all the time declining lifts.

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Stopping...Stopping...Stopped

Later that evening my mood returned and I lost all contact with any monk. Once again, the emptiness of all this is so depressing and I'm back unable to comprehend that there is another three weeks or more of it. I can't keep out the attitude of self-criticism and moodiness, the damned length of time is simply too much for me. I am again so caught up in myself that I could disappear up the backside of my own inner chatter. *And yet, did I not enjoy the emptiness yesterday? Did I not let a spirit inhabit me, a spirit that is liberation itself; something that is utterly beyond the me that strives; that works; that is responsible for meaning?*

I feel that I am living in two opposite worlds at the same time. It seems that my normal thinking processes govern one part; the one that took up residence in the bike with all the discordant noise. The other is the world of this empty monk that holds onto nothing; is nothing; always recreated in the instant. The thinker is constantly talking and trying to assess the value of the four weeks. *Is what I'm doing useful? Will it pay the bills? Is this or that interesting? Am I bored? How long have I been here; how long to go? How will I manage with all these empty days?* etc. On and

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on I victimise myself with these hopeless thoughts and feelings that will never bring anything other than hopelessness itself. Every thought stands against the next; a mind divided against itself. I'm in an upside-down world where emptiness and dull-mindedness put me in touch with deep awareness and meaning but thinking and analysing take me away from myself, trap me and make me depressed.

I reason that this 'thinking self' has learned a whole structure of meaning throughout childhood. First you learn

to speak. Then you soon discover there are values put on words and therefore you are good or bad depending on how you think. So you are glad to be helpful, agreeable and acceptable or you poke your sister in the back if she receives the favour. Thus you start your journey through the labyrinth of word meanings. Then teachers and other authority figures demand adherence to the deadly path away from yourself. I learned and agreed with all this without question - had to. Later your words help you to connect with others, to attract or repel. You watch your P's and Q's, smile, fit in, adapt or react and hunky-dory, you end up where you are – a thousand miles from your home. The world does not stand up to the reality that I touched in the emptiness. I don't trust my own reactions, moods or knowledge any more, that world is dying; the paradigm is collapsing. The ordinary world, described through words, feels insubstantial, unreal and lacking in depth. That world is based on others' attitudes and was never really me; all of it is just reflection. The world of the monk – a shapeshifting, dream-like, concrete nothingness – is startlingly more profound and, once realised, frighteningly more real. Where is the monk? How can I re-experience it again and get in touch with myself? I decide to feel into becoming the monk again. In my mind I put an empty habit around my shoulders and ask for help from that spirit. *I can't do it alone. It's not for me to do, my thinking is too inadequate.* All this I say to some memory that is an empty monk. Eventually the voice of thinking and analysing begin to quieten as a flirt enters consciousness from an empty,

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but real feeling. Life starts to happen on its own again, outside of my ordinary awareness. Emptiness is attracting the thinking process, doesn't condemn it, and the analysing begins to soften; thinking slowly lets go and subsides. Something from outside approaches: a flirt from something other, just off to the side of awareness. It is little...gentle...brings space...is slow...tiny. Its whispers are quiet, so quiet, ...it steadies, gently winks...attracts...is continuous...comes close - it is nothingness gently stopping me...Stopping me...Stopping...Stopped... Emptiness is all that is here and seems to smear itself over the universe and I feel liberated. It lingers then goes, leaving imprints, traces, feelings of enough. It is gone but remains too in something more than mere memory. This ghost is not personal, unique or unusual, but commonplace and available to everyone. The people in the fairy-lit restaurant below my balcony know it; they enjoy it in their sleep though - you have to let go to sleep. Some lines - a prayer, perhaps a song - come.

Emptiness, O mirror of emptiness, you inhabit yourself with
utter awareness,

Thinking processes following you.

You embody emptiness and 'nothingness' is all you require.

What could you need, where would there be to go?

Signed, sealed, delivered, I'm yours.

I now understand the meaning of the song that was
going on in my head, 'Signed, sealed, delivered, I'm yours'.

I think it's a song by Elton John. I have chosen emptiness, I

may fight for control, fight for my self-centeredness, fight

for what I want to do or believe, but really I belong to this

monk; this empty unknowable thing. Picked up and lived,

this monk brings freedom, avoided he becomes the Grim

Reaper who will stalk me and take my life – better to give

identity freely than to lose my body in resistance. Like the

creative impulse, the monk/Grim Reaper by default must

destroy identification in the face of pure awareness. It is

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safe, however, if you can go with its intentions.

But I tire of this thinking and go back in earnest to

my quest. I soon return to the year dot and equilibrium

manifests again; an intimacy in which "nothing" on the

outside mirrored "nothing" on the inside. A waiting

occurred that was utterly complete within itself. Now and

then the world began to lift on the inside but again gently

subsided under the influence of the empty, to rest once

more on the flat line – my path in life, it seems, is a short

one: a path that's forever getting back to the finish. I fell

asleep in this way and soon a black bear, my size, came up

to me, folded his arms around my shoulders, and with his

paws, steered me into him. He placed his head, with its

long nose, tenderly close to my cheeks. With his luxurious

black fur he held his whole body, in the most intimate and

closest of ways, to mine. Within the inner and outer

nothingness that had merged before sleep, stood a man

and bear complete and finished in the dreaming world of

contented waiting – nature reflecting the nature of nature.

The dreaming world - the seeming emptiness, the vacuum -

feels full of activity, so full that the whole physical world

with its stars, rocks, living things, love, loss and loneliness

and the rest, appears to be a by-product of such activity.

When I awake it seems obvious that the blackness of the

bear is a symbol of no-thing and echoes the emptiness of

the monk.

Now that I have again completed my quest, I am

close to the influence of the deep dreaming of my body. I

can breathe again; everything is in its right place. I wish I

could write this more clearly; spell it out, but I can't. I've

been awake most of the night and now I hear the bathers

below, the high pressure causing the sun to sound through their voices. The world feels rich and full of fun and I'm off to swim; I feel like a child with all the responsibility of adulthood falling away. Home again, home again, clippity clop.

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Drowning in Mid Air

A few days later I decide to have another attempt at snorkelling but this time on my side of the island - the calm side. Going downstairs I meet my new neighbours who have just moved in above for a week's holiday. We exchange greetings and pass on. They didn't close the outside door properly so I pull it shut behind me as I go, concerned for safety as though I own the property. After all, I've been here for several days now; I know how things work around here. With my key secure in my pocket, and snorkel and goggles in my bag, I make for what I spied was the best place to swim. Passing four bobbing heads in the water talking to each other, I realise that I saw them in that spot an hour ago from my balcony. And then I remembered that they were in the same place yesterday; maybe they've taken up residence in that spot for their fortnight break? They look just like the buoys surrounding them; I hope some sailor doesn't make a mistake. The water is so warm here that there is no difference, temperature wise, whether submerged or walking along the beach. I've been told that the water is warmer in November than it is in May or June. Apparently, it takes the whole

2 3

summer to heat up.

Eventually, I reach my spot on the sea front, tentatively slip in with my flippers and snorkel on and gently glide across the water, eyes focused on the sea bottom. Each time a two-inch wave comes over my head, however, I start to panic and gasp for air. Panic sets in because it seems to me to be impossible to breathe underwater, even with the snorkel. My head just can't get hold of the idea that it's okay; I've probably got a phobia. Anyway, I keep trying for about ten minutes and then give up, get out, and sit at the water's edge feeling disappointed and annoyed. Annoyance wasn't the half of it. Little did I know that I had just lost the key to my apartment. It must have floated out of the pocket of my swimming trunks as I struggled. Today is Sunday, the letting agents are closed, I have no money, nor the possibility of getting any. Furthermore, I would not discover my plight until later that afternoon.

Why can't I do this breathing thing, I must be stupid or something? I am frustrated. Eventually, in my defence, I

come up with a possible cause. *Perhaps it's my rhinitis?* Perennial rhinitis is blocked-nose syndrome. The condition is caused by allergic reactions and is incurable, lasts all year round, and likes to do its worst at night. While asleep, apparently I struggle for breath and can stop breathing altogether for seconds at a time.

If you had rhinitis you would have to find a way to do something about it, do something to unblock it, it is intolerable. I had to work with it last night, work almost the whole night through because I believe that illness is a process created partly by ourselves, and partly by a deeper process that is coming to awareness. I'm of the opinion that we have the means to cure ourselves but a pill is much quicker if it does the job. The medication for the condition was in my delayed suitcase and so I hadn't taken it. And then, when I eventually got the nasal spray, I wanted to see what would happen in a warm climate without taking it – bad idea. This is no small problem as it's almost impossible

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to live in your body with a stuffed nose. It's like torture, blocked off, fenced in, smothered in compacted cotton wool that you can't get hold of. Now, it's clear to me that the symptoms we suffer from are usually mirrored in our behaviour. A pain can make me act or behave like the pain itself if it goes on long enough. I get irritable and hard to live with. If you had a blocked nose that went on forever what would you be like? A blocked nose makes a blocked mind; makes you feel isolated. A cold or 'flu' can cause a blocked nose for a week or two, but suffering year after year, in all seasons, would make you feel sorry for yourself - I do. It gets so claustrophobic it would cause moles to panic.

Last night was particularly bad, what could one do to change this? There you are awake again and frustrated as hell. Rather than trying to get rid of it, as one often does, you could try a different tack; could decide not to react to it. If you had my approach you could try the idea of doing what the symptom is doing, that is, block your breathing even more. Sounds daft maybe, but if your nose and mind are blocked then why not go all the way and identify with blocking? I took that course; I reasoned that nature is the creator of the symptom, and is therefore wiser, or at least has a different goal than my perceptions and reactions. Getting into the symptom, I keep my mouth closed until I can hardly bear it, hoping that a vision or a movement related to the feeling will appear. Bodies work like that; if you held your nose and didn't breathe for a while you might notice subtle images, sounds or strange feelings. Another point - bodies heal themselves or reveal

their secrets by reproducing the same process in different channels of experience. For example, if you had a sharp pain in your head and focused on it, you may see a sharp dagger. Now this dagger could have a stabbing motion. Acting out these visions and movements can transform the feelings in the symptom and bring its message to full awareness, to completion. Moving your hand sharply like the headache and its vision, the dagger, and then letting your personality be like that by becoming sharper in life

2 5

means that you are picking up the wisdom of the symptom. A friend of mine taught me this way of approaching these things.

Normally, in this state of stuffiness I have to keep my mouth open to breathe. Each time I hold my mouth closed, I wait and the claustrophobia increases to a point that I have to open my mouth - height of frustration, forked lightening through my head, shocking body sensations. One nostril is completely blocked, the other is letting in about 10% of its normal capacity; panic mounting panic. After each attempt I become more and more a victim of it all; it's maddening. However, I eventually realise that I'm not really acting like the creator of the symptom but simply amplifying the feeling of being blocked; amplifying victimhood.

I know from experience that there is something useful in the symptom, but how do I discover it?

Here I am, in the bed on my back and in the darkness, lying still like a lightening conductor attracting frustration. Then a new idea comes up: why not use my hands to play out the process instead of suffering it inside? Anyone can try this if you have a symptom that you want to explore. So, using my hands to simulate the process in my nose, I roll the left hand into a fist and use the first finger of the right hand to penetrate the side of the tightly rolled fist, pushing between the thumb and forefinger. As I do it, I create a similar pressure in my hands to the one in my nose. Hand/nose sensations merge and the process is experienced inside my nose as well as in my hands. It's a bit like being in the theatre, the blockage is externalised - seen in the hands. There is distance achieved and my identity is no longer feeling like a victim. But in the end it doesn't work either; I have to find another approach.

A new thought emerges. I wonder what it's like on the other side of my nose, that is, on the outside of my body, even beyond my hands. Rather than identifying with claustrophobia or the blocking, why not try shifting awareness and identify beyond the block? Why not identify with the room I'm in? Awareness can do that; it's not

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confined to our bodies. Gradually, after some time, a kindness enters me, helps me to let go of my thinking, my unbending desire for resolution. The kindness allows me to let my identity flow away, drop away and fall from me. I become more open to a sense that something outside of me could move - something that has autonomy and awareness within itself. I open up to letting things attract my attention rather than thinking about them. The walls, the door, the dim light coming through the window impress me with their essence. However, nothing really happens. There is a sense of awareness beyond me but nothing changes. If my nostrils open then I will know that I'm on the right track. That is the feedback that I'm looking for. I know somehow that the dreaming world can influence and change physical reality; that illness is curable through the subtle impressions that accompany symptoms, so I persevere.

I had considered the darkness before but there was no response from it. I return and open to it again. This time things start to happen, something begins to respond. I start to attune to the awareness within the darkness and find a lightness and freedom outside of me. Whispers of nothingness begin, intimate exchanges, subtlety between outside awareness and body knowledge; mind quiet. Each time my thinking arises, trying to understand and assimilate then awareness retreats. Each time I drop thinking and submerge with the darkness, the meaning of the experience arises by itself. Through the empty monk I resolved depression and now I find the same process of darkness and 'otherness' resolves physical symptoms.

As I identify with the darkness or the air in the room as the 'other' or 'the not me', my nose begins to crackle and open. Soon the air going through my nostrils is like the fresh air on the open sea - relief; freedom at last. It makes me think that symptoms come from outer space, from the vast emptiness that collides with our identity which then blocks it causing problems. To be really me, paradoxically, I have to be 'not me'. I unconsciously get blocked in my nose, it seems, when I identify with myself as a separate

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thinking person; a person separate from the whole, blocking off the essence that supports him. It opens when I identify with the Universe; when I bow before the very air I breathe; bow to the essence of it all. In the moment I can do it at will: think then blocking happens; drop thinking, then opening happens; think then blocking happens again. *How does this process runs throughout all the other areas of my life, how does it operate in relationship, for instance?* But my nose immediately blocks, so I drop it. This conjunction

between the emptiness and personal identity will, in just a few weeks, seriously threaten my life; I will need every bit of awareness to survive and although I don't know it yet, I'm in this moment in the middle of dying so that I will live. Lying there, the frustration and the lightening shocks gone to ground, I feel ecstatic, joyous, cells of the body seeded with pleasure. I quickly and peacefully fall asleep. Back on the beach, there he is, sitting, head down staring through the pebbles into the previous night. Every now and then he picks up a few stones and lets them fall through his fingers. Children are playing near by; splashes and entrances into the water here and there reach his unfocused ear; proficient snorkellers are circling a little distance away, their heads down occupied with other worlds. The sun is hot, its light strong and high, sea glinting and gleaming. I am happy in my memories, recreating the night-time reality here on this beach, touching the dreaming of being 'not me' again. I'm enjoying the awareness that it is dangerous to snorkel; peering down at the sea bottom - safer to let go and drown.

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Lost

Still unaware of my problem with the key, I got up, left the snorkellers in the water and strolled along the beach with a mind to investigate beyond the point at the end of the bay. I passed the police station reflecting that it's good to know where that is in case I need it. Continuing on round the point, I had a quick dip in the warm water at a favoured spot and then began to make my way up the side of a cliff for a view of Marsalforn from the hill tops. I was so happy that a song burst out of me, something about creation out of emptiness, profound gibberish tumbling out. I found the songwriter and he called himself Melodious Monk and a bubble in my stomach exploded in laughter. After singing my heart out, only to stop to save the embarrassment of a farmer on his terraced field, I continued along the edge of the hill and descended again into the town. I made my way around the seafront, passed the shops, the police station, restaurants and promenaders and on to the rocky side of the bay. I had a last leap into the sea before going up to my apartment.

I stayed in the water for a ten-minute frolic and then out again. And that's when I discovered the awful truth.

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From the heights of ecstasy I plummeted to the depths of panic. I searched everywhere for the keys - as you do - in my pocket, in the ten or so pockets and compartments of my bag, under the concrete seat, back in my pocket, in the

bag, under the seat...nothing. One look down into the sea was enough to not even bother searching there. Perhaps I missed it under the seat – nothing. It must be in the bag...got to be...no, nothing. I did everything but strip naked and still nothing. *Stop the world. Hold everything, hold the tension, don't get taken by panic, there are worse things in the world.* Soon, after holding the reaction down a little, I noticed that something in me trusted the situation, trusted the loss. However, I do my searching routine two or three more times and still nothing. Finally, I retrace my steps, knowing that I have no chance of finding the key because it had to be in the sea if it was in my swimming trunks. I can't believe that I put keys into swimming trunks - stupid.

Eventually, I went to the police station hoping that they would know how to contact the owner of the apartment. I explained my situation to a seemingly unconcerned young officer. "What can I do?" I asked. He looked a little vacant, "I don't know, this happens regularly," pointing to a jar full of keys behind him. I have some ideas of what to do, and I think he has some answers to my predicament, but I think that he doesn't want the bother of me, so we both keep our cards under the table. I don't want him to imagine that I might be resourceful in case I'm not. It's Sunday, I have no money and at this point I am eyeing places on the beach to sleep for the night. He eventually suggests that I go to the apartment next door and see if there is a way of crossing from their balcony to mine. I agree but add, "If not, then there might be a way up a drain pipe", letting him know in advance in case he gets called out to some burglar shinning up a pipe. I go and check if the people above are in, but no, they've gone out, no answer to the buzzer anyway.

Looking up at the third floor apartment, there is no way of climbing up and definitely there is no possibility of crossing

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between balconies either. However, I spot a possible answer. There is a "To Let" sign across my balcony with a mobile phone number on it. I have no pen or paper and I'll never remember the number all the way back to the police station. Then I have a bright idea. I have my rucksack with me and my new camera is in it, so I can take a photo of the sign and capture the number. However, as I take the photo it turns out that the number is too small in the viewer and it's only much later that I discover that I can zoom in on a captured picture. So it's back to memorising. I repeat all the way back to the station 079 357 2690... 079 357 2690... 079 357 2690...

I know that when I see the policeman and simply

say, "Write this down" before I say the number, I will forget the sequence. And that's exactly what happens. I have to do it all over again, but this time with a pen and paper. As I get back with the number the policeman informs me that we cannot contact mobiles from Marsalforn - I'm still a chore to him. However, reluctantly he rings another station that has mobile reception who will contact the owner of the number, whoever that is. If it's the agent then it's unlikely that he's there on Sunday. A few minutes later the phone rings back and I'm talking to the owner. Fifteen minutes after that we're opening the door to a passport, credit cards, a bed and a home. Before I left the police station my nemesis said in a slow, measured voice, "Don't...take...your...keys...swimming...again".

3 1

Life Long Lover

For the next few days I abandon the bicycle and take to walking. The bike goes back after its weekly hire is up anyway. I seem to have more energy in hot dry countries; I just can't get enough of walking here. They tell me it's about C30° each day but my thermometer reads 36°. I bought it in a cheap knick-knack shop for a few pounds. It has a compass on it too with a rouge bubble swirling around, obstructing the pointer balanced on its needle and stopping it from swivelling. In a strange way I feel this compass suits me, neither of us knows which way's up. This island is hot and dusty and the land is mainly scrubland that is parched and dry. The houses, which are made of sun-bleached sand-stone, are usually square with flat roofs. People use the roofs to hang out washing, have barbecues in the evening or store squashes to ripen in the sun - green, yellow, orange, red - all colours. Many of the roads and the surrounding land in the villages are littered with plastic containers, paper and other detritus but the houses are usually beautiful and inviting inside.

If you put your back to the sea in Marsalforn and

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face inland you can get to Victoria in three ways by road, via two ridges or a valley. The low valley road is the direct route, which I've walked and also cycled several times now. It takes you through the very pleasant Marsalforn valley with its vineyard and assorted farms. It also has a dry river bed running along the side of the road that indicates flash floods and sudden torrential downpours. The road rises gently uphill to Victoria or "Rabat" as it was originally called. Another route is to take a right out of Marsalforn up to a ridge that goes through Zebbug and eventually, after about two or three hours walking, you arrive at Victoria. To the left from the same spot is another road on a different

ridge that goes through Xaghra. Both of these high towns are long, straddling, hot and dusty conurbations with occasional shops dotted here and there and the odd stray animal sleeping in the shade – people are few but sounds echo in the high pressure. Also, on both ridges you can see the cool, blue relief of the Mediterranean in most directions. I guess that's why people have built so high. I wouldn't live up there however; it seems to me that they're newly thrown up to accommodate the housing pressure from foreign buyers. In the rush to build, the surroundings have been ignored and used as dumps. The old, long established towns in the valleys are cooler because they are more tightly packed and are much cleaner and cared for, so buy there if you want to live in Gozo.

Yesterday I did the right hand ridge and today I'm on the one through the town of Xaghra. I have an ambition quietly lurking in the back of my mind as I walk; I want to steal a ripe orange off a tree. I'm told that this is the orange season but there's none to be seen, yet. There are a few green ones but no orange ones. Walking around looking for things like oranges feels good; beats depression. That damned depression is shaken off; I'm rid of it at last. This island, even though having lots of people living here, has a sparseness about it that suits me; I thrive in it.

What I'm doing in these walks is just hanging around, drifting about and letting things influence me in a dreamy sort of way. I love Walt Whitman - he's an

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inspiration. He talks about loafing around outdoors, says things like "Henceforth, being done with indoor quarrels and libraries" he takes to the open road, free, going nowhere; no blocked nose syndrome for him. I'm with Walt, there is no guilt in us, no struggle, no right or wrong, only right and left. Walking, that's Whitman, just walking over the grand rolling earth, walking gently across his own being. With oranges in mind I'm rather less loafing around, more loitering with intent.

About half way over the ridge I pass the Ggantija Temples. These two Neolithic Temples are the most ancient in the Maltese islands, constructed around 5600 BC. They are the oldest temples in the world, I'm told. There are two temples right next to each other; one called the north temple and the other, the south. I read that some people say that the southern one is surrounded by an uncanny energy. People have been overwhelmed by visions or a sense of a sacred aura after entering. Unfortunately, what I saw was gigantic rocks, the only mystery being how the hell they got them on top of each other.

How did people 7600 years ago manage to upend,

let's say 50 – 60 ton boulders (I've no idea how heavy they are) and stack them one on top of the other, I wondered? Then I figured that this is a routine all of us tourists do here, so I decided to continue on towards Victoria. Always Victoria, I must change my destination from tomorrow. Continuing on I pass aubergines in fields, mixed plantations with honey melons, marrows, pomegranates, prickly pears as hedges, tomato vines and other strange fruit and vegetables, but still no orange oranges. I see animals too, dogs, cats, donkeys, sheep, pigs, horses, all sorts. I just passed a nonchalant rat that saw me but took no notice, just continued sniffing around. There are lots of lizards too; we don't have these kinds of lizards at home, except in the plush business lounges in the cities, ha, ha. We do have newts however.

After some hours walking, I notice I'm beginning to strive to get back into the dreaming world – lost it

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somehow; missing the soft, effortless world of the monk. I guess as long as I exist I'm going to lose it. I'm starting to think hard to get under the surface of my experiences. I'm a hard task-master when it comes to growth, no time to waste, the hard leather strap method of childhood - a method learned from the Christian Brothers in Ireland; they had stones behind their rosary beads that could make you bleed. *Where has Walt gone?* Probably lost him in the temples when I was trying to figure things out. Spotting a cafe in the corner of a square of the endless dusty village that I'm passing through, I pull myself across the open space for some sixty paces.

The square, the size of a football pitch and the centre of the village, harbours no ghosts of loutish behaviour; no night-time brawling and smashed beer bottles of the British nightlife scene. My trailing feet attract attention in this quiet place; the proverbial pin would cause ears to prick up. There are people here but you know you don't see them. An old woman, dressed in black as usual, far off to the side, sits perched on her stool outside her shaded front door - this is afternoon heat and I'm guessing that the quietness contains a thousand years of exhaustion in this place. The church, grand enough for such a big space, towers over the village and sits watching, ensuring that life remains traditional, obeying. The sun is strong and my pace quickens as the shade of the coloured umbrellas entices with the promise of a cool drink and a place to rest. From the diagonal line I approach the neat group of tables and chairs. There are about ten tables, each covered with red and white checked paper. Sturdy plastic clips clamp each of the four sides to hold the paper in place against the

warm African winds from the south.

I've made it and sit down at the nearest available place, remove my hat and sunglasses, lean back in the shade and wait to be served. I'm too wired into movement to appreciate the gift that the seat brings to my exhausted body. There are not many customers here: a family behind me; two workmen a few tables away to my left; a solitary man writing in a journal or some such, also to my left; he

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could be a writer or could simply be writing. He has expensive taste: short-sleeved shirt with small blue check; well-ironed trousers made of the best material to go with his socks; shoes shining. I reasoned that a car must be nearby with spotless shoes like that. What is he writing? Perhaps he's an architect writing about the church; I don't think he's writing about me. He's studying me though, has been throughout my approach. I don't face him, put my left shoulder towards him, don't like being observed; I could talk to him but I don't, not ready for people yet.

The two builders, covered in stone dust, are deliberating in Maltese, the elder clearly the one with rank. They sit diagonally to each other, the elder slaps his left hand down on the table, fingers spread, decision made, both in agreement. They get up, walk a few yards, push a board back, which is suspended on one nail covering an opening, and disappear into the shell of a house; late afternoon break finished. The two reminded me of a couple of men who worked together in the same place as me twenty-five years ago. These two Maltese men looked exactly the same as my work colleagues – same age difference, similar features and postures, same relationship dynamics, everything the same; perhaps they were around when those temples were built, could be these are my friends? *What organises that? How can patterns repeat in different cultures like that?* I have no answer.

Some numinous quality caught my attention, flirted with me while I was waiting; the sort of thing that seemed unimportant at first, like a gentle aroma that leaves a shattering impact, or a life long lover that you didn't notice at first. My thinking and reasoning under this influence got suspended and my normal identity just simply and quietly fell away. In that moment I realised that I don't have to go anywhere, ever. I have arrived at the centre of my life's journey; I'm home; I've finished. I'm at the centre of the universe. The change happened so effortlessly that I'm not even sure how it happened. Perhaps it was the man across from me writing – the architect, whose mood I may have picked up; or was it the workers that brought life full circle

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from the ancient builders to the modern? Perhaps I'd walked away from my identity - left it in the dust. Who knows, but I somehow slipped through a crack in the ordinary world. Suddenly I'm back in the dreaming; suddenly the whole world holds me in its hand. I can say little about this sense of completion because it is so simple, immediate, and lives from moment to moment unreflective of itself.

Reflecting more, perhaps it's the power of Ggantija, the ancient temples I just visited that are stalking me. It's as though the influence of these temples created my experience as soon as I let go of thinking. *Are we so cut off from the magic of our ancestors?* I don't think so. This love that knows no bounds inhabited everybody, everything across the table, the square, all squares; the centuries. You'd remember this even when you forget a whole lifetime of events. Cafes, I think, are one of the best places for opening to this dreaming awareness. People just sit and are taken care of in cafes, they can afford to let go and slip down. You pay your money and, if you're lucky, get served up a cup of universality. I muse that a good name for a cafe could be 'The Eternal Cafe'.

As soon as the experience engulfed me it was already beginning to turn into a memory. Up and out of the cafe I went, leaving an experience that was already leaving me. With trails of love wafting, I continued until I eventually reached the outskirts of Victoria. I approached a tree in a garden overhanging the pavement. It has green ball-like fruit on it. I get closer... yes, they're green oranges. And, to my delight, I also spied two orange ones within arm's reach. However, two people were coming down the road towards me, what was I to do? There was only one thing to do - I walked passed. No, I'm just kidding, I plucked and ate them! Some might say "How sad, always re-enacting his childhood", and that is true. By then it was 7 p.m. so I turned left in Victoria and walked home through the silver moonlight, looking for something to dry my sticky hands on.

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The Child and the Flying Saucer

Up early today, enjoying the Sunday morning heat on the veranda; the day - beautiful; skies - clear, and the rings of blinding water from the bay keep winking and glinting so frequently that I have to squint from behind my sunglasses. For my breakfast I have half a cup of milk, half cup of berries, one scoop of whey protein, a little flax oil, and a banana all blended up into a smoothie, followed by toast and tea - delicious. I'm sitting on a patio chair with a matching plastic table, feet up, enjoying the view. It's about

7.30 a.m. and as I scan the town, I see that it's empty, not a soul around. Soon however, I spot something moving; time to reach for my binoculars. A woman appears from a side street, quietly and deliberately making for the sea. She walks directly and purposefully into the water without pausing; a woman on a mission. I fancied that she'd arrived the night before and had been dreaming and waiting for this moment all year.

As she dives under the water, there is a feeling of relief. With the same determination and pace with which she approached the water, she over-arms it directly out to sea. As she gradually pulls herself out into the choppy

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water, wheeling her arms, I watch with envy, knowing that I would never do that; couldn't do that. On she goes, doggedly swimming in a straight line towards Italy - or is it Africa that way? She's way out by now, an hour must have past because the town has woken up and people are going to church; shops are opening and the odd child is playing on the beach. Eventually she turns right and makes her way towards some rocks at the lip of the bay. I can see further out that a fishing boat is returning with its catch for the local restaurants. Is she going to bisect its path at the wrong moment? I watch the two trajectories carefully - the path of a little head bobbing up and down and a steaming boat with bow up, forging forward. She, however, seems to take it all in her stride and passes well in front of the boat - marvellous seamanship. Still swimming at the same pace, I can see another potential disaster. She is approaching treacherous cliffs with waves lifting and falling, revealing knee ripping, tummy slashing spikes of rock. Who would venture there? Calmly, however, she swims between and around the rocks, letting the waves move her up and down, holding the pocked marked volcanic stumps, swaying with the water, rocking, watching for her chance and taking it with confidence. She disappears behind a cliff and is gone.

Somehow I got transfixed by this feat, went into a dreamy mood. Sitting meditatively I changed my focus and began dreamily to ponder the few clouds in the sky, a beautiful morning, great white fluffy clouds dotted around. Then something happens, something beyond anything I know.

Suddenly there is a movement beyond the clouds. It looks like a metal object that is round with two tiers and windows in it, and it's getting bigger as it comes closer; spinning too. I watch it as it zig-zags back and forth at high speed some distance above me. It descends further. *Jesus, it's a flying saucer.* My mind's in utter panic. *I think it's*

coming for me, I know it's coming for me. This can't be happening. Then I realise there's a small child in my lap...
How on earth did he get here? The craft is the more

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frightening thing though. It begins to descend and I am more and more panicked; I know what is going to happen, I've been here before many times in my life and know it's coming for me. Then the thing slowly lowers itself and lands close by. "You have to go." I jump as the child begins to speak, and immediately I realise that the ship is communicating with me through the child. In a friendly voice the child says, "You must go, you have to leave here". "What do you mean, do you mean the earth?" I ask frantically, knowing exactly what is meant. "Yes" is his emphatic answer, "you must leave now." This is a very sudden, real life-and-death crisis, it's as if a gun is being held to my head. Terrified and shaking, I respond, "I can't go, I'm unable, I'm too scared." At that point the ship and child disappear and I'm back on my own in the chair trembling.

What the hell's going on? Am I going mad? My brain is in turmoil, I can't understand what has just happened, can't even call it a dream, but it must be. I've had this experience of a spaceship visiting me and terrifying me many times throughout my life, but always in my sleep. The demand is that I have to leave all that I know and go into outer space forever. It's like asking me to die. After some considerable time in a confused state I eventually decide that I want to find out about this thing for once and for all. I want to find the courage to step onto that ship, really get it done with. I can't tolerate not understanding it, can't stand the feeling of weakness and the fear either.

As I write, I realise that this episode reminds me of an experience that I had thirty odd years ago. At that time, emerging out of a depressive episode, I did somehow become the essence of the universe, and even though it was utter joy, I'm still scared of the complete loss of identity that happens when one has this other perspective. This spaceship experience goes some way down that path. It's a weird situation; I've been trying hard all my life to get back to that place of thirty years ago and now, when I finally get the chance, it is too terrifying to go near. You work all your life for something that, when you finally get

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it, you run as fast as you can in the other direction. I wish I was interested in making money, playing an instrument, sport, whatever; linguistics, gardening, potholing, tiddly winks, anything, except loss of identity. This craft, however, is lurking somewhere, like the monk waiting to

take me out of the known world. It is probably the monk in another guise for all I know. In any case, it feels like being abducted. Losing the key to the apartment is one thing; losing the world as I know it is something else – or is it?

After a day or two I feel far enough removed emotionally from the event to revisit it. If I understand the meaning of the experience through following the event accurately then I may feel less scared about going on the flying saucer if it returns.

(By the way, shortly after this happened the ship did return in a dream and this time I had no choice in the matter. The voice in the dream clearly said: “Stand up; pick up the stick; walk to the ship; humanity has taken a wrong turn; you must board now, time is up.” I will talk about this second visit or dream later: these two experiences came just two weeks before the first signs of a serious illness manifested.)

I sit in the position I was in when the craft appeared and start to relive it moment by moment. I see myself with the child on my lap and try to reconnect to the fear. I then study the flying saucer, seeing it in as much detail as possible. I notice that seeing the ship, in turn, really brings back the feeling of fear. I get up and move in the same way as the spaceship, zigzagging about for a bit. But nothing happens, there is no sense of getting to the underlying awareness except for a slight feeling of detachment that goes nowhere. *Should I give up?*

Following processes like this is like solder wire and heat. You hold the wire to the heat source and the wire stays solid if the heat is not hot enough. Increase the heat (amplify or hold awareness to the problem) and at the right temperature (attention) the wire suddenly collapses and

4 1

becomes fluid. It's the same with strange, scary processes like these; you get into them by becoming them and then work with the different parts, holding the most mysterious or scary places or aspects until the polarities collapse - automatically and suddenly you're in the river of awareness. Anybody can do it. Do it with an accident if you want; illnesses too; any dream; a relationship problem; moods; whatever; just get into the dynamics and hold the tensions, and then experience the problem resolving itself. Becoming the craft didn't work, the solder just did not collapse. So acting as the ship is not the way for the moment.

I switch and become the child, it was the child who made the contact, not the ship. I sit and become the child on the knee of my normal self and feel into that position.

As the child, I repeat the words that he said to me: "You've got to leave, you can't stay here, it's time to go". Suddenly I'm into something and my whole body begins to respond and shake with emotion. As the child, I feel tremendous kindness towards the one whose knee I'm on. Rather than feeling like a child in this position, however, I notice that my awareness is that of a little three-foot, wise, old man. Sitting as the child/old man on the lap of the terrified normal me, there arises the perception of the struggle of my being. The child/old man and the normal self are the same person separated only by a different kind of awareness. As I play the child/old man I feel deep kindness towards my body, I have nothing but love for myself and tenderness for the one who is terrified of going onto the spaceship. I know, however, that he has to go aboard, has to come home to himself. The otherworldly territory that this ship will bring him into is love and infinity. My normal self is being called upon to enter the infinite and turn away from consensus reality; that is, to really enter my body, live in joyous feelings for myself and let nature express herself through me. I get a flash of knowledge that the invisible world is startlingly real; that everything from other dimensions has a vital reality that is beyond consideration; in the end there are no choices. I've

4 2

turned forty five degrees in my own being, I felt the shift and now I'm walking a different angle. With insight into my being, the two of us collapse into one. I cry many tears, sobbing, holding and slowly kissing my arms and wrapping myself tenderly. I realise that you don't need to be brave when you have love. I turn another angle and realise the day is warming up and it's time to swim.

4 3

Externalisations

The sun is shining, it is 10 a.m. and I'm in the water below my apartment bobbing up and down and twisting about. I can't swim very well but I can surely twirl and spin like a perpendicular old crocodile. Others may glide like slender fish through the flat surface to the other side of the bay, but I can spin just as gracefully. At the moment I'm playing at being upright, half a head above the water, eyes level with the shimmering smooth surface all around, and I'm enjoying the warmth on my head. While playing, something touched my ankle and suddenly I'm out of the water, but I have to swim first. I swim frantically towards the metal ladder attached to the rocky edge. *Don't panic, don't panic, just keep swimming.* Nothing has touched my leg again, another few strokes and I'm there; swim, swim, swim. Finally I catch a rung and at that moment I feel

another contact: *Is that a bite?* I'm really out this time like a spring-loaded chicken hardly touching the ladder. Sitting on dry land, I look down at my ankle and the mystery is solved. The previous day I was walking up in the highland and was musing about the softer, gentler aspects of my nature, when something glinted at me from the ground. I

4 4

went over and found a girl's hair band. It was a glittery little band with two green glass balls attached to it. I put it on my ankle and left it there. Okay, mystery solved, I can go back in again.

Back in the water, floating around and suspended in the enormous body, the thought of the spaceship came to me again. I wonder what it is like, here and now, to go beyond my identity and thinking processes; to leave the earth. The answer came direct and fast. Somehow, in the moment of asking, my awareness switches from inside my body to outside, and the world is watching the man in the water twirling around. The lamp-posts on the road watch him with tenderness; the buildings that surround the bay, all looking down with relief. The world too is the conscious body of water supporting him. He, the man in the water, is at the same time, each person on the promenade perceiving others. Awareness is everything that is outside of what he normally calls "I". There is no surprise in this switch; the perspective has been unnoticed and ongoing, and is older than the earth itself.

Flying saucers apparently come from a world that is from outer space: a world beyond this one; from a place beyond normal thinking processes; beyond our identities or belief systems; outside of everyday worldviews; outside of our paradigm. I can see that to be outside of thinking is to be outside of the whole world. Even our knowledge and perception of the stars is part of our world, part of human thinking and perception. This is the space-ship that is waiting and which cannot be boarded while the normal worldly thinking dominates. In the water, somehow I go beyond the limits of my identity and get on the external ship. I am not the captain anymore; there is a new one, better suited to the larger work. The usual me constantly fights hard to maintain control but is beginning to see its limitations. The captain of the spaceship has haunted me previously as an empty monk and now I am fortunate enough to re-inhabit his awareness. I want to ground this experience in words; ground this awareness in my memory, so I'll call it 'Externalisation'.

4 5

I get out of the water, go back and shower and eventually catch the bus to Victoria. From Victoria my feet

are set on walking to the ferry terminal at Mgarr Harbour. Walking to the terminal took about three hours along the busy highway in the blazing sun. I didn't know why I wanted to go there; I set off somewhere putting one foot in front of the other. There are many externalisation flashes happening all the time as I walk. To facilitate them, I bring my attention to the edge of my thinking awareness and just step beyond it – the outside. You think something, then realise the limit of that thought and then the switch naturally happens without effort.

I get to the terminal, check it out and then climb the rocky hill overlooking the harbour. From there I watch the ferries coming and going. This is how I arrived over a week ago. Everything on Gozo arrives this way: cars; bed linen; washing machines; carpets; nuts and bolts, it all comes through here. Everything except my suitcase of course, which arrived in style, high in the air. Looking, one can see that this port is the lifeblood of the island. Without this port the island would stagnate.

Every half hour, people pour off the ferries: some with rucksacks; some empty handed; families come with children; couples hand in hand; groups of every nationality, some with a guide, lone people, too, who may do this trip every day. They all pile off in quick succession and then disappear almost as quickly into their own transport; into buses; cabs, or just walk on up the hill. Then after the foot passengers come the cars; buses; lorries; camper vans; building plant; all led by a hoard of bicycles with outdoor types peddling. The whole process is reversed as soon as everyone has disembarked. Vehicles and people troop on to leave the island. All is done in no time. Soon the harbour is empty, only to fill up again in thirty minutes. As one boat leaves another docks.

Sitting high up on the hill I'm content to just watch and enjoy the sight. My attention is then caught by a man below me picking up a magazine from the flat expanse of

4 6
rock that he is standing on. He's about twenty yards away and I wonder whether it's a soft porn mag. I'm looking at him looking at the magazine, and as I am higher he doesn't notice me. This goes on for about fifteen minutes - him looking at the magazine and me looking at him and some other perspective perceiving both of us. The two of us sit there, running on in our normal thinking; turning over, both of us, in the consciousness of the 'little me'.

But then something else is here too, the Great Constant; the Quiet All, seeing me seeing him seeing me. This is the three hundred and sixty degrees awareness; awareness that seems to arise from the earth, as much as it

does from the universe. From my thinking perspective I am reminded of that filming technique where the scene freezes, but the camera continues to circle the objects in a frozen state. In the same way, this 'awareness beyond awareness' is faster and can cup the objects of consciousness in its hands so to speak, perceiving them from all angles; a bubble of lightness that can perceive and hold the weight of consciousness in its centre.

Both of us sit there doing our own thing – just two of countless billion 'little me's. But the 'Big Universe' is present too, like an inter-terrestrial visitor that has always been here. Eventually the man drops what he is reading and walks on; I'm tempted to go and see if it is indeed a porn mag., but I don't. I want to stay with the ordinary, the common place; I want to walk empty, no entertainment, no sex, nothing. Don't want to let my normal thoughts get too magnetised. This way of being is particularly easily lost because it is the subtlest form of pre-expression.

I stand up and walk on back towards Victoria.

Flashes keep coming as I walk, perceiving my perception of events, perceiving the creation of events, letting go, seeing as from the 'other'. I know as I walk that these experiences are one source of art; no reference is taken from society; not from everyday thinking – pure unreflective art. I get to Victoria, look for a seat in the square, but the locals have taken them all. I walk around

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the narrow streets in the warm evening. Mothers, daughters, grandfathers and children are out on their chairs, talking as usual. As I pass, I say good evening and they respond likewise. I continue wandering around the alleyways and take the chance to peer into some houses with lights on: they are surprisingly stately and elegant. I like the doors, I like the interior, I note the lack of fire places, I like the tiles. I like that they share their internal space with any passing Tom, Dick or Harry. Returning to the square, I find a place to rest. I'm sitting next to what seems to be a multi-generational family, but they could also simply have known each other all their lives. These people live outside, and so maintain contact with their community, unlike the people of the cold north who live indoors, shut off, closed up - internalised, even to each other. I'm from the north.

I become fascinated by the relationship between a six-year-old boy and perhaps his grandfather, or even great-grandfather. They are playing, the old man holding the boy's two wrists that are locked together between one enormously great, weathered thumb and forefinger. He then challenges the boy to do the same with his little

hands. Both are having great fun. The old man loves the young one; they are like little children giggling together. Both of the little boy's hands are unable go around one of the old man's wrists, never mind two. But this is love of one another, not competition. I can see that they are soul mates; one just entered this world and the other not long for leaving. They are both close to the world of essence and somehow recognise it in each other. I see how meaningful life still is to the old man with the young around and how the boy can be loved without the anxiety of parenting. While enjoying this tender scene, I recall the experience with the child on my knee of early morning and realise that that dream is right here in front of me. I am both the child and the grandfather. The world is full of magical and meaningful interconnections, patterns within patterns.

Eventually I get up from my seat feeling a little

4 8

envious of this out-doors community and go for a pizza. Since my thoughts entertained me so much in the last hour or so, the experience of going beyond myself - the externalisation - has gone. I've become solid, can't step beyond myself anymore. I try not to miss it; don't want to labour at it, so I drop it and take myself off to the cinema. It can't leave me anyway, couldn't breathe without it. After the pictures I walk home through the warm night air thinking that the monk, the spaceship and the experience of externalisation are all the same thing, the same process. The song was sung and the deal was done - it was signed, sealed and delivered - I am yours. I got home and crashed into bed - a good day.

4 9

Smiles in my heels

This is my second week and I've become a tramp wandering the roads day and night until I can hardly stand. I'm like an empty shell; someone you wouldn't notice; almost invisible. I've always liked tramps, drifters, vagrants, American hobos; they seem to be going in a different direction to the usual; directions unseen and unsuspected by normal people who live in houses. This tramping state helps me stay empty. I'm reminded of my first ever memory. When I was about three years old I crept into an old tramp's shack on my own; it was down the country road, some way from where I lived. I was terrified but continued entering into the dark and smelly place until I found myself in a little room. Just there, in the middle, I saw a silver coin. I grabbed it and got out as fast as my little legs could carry me. Carl Jung, the famous psychologist, has said that your earliest remembered dream

or memory is your personal myth – a sort of dynamic pattern or blueprint that is the essential ‘you’ and which you grow into in the course of your life – like the oak tree that was always within the acorn. It is a teleological concept, born from the idea that dreams have meaning and
5 0

purpose and extend into our lives in order to complete themselves. I have learned the value of taking chances in life - and getting rewards in doing so - as in this first memory, but less known to me is that I’ve been developing into that tramp of childhood; that old bogey man who seems to be the highest expression of my nature.

Being a tramp helps me to stay with emptiness, and seeking emptiness is a worthy and tricky endeavour. Emptiness can’t come simply because it’s called, isn’t available at the click of a finger, nor accessible to a sharp intellect. You won’t find it on the dot of six o’clock; it can’t be located in a particular cave or cathedral. This no-thing can’t be revealed; doesn’t come to the table; doesn’t come to mind; won’t come to explanation; has no need for defence or control. Power it has, but it never pushes (how could it?) and it won’t help you advance yourself in the world. It comes to humility – maybe; loss; openness, perhaps. It comes with prayer sometimes, but when it does come you’re done, you’re complete; blessed.

I’m walking on, passing shopkeepers standing in their doorways; walls to my left coloured with Mediterranean hues. Hopping off high pavements at junctions and up again on the other side is a thrill. The traffic is next to me, moving around, beeping and jostling; shoppers, too. The high pavements are designed for times of heavy rain, I’m thinking, as I move quickly across junctions. In the middle of this rush, I feel paradoxically like a hunter-gatherer wandering around picking up ghosts - that’s a strange statement, so I’ll say more. I know that each unhappy or depressing thought that crosses my mind throughout the day is like a ghost stalking me, sitting there like an old bogey man sapping my energy as if it’s the whole truth. With thinking suspended, I let myself become the ghosts along the road, enter them, and walk on *as* them.

Songs are everywhere as I keep moving. I see a nice car, notice that I envy it and then I shift perspective and become that car. Becoming the car completes the feelings

5 1

of wanting it. In that way it’s no longer a ghost able to haunt me. Becoming the most expensive car is great, a big expensive job - beautiful. Lines of a song come from the experience that further bring the process to reality and then

the songs disperse in the breeze and melt away as I sing them. Emptiness returns, unbelievable, I'm back in the flow. I then see a beautiful woman and become her, femininity and all, maybe softness – gorgeous; see a house, become the house – security; make more songs. Thus I inhabit the ghost in my thoughts and complete the whole thing while moving on. In this way thoughts cannot take me away from the emptiness; can't mesmerise me; can't become over-magnetic and possess me; can't keep me polarised in fear, or whatever, and only half awake. A little street song comes to me as I drop off a curb:

Inhabit your thoughts before they inhabit you know who.

Emptiness returns when your old shoes turn new and your thought lines become sky-blue too who, who, who.

Tramping through flowers on a hillside now, it's obvious that my mood has changed; a sense of hopelessness abounding. Gradually, I've ended up in a hopeless place, head down, the world seeming pointless. My mood is as low and as depressed as hell. *How can I live like this, how can I keep going?* Life is not worth living. But there's more than this. Something different is happening simultaneously; something quirky, upside down, backward facing. The sense of no hope that is crushing, thrills me; it's delicious. Suppressed joy comes to mind; love's nature gladly contained. Looking at me, if you un-focus, you just might see a vague sense of wings; perhaps long white wings. Ravines beside me as I walk are filled with hope, with beauty, with joy; all depressions in the land are filling up with love but I'm not. There is an obscure brown bag of hopelessness in me and I hold on to it as though it were my very life. My song is hopelessness and I cannot let joy

5 2

steal it from me as it always does.

Things are changing now. I don't know how to explain it, don't even want to, but I will. If you look carefully with a dreaming mind, you might see swooping going on, swooping up and up and rolling downwards over the hills. Somehow a connection with the essence underlying depression and moodiness is happening, and songs are coming up. All sorts of mystical energies in the landscape are collapsing joy and hopelessness into one, and there I am, holding them apart – there are stones in my shoe but my sole is laughing. I'm flying as an eagle, swooping and diving, while my feet are solid on the ground like an elephant on a thousand mile walk; heavy feet in the other world, wings in this – freedom gladly confined. Feet of clay and feather-light wings, each needed

to maintain awareness of the other and everything is moving along in an empty gesture. If I lose this awareness, I swear I'll scour the land to find someone to criticise me so that I can recapture it.

Another song:

Protect me from optimism

Protect me from success

Protect me from hope

From hope, from hope, O God, protect me from hope

My heart is pointed towards you

No pale imitation that is reflective thought

But the sustainable joy that you bring

The sustainable joy that you bring

You give me emptiness

And I fall into its arms

And you lead me home.

5 3

Lead me home, home, home

You lead me home.

Push on, keep pushing on, going deeper, the process that has brought me to this open island continually creates emptiness, reduces my world, steals my possessions, robs me of my thinking, but leads to home. I have to thank somebody for this backwards liberation – doing backward awareness while my knees are moving forward. Let me tell you that God, or whatever the awareness of this universe is, seems to be a backward sort, functioning through the reverse of thinking. Anyway, you can sense a big awareness going the opposite direction to the general trend; it feels like paradoxical creation. When you're like this and God is everything and nothing, you gotta find something to thank, so I'll thank the big round beautiful earth, rolling one way while we ignore her and roll the other. I swear I'll live a life of crime such as fly tipping from now on just to keep rolling the wrong way. Walking on, going west around the edge of the island, passing men fishing, some with great long fishing rods, others watching lobster pots and octopus contraptions positioned way out in the water. Now and again amazing fish are being landed, all shapes and sizes: some flat; some swordfish-like; others fat and round. There are large ones, bigger than I've ever seen.

I'm on a road next to an extensive flat bed of rock that stretches on my right side, for about twenty metres, to the sheer cliffs. This flat rock runs on ahead as far as the eye can see. Arabs have carved the surface over centuries for the purpose of capturing salt from the sea. Small beds or pans of various sizes, usually about three inches deep and six feet by four were chiselled out of the rock.

Seawater was then emptied into these pans so that it would evaporate, leaving the dried sea salt; a precious commodity in those times. I can see that people are still working on them.

I walk off the road and pick my way through the

5 4

salt pans, balancing on the narrow mounds of rock dividing them. *Hold your balance, don't fall one way, don't fall the other.* With arms outstretched, I keep going in this fashion for some miles, hoppity hopping. The sea is to my right. There are big waves crashing against the rock cliff, creating amazing geysers that shooting through holes and up into the air for many feet. There are thumping noises too, under the overhang, thumping and sucking in an ancient, grumbling conversation of mythic Greek proportions. *Still plenty of fish to be caught down there.*

Eventually the hard rock turns into a stratum of sandstone for the next few miles. Occasional salt beds have somehow survived in this softer rock and the landscape takes on a very different and interesting sculptural quality. The sandstone is so soft that the wind over millennia has carved beautifully soft, rounded shapes into the hillside cliffs to my left. The shapes - round, vertical, soft - reveal a spoken response to the spirit of the wind; a conversation as old as the earth. The moving and the immovable are not only friendly here, they interchange. People have dug out square holes into the sides of the little overhangs in order to hold tools and things: oil drums; petrol cans; water butts; lifting and pulling tackle for boats, lots of stuff - all needed to fish and survive here in times passed.

The landscape has changed again, over scrubland now; high up too, and I'm picking my way through thorn bushes and hard sun-baked leaves that penetrate the skin. The sea is marvellous, the sun towering, little geckos scurrying everywhere. Curious as to where I'm going, I get the map out. Forna Point, it says, but as I can't see anything that attracts me in any particular direction I decide to keep going forward, hugging the sea. Eventually, I spot the Azure Window at Dwejra Point - a tourist spot; usually stay away from them. I scramble down to the most appropriate position to look at this marvel. It's a giant hole in the rock created over many centuries by big breakers in storms. You can see the azure-coloured water through and beyond it; this is one of the selling points for the island, attracting people from all over the world. I sit there for a while, more

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interested in my feet than a publicised vista through a stony hole. I dip them in the water in order to rest and refresh them; they've done a lot of walking. I'd kiss them if I

weren't so stiff.

Up again and I walk: mantras; koans; poems;
otherworldly impressions; mindless things; song lines;
insights. Loads keep bubbling up, like:

When you're going up, you're simultaneously coming
down

In going in you're simultaneously going out

Lots of lines keep coming:

Accompanying humility in yourself is simultaneous joy and
freedom

The winner is at the moment of winning, the loser

The loser the winner

When giving love to another, in that moment you receive it

To target another with hate is to target yourself

When you leave a role then you really inhabit it for the first
time

When you leave a job you really start doing it

That is the balance and completion of life in any moment

When you're empty you're full

If full then simultaneously empty

This is not a crest of a wave and then a trough, not one
after the other, but concurrent, simultaneous, Tweedle Dum
and Tweedle Dee. And more, these oppositions spring
from the essence of all - the emptiness - both at the same
time. If you want freedom, particularly in a cage with no
way out, then master this.

If you lose something you simultaneously gain something
(don't miss it)

If you die then you are truly born

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Death is in life, life in death, but only simultaneously

Accompany yourself loafing and you will be most
productive

Working hard without you being present, you accomplish
nothing.

Sickening you are instantaneously getting well. (The illness
is the cure.)

What is considered evil, when inhabited with awareness, is
good

What is considered good, caring and helpful, as 'proper
behaviour' is at best useless.

If you don't perceive the simultaneous nature in the
moment then you'll perceive the change to the opposite
over time. There's no tally in life unless you miss the
simultaneous.

*How is this work of seeming opposites tracked from moment
to moment?* "Simultaneously," comes the answer. "By
noticing the opposite of what is happening in any
moment." - Laughter!

Continuing:

Any question has a simultaneous answer

Pick it up simultaneously

Reveal that which you keep hidden, hide that which you continually reveal.

For the student to really learn, the teacher needs to be empty

Being self-centred reveals hidden universality

Universality, the front for selfishness

Being stuck has a certain flow - stay there

Going down into depression is going up into elation

Miss that and you go up and then down, round and then round

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The future and past simultaneously happen in the present

The thought and event of yesterday is simultaneously happening now

In saying everything, nothing is said

Saying nothing, everything is

With these fragments going on in my head, I

continue up and down the scrubland, light footed -

unencumbered. I don't have the responsibility of anything

that goes on inside, don't even know who's thinking, no

interest in that direction. A short way along the hillside

another tourist spot looms; an "inland sea" - says so on the

rain-proofed abstraction sheet. Seawater comes into a bowl shaped area inland through a tunnel in the sandstone

created by the sea, forming this little lake that is even

warmer for swimming. Buses, cars, ice cream stands, toilets,

shops with pink buckets and spades, people everywhere -

tourists as idle as I am, but I don't stay long! You can look

it up on any map if you want to. Next point along this

popular area is Fungus Rock, which stands out in Dwejra

Bay, just a short walk away from this little sea. It is here

that the famous "Fungus Gaulitanus" grew; I'd never heard

of it. I read that the Knights of Malta protected this rare

plant, believing that it had miraculous healing powers. It

was constantly kept under guard and anyone caught

stealing it was instantly killed: perhaps that was its healing

secret - you died looking for a cure. You can't get onto the

rock because of the sea, so I keep going.

At some point I arrived home; time passing

strangely, space and distance not clear, but I feel more than

well. I sat down and thought about my mother, who died

three months ago, and the songs she'd written in her youth.

I have never written songs, but I sense her around me

today, I have been touched for sure by her presence. I

hadn't noticed her until now but I sense her with me on

these journeys. Today I've practiced a life of crime that my

dead mother is proud of; today I walked away from the pale light of the self-raising sun with smiles in my heels.

5 8

Little Pebbles and Big Ripples

I'm in bed and I'm in trouble. Things of the mind get threatened if freedom is close by, it seems. The joy and the security of earlier lowliness has turned to dust; the empty walking has become an illusion. I'm a fool, got drunk on power somehow; fell into a trap, a nightmarish pit. Little did I suspect that the powers of my thinking world would rebel against me and reassert control. The backlash was fierce; a thousand whips visited my mind. Some god-forsaken demons got in and tried to peck my brains out - misfits all clambering to be heard at once. My thinking was at war with itself, its very foundation seemingly threatened by the joy of emptiness, of love, of externalisation. The balance held earlier utterly gone.

It appears that I terrified my normal consciousness by following processes apparently outside of myself; I didn't follow the dictates of my thinking - meddle with your identity at your peril! I threw some essential pebble into the waters of personality and caused a frightening turbulence; an enormous furore. I lie there in bed in pandemonium, unable to slow down the cacophony of voices. They are shouting about losing emptiness and

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wanting it back, but when I study the content of most of the attitudes it is more about the loss of the control of emptiness. Many of the voices wanted to help me with emptiness, they wanted to help me with self-love, and they wanted to help me with going beyond my thinking – I was each of those voices. They employed every tool of awareness that I know, but it was all based on the need for control. How can I let them regain control, there must be a way? One voice would say, “Slow your thinking down now, to get to emptiness!” Another would say, “Find out who you are talking to in your head,” and then it would attack me when I couldn't do it in the midst of the panic. Then another, “Look for movement or feelings in your body and follow it and stop thinking.” Good suggestions but everything in me was drowning in chaos. Yet another suggestion, “Let things flirt with you from outside,” but then having said that, the voice would talk incessantly, saying the same thing over and over and driving me up the wall. Some of the attitudes would just simply attack me outright. “I hate you!”

The battle between the ones who would steal me away for a fresher, bigger life and the ones who wanted to steal me back to my same-old-used-to-be was too much to

bear. In this moment I would go back to my same-old-used-to-be and drop all this awareness-seeking if I could, but the battle lines are drawn. And all this because I planted the best seeds that I was given. It seems that I planted them in a magnetic field and somehow that work caused an enormous storm. How was I to know that, in so doing, I'd threatened the very foundation of my being? Naively, I thought that I was liberating my whole nature; thought it was a simple thing; I thought I was planting and growing when other parts felt that they were being weeded out.

With this craziness in my head I got out of bed and took myself off into the countryside, couldn't stand lying there any longer. My body feelings were so discordant it was unbearable being inside my skin. I made my way towards a hilltop outside Marsalforn; must have been about 60

2 a.m. I climbed and climbed and climbed, until I got to the top; the energy in me was incredible. The last bit was tricky in the dark; steep, involving rock climbing, but I made it. Up there I found Jesus. He stood with a quiet dignity. There was still, however, desperation in me, I was split a thousand ways, voice against voice. Something in me as usual, tried to give them space; tried to relax them, but it got worse, nothing was working. How could it work? My interventions were just one of the many voices. I found myself a relatively comfortable seat among the rocks at the foot of Christ and breathed in the scent of unnoticed thyme scattered everywhere. This statue is similar to the one that stands over Rio de Janeiro; it's about, maybe, ten metres tall with feet as long as my arm. It is similar to the one in South American, in that it's a large Christ standing on a hill top, but this Christ is probably much smaller and the arms are lower and held in a more receptive gesture. I knock on a foot; it's hollow, feels like it's made of fibreglass. It's been there many decades judging by dates carved into it. A depressing joke comes to me.

"Do you know who God is"?

"God is the being who you ask for help when you really need it, just to find that you get no answer to your plea. Rather, dead silence from an empty fibreglass hulk."

There I am, in a psychological mess on a hilltop in the middle of the night in Gozo. However, I'm not alone in my struggle; all around the world there are power dynamics and oppression going on. Muslims boil, for instance, as many westerners calmly hole up in their safe Irish house on Pennsylvania Avenue, making one-sided decisions about good and bad, right and wrong, and then the vengeance.

Anyway, my torment continued. The noise grew to an unbearable pitch: shout, shout; screams, screaming; crying; hate; anger; fear; children's voices, adults' - turmoil. Finally I shouted out in the middle of it all, *I can't do this alone, I need help, please, please help me.* I put the shouting

6 1

and rage that was in me into my mouth and let it go off into the unknown world. Suddenly everything went quiet: utter silence. The silence you'd expect on the top of a hill in the middle of the night was suddenly matched by a deeper inner quiet. In an instant there was utter peace. The part of me that held the overall awareness, that could realise the nature of the voices, that understood its own limits in all of the melee, had simply screamed out. Soon after, and in the midst of silence, I covered myself up with my jacket. Enjoying the scent of soothing thyme under my head, the time had arrived when I could finally let go and fall asleep in my little space.

□

“While he sleeps I will speak. The writer fool thinks that he will eventually be successful in his quest for awareness but I know he never will be. He's too frightened of transformation and I'll make sure it stays that way. He thinks he can outwit me but I'm much faster than him. I have magic and the whole universe is my body. At times he gets close but if he gets too close I'll kill him – it's either him or me, it can't be any other way, for I'm hidden in the spaces between his thoughts. He's almost always blind to me. The fool thinks that his thoughts are his own. If he does discover me I use every thought in his head against him. I cause regret, remorse, guilt - piles of guilt. I set traps at every turn, build him up just to enjoy seeing him topple.

“One of the first things that he will think when he wakes up on top of that hill is how smart he was to quieten the voices, how good he was to be able to drop power and follow nature, but he won't realise that at that moment I've trapped him. He's on his way up again, sitting on an ever-expanding ball of inflation and that's just how I get him. I prick what he calls his 'ego' with a sharp pin, and down he'll fall. (I have some very sharp nails.) He thinks of me as his critic and I'm more than happy with that; I get bigger the more he fights me.

“It's me who's in control of awareness and that's always a fact, can't be any other way and you'd better

6 2

believe it. I said I'd kill him and I would if I had to, but that's not the fun of it. What I like is to see him fall and then fall again. I like to see him in disastrous situations, in deep depression, full of guilt and pain. As long as I

stimulate his so-called ego, then I've got him forever; he's my food; his anxiety is my joy. I will control him right to the very end of his thinking and his thinking is not about to let go anytime soon, I'll see to that. He's walked into my traps all his life: I send him into depression; I create loss at any time; I block his nose and create illness; I terrify him with emptiness and visions. I am to anti-matter, as he is to matter. I have no pity; such attitudes are sentimental and not true to me. He always goes for the soft side, goes for the friendly, related expression. He's adapted beyond belief, always wanting to be liked; to be human. Where he can't go, there I live. I am never available to anyone, always angle-poised to his adaptability, always ready.

"His unconsciousness is just one aspect of my eternal liberation. My most successful work is when he is with other people; there I have carte blanche. With people he has to adapt and submerge in expectations. He's a convincer, a communicator, a roof thatcher working for security, but I don't even have a pen that would touch paper, nor a brush to paint a picture; my stroke is detachment. I control all thought in relationships and that's too strong for him to stay awake in. You see, people don't know that I exist, nor would they believe that I exist – I can speak aloud. I influence the thought of human beings and control it too. He says that I'm a megalomaniac and that I cause war, but nobody would believe that; he says that I cause all disease; illness; addiction; famine, strife of all kinds, but he's a crackpot, he knows nothing. People's reactions are their downfall; his reactions are his downfall. I make sure he keeps reacting to his fate.

"When he talks about an empty monk he is talking about me. He glorifies me and I help him build a big illusion about his experience. He won that battle with the monk and got out of the depression but I soon turned the tables again and got him back into his normal

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unconsciousness. Several times he's won – with the nose, with the key, all that stuff; insignificant little battles won, but he slips back. When he talked about 'Externalisation', that was my awareness: when he walked empty on the road, that was me too. Any creative insights he has ever had, he is using my nature to perceive. Several times he's taken my form but each time I lull him back into unconsciousness. It's always him or me, no other way. When he thinks that he's got me, I'm somewhere else, something else. If he really took me seriously twenty four hours a day, rather than just now and again, then he might have a chance - but I work twenty four hours a day. I do what I am and that's all that I do. Okay, he managed to

quieten the voices in his head that I spooked but he really is a poor opponent, no integrity, no impeccability. I act according to nature as it is expressed in the moment; he acts according to his beloved thinking, believing that it's the whole truth. The norms of humanity are his measuring stick and he lives according to that. That makes him my slave while I feast off his flesh.”

□

6 4

Road Sweeping

After a few hours of sleep next to the statue, I awoke with a stiff back and shifted around to get comfortable. Even though my back was in pain, my mind was in a calm, even serene state as I recalled my anguish of earlier. Somehow, in my walking and travels, the idea sneaked in unnoticed that I was the only one involved in my life: that I was responsible for it all. I thought I could control my thoughts, thought I could recreate freedom anytime. I slipped into identification with power and forgot that my nature is more to do with following. Along the way I lost softness, gentleness and openness towards the wisdom ‘out there’: that ‘warm night’ that attracts and holds like a female womb. Thinking of the voices again, just any old shout would have made no difference, that clamber would have continued and my shouts would have been just one more voice. It needed to be congruent, a shout that was true, impeccable even, one from the bottom of my being – a shout that contained within it all the voices. Now I felt like a Zen artist who performed a master-stroke; one penetrating moment of ‘shout’ that cut down all the voices of frantic reason and paralysing analysis; the voices that

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refuse to get on the space ship.

It was getting light in the eastern sky – a clear and delicate vermilion turning to translucent vanilla on the horizon. Still quiet and comfortable, I wandered to thoughts of the several experiences I’d had on this island. I felt such love and appreciation for the help I’ve had and the awareness gained in the most difficult situations: the ability to penetrate under the surface of reality; the humility that brought such security; the doors that opened to the love of myself and others; the gift of ‘externalisation’, of being outside of myself without the need for control or responsibility; the simple joy at the cafe that gave me a perception of the essence of life; the insight that the most difficult is the most wondrous – all this challenges one to stop time, stop the world from running off headless. The joy of beginner’s mind too and the songs that issue like flowers from a crazy stomach, talking the language of some

spirit. These gifts and more are given to me by an obscure, loving, generous, challenging and often terrifying process that one could ever know or adequately put into words.

But these are feelings of the moment and life goes on, moods change and I'm determined to change with them.

Deep awareness never remains with us and I'm ready to consciously walk away from it. Up I get, and to home I go, and into bed I fall with sleep.

It's lunchtime, and I am back again in the central square in Victoria. Everything is hustle and bustle, people wandering about looking at market stalls that are situated around the edge of the square – sunglasses are much to the fore, so too are sun-hats, watches, bright coloured clothes of all descriptions, handbags, black and brown wallets, purses with sequins glinting in the sunshine. Other people are seated at cafe tables busy with their lunchtime meal or this and that. I spot a vacant table in the middle and claim it fast.

I have my stick with me; it's a holy stick, it's about eighteen inches long. When the spaceship revisited me in a night-time dream I was told by a voice that humanity had
6 6

taken a wrong turn and that everybody on earth had to simply stand up, pick up a stick and board the craft. No ifs or buts this time, no crying. We, humanity, walked towards the ship and boarded it - the end. I pulled the stick out of a hedge in order to anchor the awareness gained from the dream. I rang a therapist friend for help with the understanding of the dream's meaning; he's a therapist who was one of my teachers who trained me in the same work. He asked me what I associated with the word 'humanity'. "The dream didn't say people or everybody," he continued, "it said that humanity had taken a wrong turn." "I think of being human or having humanity", I responded. "In that case," he said, "the dream means that 'having humanity' is a wrong turn for you. Caring and being supportive is being adapted to everyone except yourself, it seems. You have to leave all that and develop objectivity – leave in a space-ship".

I was shocked to discover that in my caring attitude I had taken this wrong turn and that such an attitude didn't take care of my true nature. I couldn't argue with him, I could see the truth of it, having humanity was the wrong turn that I've taken in my life.

So I pulled a branch from a tree and kept it as a hook to remind me to be stiffer, direct and straight - having less humanity. I'm learning to wield the stick in relationship, to challenge others and to wake up sleepy situations inside and outside myself so as to correct the

wrong turn. When I'm with people, as soon as I can, I wonder what the stick needs to do. If I'm bored; if there is sarcasm; if I am being forced to adapt in some way; if I'm not free to express myself; if I'm unable to follow myself even if the other person is upset by my behaviour, then the question is "What does the stick need to do now?" Also, my therapist suggested that according to the dream, I should live as if I were in outer space, while my body exists in the world. So the task is not to be there in any conflict.

After fifteen minutes I'm still waiting to be served by

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a waiter. All the tables and chairs are situated in the middle of the square surrounded by the colourful market stalls with everything contained by a road running around the outside. Across the busy road are the cafe buildings themselves where the food and beverages come from.

There are many cafes that feed this square and each one has its own section in the inner space. Perhaps I can be clearer: imagine a square created by buildings with a main road running along one side; this is the road that the priests crossed. Then there is a smaller road making up the other three sides of the square. Like boxes that fit inside one another, there is then a sort of plaza area of about thirty paces square that is defined by market stalls, and inside which are the various sections belonging to several cafes. Four people sit at the table next to me and a couple of minutes later, an unfriendly looking waiter appears from across the main busy road. He duly walks past me with his eyes set on the lucrative foursome.

Immediately, I show my displeasure by leaving his table to sit at the next one, which is in a different cafe - his has blue tablecloths and the other cafe has red. After a few moments, I remember my stick attitude so back I go to the original seat.

Eventually he comes by again and passes me without even noticing that I had left and returned. On his repeat journey I pretend to trip him up with my stick. He stops.

"Can I help you?" he asks.

"I've been sitting here for ages and I feel that you ignored me."

"No, that not true, I very busy."

"But you had to pass me to get to the other tables."

"I very busy." he said.

I told him I'd prefer to eat at the next cafe because I don't feel looked after here. He shrugged his shoulders and we both promptly left the scene. But he always

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remembered me after that; I always got good service from

him from then on.

As I sat at the red table my new friend, whom I met a few days ago at the bus station, approached and slouched down on the seat next to me, face smiling as usual.

“Good to see you again,” he said. “How’s it going?”

“Great!” I responded with a shy grin. “I thought I might see you here today.”

We sat chatting for a while. My new friend dresses as colourfully as the stalls behind him. He knows everybody and since I’ve been here a while now he’s discovered me too. He works on the roads, emptying the bins and generally keeping the town clean – fifty six years old if he’s a day. His skin is leather with eyes that have never attempted to hide a teenage twinkle. Raoul has Rastafarian matted blond hair and you know that he’s been around – India and the rest. Before we spoke for the first time, I used to watch him chatting up the pretty young girls, convincing them, as I found out later, to visit a nightclub – another of his jobs. You could see that they couldn’t resist him. He’s a complete open book, a small man, there’s something about him that is like the long dusty straddling conurbations; a living trail of urban optimism as he slowly saunters about. I couldn’t see him in the little tucked away communities around here, he doesn’t inhabit the shadows, his depth is on the surface. I told him about my encounter with the waiter.

“Oh”, he said, “that guy... He’s married to my sister. He’s from North Africa you know. They have strange ways; he punched my sister in the face the other day.”

“What!!!”

“Yeah, bruised her cheek.”

We can see the waiter standing by the cafe door, one hand cupping the other across his front either standing guard or hiding the offending fist.

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“When I confronted him,” Raoul continued, “he told me that he couldn’t look my sister in the face since he hit her. I told him he’s not only a lily-livered coward for hitting her, but he’s indulging in guilt and embarrassment; can’t even look at his work; can’t stand for what he’s done. The guy just hides – lily-livered!”

Then Raoul told me to look at the waiter and asked,

“What do you see?”

“He looks like a person who could handle himself, he’s big, but I think he’s moody. He looks like he skulks, like he’s in a bad temper all the time.”

“I’ll tell you what his trouble is,” Raoul went on, “he’s a fighter who’s always looking for ease, looking for

relaxation. If you look at him in a phenomenological way, without your ideas about him, just by what you see, you'll see a fighter, a boxer, who needs to fight in every situation, zap zap zap. He needs to create tension everywhere, that way he'd gain space for himself. But he neglects the fighter and that makes him dangerous. That fighter suddenly came out and hit the defenceless and all he does is wallow in guilt, in his feelings of weakness.

"If you really use phenomenology you can see what's in front of you, no need to work things out. Look at him, he's full of tension and all the time tries to get out of it. His eyes are tense, his shoulders are the same, and the fighter in him is trying to overwhelm him. That's why you got involved with him; his body tension pulled you in. The fighter in his body dreams of battle, it's so obvious when you open your eyes. Know what I mean?"

"Yeah," I said.

He looked at me in his usual friendly way and asked, "Do you?"

"Yes, I do," I responded, "it's about direct knowledge, concentrates on experience rather than ideas."

"You got it" and then continued making his point.

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"I'm a road sweeper, I've learned to use the wisdom that flows through movement. It's a wisdom state, not a thinking process. You can perceive thought when your position is outside of it. But when you're inside, you're lost."

I can see Raoul do something with his eyes while he's talking - they seem a bit vacant.

"If you'd have followed your movements realising that your thoughts are just abstract, then you'd have been free around him. Yeah, that's him, zap zap zap, a fighter on the move, zap, zap in conversation, always ready, always aware, putting people on the back foot. But that guy's got no idea who he is, swimming in mashed-up thoughts and feelings. He's unsafe because the fighter will come out unconsciously and cause abuse and damage."

He asked me to sweep the scene in front of me using my body to see what I pick up, but I couldn't really do it, not then anyway.

"How do you do it so easily?" I asked.

"Practice! I'm a phenomenologist, I practice it all the time."

"What do you see in me?" I asked. He responded without looking:

"You're cruel to your thinking, you place too heavy a burden on it, and you're at war with it."

"I don't think I agree," I responded.

"Well, on the one hand you rely heavily on it, and on the

other, you don't trust your thinking. But I'm safe guessing this because everyone does it."

"So phenomenologists guess like the rest of us," I interjected, feeling a little miffed.

"There's a heavy burden placed on thinking by all of us. Thinking has been trained in our world to rely on itself as if it's the only wisdom. The burden is often too much for it; the responsibility too great. In ancient times here and
7 1

everywhere, people had omens, signs, signals, portents; all sorts of happenings outside themselves that were endowed with wisdom and could lead the way. All we have now is ourselves or other thinking people."

He laughed, and I asked him what was funny.

"Because thinking is tricky, but I also feel pain for the process. Thinking has to keep going, rely on itself; work it all out as though it is the centre of the universe. It's extremely lonely, extremely lonely and we're often way too hard on it. On the one hand, thinking is an information exchange, internally and externally. However it also represents parts of our nature expressing themselves and, as such, we need to give lots of space for all of our parts and their attempts at knowledge."

As he said this, I thought about the frenzied eruption of my own inner voices the previous night and wondered whether he knew something deeper about me?

"Some of the ancient people followed omens because of fear, at least that's what we modern people, with our insecure process of knowledge-gathering, like to think. But for most people long ago, omens pointed to a state, a state that was outside of themselves and one that they could inhabit. These people knew that there was something more than them; something more than their thinking that they could trust. This something was greater than them and yet to know the wisdom of omens they had to be part of that wisdom. If you know the wisdom of omens, by definition, you are outside of yourself. These people were not unknowingly lonely or unknowingly burdened like us; they shared the wisdom of the universe, and could lean on it because they themselves knew that they were an expression of it. As I said, they were not alone like us, but were accompanied every step of the way by something greater. All this is phenomenological but you'd never guess it if you were a thinker."

Then he got up off the chair as though he'd suddenly remembered something.

7 2

"I'm off," he said, "got someone to see, shall I throw that stick in the bin for you?"

“Yeah, okay - no, on second thoughts I need it.”

“Don’t forget, take care of thinking, it needs all the help and love it can get.”

As he left I could hear the birds twittering in the trees around about, calling out to each other but I paid them little attention.

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Signals, Signs and Omens

I’m enjoying the hustle and bustle here, happy to be in this colourful cafe and just write. Raoul has been gone about five minutes. Two people sit at the table that I vacated earlier. When food is brought to them, they have an argument with the guilt-ridden waiter. I can’t hear what it’s about but they are not happy with him either.

Here at the red table, at last a new waiter comes to serve me. I’ve been here about forty-five minutes and he didn’t come near me. I give him my order eventually but he doesn’t pay much attention, doesn’t write it down, just watches what’s happening all around. He moves on and proceeds to take the order from three other people, doesn’t write that down either. Next he cleans a table for customers who are waiting, and at the same time is talking to locals that pass-by. I wonder whether he knows that I even spoke to him, never mind remembers my order. In a short while he arrives with my food and the other people’s food too; everything’s in order. I continue watching him, he fascinates me; I’ve come to love his relaxed efficiency in such a chaotic place. He was so busy that he didn’t get to me for a long time, but I can see that he takes care of

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everyone and attends to all with genuine courtesy. It seems to me that he loves people, loves his work. Adapting or being related is no problem for him. He doesn’t need a stick, he bends with everything, no problem being human. All the tables are still occupied but the cusp of lunchtime busyness has been crossed and, as I write, he comes up to me for a chat:

“That’s da life, you taket easy in my cafe, plenty time.” He’s curious having seen me writing.

“Dat your stick?”

“Yes.”

“Oh, okay, I tought dat it might be rubbish.”

“No, it’s mine. Is that your busy period over?” I asked.

“No, at two torty de bus loads come, I start again, but I look after dem.”

More Russians probably.

He is busy but he is not rushed. He has never been rushed, I imagine, since the day he was born. He carries on with his work, happy making money. Later, in the evening,

I saw him with the most expensive car in town. Soon, I notice another conflict a few tables away - it must be the day for it. There are two gay men accompanied by the mother of one of them who are standing near a heterosexual family – two parents and one adolescent child seated at the table. The family with the young child have finished their meal and my nonchalant owner had cleared the table before the gay family arrived. Here's the scene: the gay family are waiting for the table that the straight family are sitting at, but the straight family will not budge; each is aware of the other. There is a spare chair at this table and eventually one of the gay men asks, "Can I sit here?" The family reluctantly nod – what else can they do? But they don't get up to depart. This leaves the mother and the other gay man standing. It is a stand off, all sorts of body signals flying around: aggression; fear;

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timidity and rage - the lot. I have three chairs at my table so go over to offer my spare seats. As one of them has already taken up residence with the seated family, he refuses to move so they all stick together.

Eventually our waiter sees the problem and asks the young family if they wouldn't mind leaving in order to help with seats. The parents and child leave smiling at each other as though saying, "Who do they think they are?" This all seems a sad episode; the nuclear family have all the power of society behind them. They identify with being pushed around as victims and all they need to realise is how much support from the world they have in relation to the gay family, who have to survive all sorts of prejudice and even danger. If they really knew how valued they are and how undervalued gay families are, then they would perhaps be more generous. The young family have rank and power that they are unaware of. Someone else at a different table next to me leaned over and said, "Families - ya can't live with them, and ya can't live without them!" I've had enough of sitting; I decide that I want to walk to the town of Sannat and to the cliffs beyond.

Up and out in the afternoon heat, I soon find that my body wants to walk in a slightly different direction to the signpost. It's going to be longer, if I ever get there, but I get curious about this new direction. I wander the back roads out of Victoria, pass some trees ripe with olives and then on into the countryside, pocket bulging. At some point I get lost. I have no idea where I am. Eventually, I see an old man carrying a bag thrown over one shoulder and a wire coil hanging from the other one. I approach him.

"I'm looking for the cliffs, do you know the way to them?"

“Yes, cliffs this way.”

He is going in the same direction so I accompany him. We walk and chat together through the scrubland and farmers’ clearings for about an hour; I’m enjoying his company and the talk together. We talk about the British

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and the fact that he likes them. When he was a boy, he said, he used to do errands for the British soldiers at Xlendi, and sold things that he had made to them too. Being Irish and a fellow colonised islander, I’m surprised by his attitude. Some Irish wouldn’t understand the British oppressors being liked. The British were in Malta for two hundred years and were much preferred to the Knights of Malta whom the Brits ousted. Perhaps, I thought, the British were in a good mood while here; maybe it’s the weather. They certainly were not in a good mood for eight hundred years in Ireland. But then the Irish are a difficult lot, they’re different to the English, I thought, and in that moment an impression flooded me. I could see in my awareness that the Irish catch hold of things differently; grab life in a different way; a tighter grip that comes closer in, with a swifter turn away; a dynamic, emotional difference that comes at a sideways angle.

I had recently read a book about the Irish. The Romans inhabited Britain for a few centuries early in A.D. and brought with them, among other things, new ways of thinking. From the Greeks they had learned to approach nature from the point of view of Logos – the word. This new perspective enabled the Roman world to consider nature as an idea and to use language itself as a way of considering and detaching from experience. So the British, in common with the rest of Europe, developed rational thought and logic. The Irish on the other hand, never had the pleasure of seeing a Roman army; for the Romans didn’t bother with Ireland, leaving the Irish to continue in the way of all ancient peoples, the way of Muthos, or myth. In this so-called primitive approach, nature and people are not separated, but are expressions of the gods. Muthos is the act of the gods in their creating and works something like this: as the gods think a thought then that thought has three aspects: it is, at the same moment, thought, word, and deed – as they think of something then it becomes real and manifests in the world there and then. Similarly, as a stone falls it is animated by a force that made it fall, and such a force could inhabit the observer. This is similar to the

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findings in sub-atomic physics; that the observer and the observed are found to be intertwined, just as are the particle and the wave. So, for the Irish, as well as the poet,

words have a force; a power in themselves. Human beings seem to be inhabited by two roles or perspectives, one that sides with Logos – the scientist, the philosopher, those looking for proof, and so on; and the other with Muthos – intuitive thinking, the artist, the dreamer, the poet. From the Muthos perspective, when words speak about sleep, then the words begin to sleep. When words talk of hearing, then the words themselves are listening. (James Joyce’s writing is a great example of this.) The integration within Muthos is so complete that words are both concrete and imaginative. Things are, in and of themselves, the realities they speak about. The book says that Myth, rather than being illusion, proclaims reality is hidden essence and inspires physical, psychological and social structures to arise from the heart of its own narration. In any case, it could be that the Irish are mainly Muthos-orientated and the British mainly Logos. Perhaps this difference is the underlying source of the conflict between them for centuries.

Together the old man and I talk about boreholes and the constant need for water; we talk about life on Gozo in past times, and we talk too, about people shooting birds that come over from Africa. Indeed we can hear shotguns as we walk, and he tells me how they trap them with nets. The conversation continued as I loved him – when I have a hundred questions, then I know I love the person. He says that poachers killed the last two Maltese falcons in 1982, and that they are now extinct. Then he tells me with some pride, about a woman who was the first person who scaled the high cliffs from the sea that we are now approaching from the top – it’s a fine man who is proud of a woman’s achievements in the male-dominated world of the Mediterranean. Finally we arrive at the destination, which is the same for both of us. His plot of land is at the very edge of the cliff.

I have never before been at the edge of such a

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towering, sheer cliff; it fell away for about 200 metres beneath my feet. He pointed out Malta and then Comino: even smaller than Gozo. Then he said with a little smile from under his squinting eyes,

“This where I play”, pointing to his plot, “I planting onions and garlic today”.

“Anything I can do to help?” I ask.

“No, you enjoy da view.”

This is a garden plot in paradise. I sit in the sun at the edge of the enormous drop, legs dangling over, and think about the crazed voices that nearly drove me mad. Lying here, I can understand why those voices were in

such turmoil when I dropped my identity. If I jumped off this ledge now, there would be no less panic on the way down. On my back, my mind wanders again to Muthos. Muthos and quantum mechanics are quite similar; both are highly integrated systems that are to do with creating and supporting human life and the human spirit. Perhaps in the future physicists will be noting in their uncertainty notebooks, omens, signs and symbols - just as our ancestors did - when interacting with particles and the like, I suspect they already do. I think the future will be full of shamanic physicists dancing around in laboratories, with the ghosts of dark matter on their backs.

The old man and I are both happy together; we're each doing our thing with just yards between us. I'm lying on my back on a gigantic slab of stone with one leg still dangling over the edge while he potters. While in a reverie, shading my eyes with one hand and feeling the ground with the other, I somehow picked up something which seemed to be a flat bit of stone. I casually lifted it up and became astounded to see that it was a bit of fossil that was the very image and shape of the flying saucer that came for me. It had the same two-tier structure and window-like shapes around the edge, joining both tiers; some sort of ammonite, I presumed.

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It was apparently tectonic plate movements between Africa and Europe that created the Maltese islands and therefore there are lots of seashells embedded in the high rocks. This was one such shell. It felt like an agreement between the ordinary world and the dreaming world - an omen. Finding it gave me hope that the ship is still around, flirting with me. It made me feel so happy that I hadn't been deserted through fear of the craft. Later, after some inner work connecting to the ship and with the shell in my pocket, I waved goodbye to the old man, said I'd see him again, and walked along the cliff top towards Xlendi. He reminded me of my father as we parted, they were both workers; I liked the old man, however, I could dream near him.

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Accidentally on purpose

I had read about the world famous Ta' Pinu Basilica, so decided to go and have a look at it. To get there I walked towards the small town of Gharb. Three quarters of the way there I took a left turn towards The Basilica; arrived, looked at it and walked on - special for some but not for me. Further round, made my way to Gharb and from there I again joined up with the road back to Victoria, doing a sort of hangman's noose journey - up, around and

back down. At one point I sat for a rest, sat on a low wall in the shade to cool off. It was then that it happened. I parted company with the digital camera, my new toy, my pride and joy. It was like losing part of me, I couldn't believe the anguish. The reaction to losing it was way over the top. I discovered the loss when I returned to my apartment, looked in all the pockets of the rucksack, under the table, in the bag again, under cushions, under the table, etc, etc, etc. Gone, I couldn't believe it. Soon I was sitting in a taxi returning to the spot. No camera there - how could there be? An obvious camera on a wall would hardly enjoy a long rest, even on a religious island. From the 'bad place', the squat wall, the hole in the world, I walked the
8 1

route back to Victoria - about four miles - with no sign, no sign of my precious third eye. I checked the police station later and also for several days afterwards, with no result. Where the externalisation experiences now? Where the empty monk? Where the great feeling of eternity, the creative song lines, the internal silence? None of it important now - I've lost my camera and that's everything!!! First the keys, now the camera, how could I be so stupid, what sort of head have I got? I just threw away .300, how could I be so unfortunate, so absentminded, so brainless? While walking back home to Marsalforn I rack my brain trying to remember what I did to lose it, going over and over the sequence of events. There are attempts to reason things through, incessant thinking about the consequences of the loss, criticising myself on the one hand and trying to defend myself on the other; all the time I'm living in hope that it will somehow turn up. I try to tell myself that nothing's ever been found in such a state but it doesn't work. I continue criticising myself, taking other unrelated crimes into account to support the verdict and pronounce the sentence.

On this dusty road, cars speed by forcing me off and making me furious. Judgements continue internally, sentences are passed and I'm imprisoned by my own state; guilt is pronounced for being so egotistical, having attachments to objects, being acquisitive and all the rest. Another car passes with locals laughing and shouting something out of the window.

"Piss off," I mumble, "for all I know you yobbos took it; wouldn't be surprised if they started taking pictures of me just for fun."

I was so furious I could have chewed my teeth. Then I switched back and beat myself up again. It's one of those times when criticism comes at you from all angles.

You gobble up everything, you're so petty minded, everything

that you touch or comes through you, you use to further yourself - gobble, gobble, gobble, you're like a praying
8 2

mantis.

How I got to that attitude through losing the camera I don't know, but it felt like my ego was a praying mantis – ego gobbling everything in sight, as if the world was there for me alone. Then a different kind of thought came.

Strange idea, my mind as a praying mantis - where did that come from?

I'd picked up a different awareness, outside of my torrid mind; a different voice that used words like gobble and praying mantis. These are not words belonging to my normal vocabulary. In my normal thinking I would never consider myself as a praying mantis, hardly know what it is. However, in the moment of recalling “gobble, gobble, gobble”, I immediately felt, saw and held in my awareness a praying mantis. I somehow stumbled across and captured a hunter camouflaged in my thoughts. It was the kind of rare insight that makes you want to go ‘Eureka!’ Suddenly, I can identify as a praying mantis. Another thought occurred. *If the praying mantis is the ego, then what's the prey? If there is a predator around then there should be something preyed upon. They usually go together.*

In an instant another realisation hit home: Christ, it eats *me*! I was astounded; I'd suddenly entered the whole structure of my nature and could instantly see the dynamics that made me tick. First I discover that I'm a praying mantis and then I realise that it eats my identity - I'm food for a predator! It eats me when I criticise myself; eats me when I call myself egotistical; call myself stupid - the praying mantis is the critical attacker. The realisation dawns that I've been setting myself up on a platter all my life. When I judge myself then I'm the prey; when I doubt myself or pull myself to pieces, I'm being eaten at that moment. In criticising ourselves we tend not to think about there being two parts, but there are. When I concern myself with what others think of me, I put myself in the trap - give them my awareness, my autonomy and in that way, I'm also eaten internally. Slurp, slurp, a long, invisible tongue appears out

8 3

of nowhere picking off my words and nobody is any the wiser - except that I feel dissatisfied, incomplete and wretched as though my flesh has been ripped into and devoured. I've had this happen to me so much that, now that I've caught it, I realise that I know the praying mantis intimately; I know, too, its many forms and manifestations throughout my life. This praying mantis is totally egotistical and self-centred and is completely at peace with that,

wouldn't even think about it – eat, gobble, eat, gobble, yum, yum. It's obvious that this creature has the better part of the deal.

As I shapeshift into this critic, I know that I'm a sharp hunter, a stalker, a predator who requires obscurity to survive; becoming obscure even unto myself, without history; momentarily hidden in ordinary reality, ready to pounce on life. I am a secret lover, a devourer of awareness; a praying bishop; a divine parasite. I'm God's chameleon and the devil's camouflage. I know that my praying mantis spirit is man's liberation and man's destruction. As I hold my normal identity together with this new perspective, I realise that the praying mantis is the unseen enemy that is so close that we call it 'I'. There is that choice that I mentioned: one can either get eaten by it by simply living ordinary life, or one can study and learn from a supreme hunter of eternity, who is continually sensing, stalking, and capturing everlasting freedom through consciously blending with the environment – with you. What form can your essential awareness take – the one who is aware of awareness? All this I reveal without being eaten. People ask when someone looks irritable or worried "What's eating him?" I say "What's eating you?" Let me reveal more. The praying mantis does nothing but sit in our thoughts, being them. It is awareness that tunes in and becomes every thought we have. It is Taoism. It is 'non-doing'. Praying mantis action never gets eaten because it is never differentiated, always camouflaged, always safe. I caught it eating my thoughts when I was angry with myself. I was reactionary, undifferentiated, working against myself, and praying

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mantis awareness was ingesting the whole thing - gobble, gobble, gobble.

If you want to catch a praying mantis, or a similar sort of pattern in your own consciousness, you simply need to be aware of your thoughts, nothing more; no wondering about them, no analysing, just letting them function while observation happens internally. In that way you are doing more of what you're already doing, but consciously and your unattached observations will pick up the creature that ingests awareness. The praying mantis is submerged into the world of agreements, blending with what is. All this is the way of this creature and in revealing this, I still don't get eaten.

I felt so safe and with such inner confidence that I wanted to kiss something. So I took myself off to the hills and eventually, after an hour or so, sat down next to a beautiful little thistle - yellow, feminine, receptive –

pillowed by the rough ground. In this place some thistles don't have stems, the blossoms sit on the soil receptive of any insects; even a foot couldn't damage it. The flower enthralled me with its beauty, pulled in all my awareness. This unassuming flower sat there as though pinned to the earth; pinned like a buttonhole for some curious marriage. The message it gave was love; it was just there giving it to the world – nothing hidden or obscure about it, nothing camouflaged except that we don't usually notice weeds. The thistle shone with the security and safety of being inconsequential. In a way it was just as hidden as the praying mantis.

I sat next to the flower, both of us quiet. I think it was glad to be next to me, glad to be observed and appreciated and I felt a gentle, inner relaxation - I felt blended. In the stillness something caught my attention off to the side. Something had moved, but when I looked, there was nothing there. Then another movement and there it was. About three feet away was a long, slender, light green stick - one that moved. I couldn't believe it - who would? Right there in front of me was a real, breathing,

8 5
physical, praying mantis. It hung there on the stem of a dead, brown weed, struggling very slowly upwards, more stopped than moving; no movement at all if I moved. It was surreptitiously reaching for the lower branches of a short, green bush just above. As I observed, it became still – a green branch on a dead stem, incongruent, exposed - caught.

This was the first time that I had seen a praying mantis and although delighted and surprised, given my experience earlier, it seemed a natural discovery, could have expected it even. This discovery was no coincidence however; I'm on the edge between a dreaming world and consensus reality, the edge between two paradigms. The dreaming world is revealing something 'accidentally on purpose'. I felt that some organising principle - a praying mantis spirit - was involved in this discovery, and in the loss of the camera, too, it probably created the whole situation – the criticism, the words 'gobble, gobble, gobble,' and now here it is, the physical praying mantis. As the Australian Aboriginals might say, I seemed to be in 'Praying Mantis Dreaming'.

Watching this fascinating creature, I became interested in why it moved so slowly and wondered how fast it could move. It was almost hanging upside down on the thin stem; a stem that could hardly sustain a puff of wind never mind a three inch bishop-like devourer of insects. I inched imperceptibly closer, stalking a masterstalker,

and after some minutes eventually touched its tail.

As I made contact, it moved with such speed that it was instantaneously here then there, so fast that my eyes couldn't catch the sequence. Then it returned to its frozen state, commencing its gentle struggle upwards only after it felt safe. There we were, both playing a deadly game of stillness and movement - deadly from his point of view anyway.

As I watched, it eventually reached the green bush and became perfectly camouflaged, settling down and miraculously transforming into a branch and leaf, to all

8 6
intents and purposes, gone - if only I had my camera! I had happened upon it because it was in an exposed position on the brown soil. The movement against the brown background revealed it, so it had no choice but to advance as slowly as possible towards safety. As a delicate animal, speed and blending are both its weapon and its defence. In the first encounter (during my internal criticisms) it became exposed when I noticed that the words 'gobble' and so on, were incongruent within my normal thinking processes; words like gobble, gobble and praying mantis stood out like a green stick on brown soil.

This static creature in the ordinary world of time and space hunts insects, but in the world of consciousness it preys on thought, preys on self-criticism, gobbles up the exposed self-attacks. Such a voracious appetite keeps one in a state of low self-esteem, keeps one the victim; the prey. But to capture an internal praying mantis is to inhabit its awareness, and to become it is the transformation from victim hood. However, you don't capture it externally and internally in the same day without the incidents happening 'accidentally on purpose.' I was somehow given this experience; the praying mantis revealed itself as a partner in awareness-seeking. It is really too skilled for me to catch it without help. However, I may be deluding myself in thinking that I'm discovering a praying mantis. It is more likely the praying mantis is transforming itself into me - extending itself into the physical world; extending its territory beyond my consciousness and into a wider arena. The term 'survival of the fittest' was always a rather a one-sided way of seeing natural processes. Is it not better to say 'the triumph of awareness'? In nature we witness the savagery of animals in the fight for survival, but on the level of awareness, behind such encounters, nothing may be lost and everything gained. Rather than nature being a savage place, it is more likely to be about love, a place of love, self love of the One Being expanding itself. Praying mantis knowledge says that to become

praying mantis energy you would do well to drop your old
8 7

knowledge of yourself. It is dangerous to self-examine because you don't know who is hunting that knowledge. It says: remain obscure, even to yourself; drop your history and identity; leave those who know you because that knowing reveals you, mirrors you, fixes you, and in that way you've already been digested. Self-imposed obscurity, however, includes awareness; includes experience in the present moment and in that way you retain an everexpanding life and Being that is indestructible. In obscurity polarisations cease, there is no praying mantis and prey; there is just the one eternal awareness. The only awareness required for being a praying mantis is to know that you are the hidden praying.

8 8

The Hostage

We're in the last two weeks of our journey. In his time here Tweedle Dee, the 'old familiar', has finally become just a little dumb, lost a little of his own light; lost his attachment to words. I've always been his real compass, his true north and in this moment he knows it. He rambled all day over the flat rocks and dry scrubland that gradually rises, wedge-like, to the high cliff-tops. Made his way early in the day from Victoria to Sannat and from there, crossed the rough empty landscape towards the general area called Ta' Cenc. Giving himself to me, he tracked his way slowly through the rocks, picking up hunters' pathways that crisscrossed everywhere in this vast expanse. The area, he noticed, has been a hunting ground used by man and animals for centuries; paths abounding, leading nowhere and that suited just fine.

Lost is the quest, lost the theme; smelling it; tasting it, lost in the midday night, one foot on the earth, the other not. Treading unseen paths too; invisible paths that are more ancient and more used than the well-worn paths his sandals are picking through. The 'old familiar' doesn't know who's thinking anymore, everything is in the lost. He

8 9

used to think he had his own path; called it his life, but the path he walked and is walking was never his, that path belongs to the lost; belongs to the unknowable. Around in circles he goes, lifting, lifting, inspiration everywhere, head in a storm, shaken by delight. Pure gestures happening from him towards subtle phenomena, and towards this and that – the ordinary. Reflections, preconceptions and good looks, like broken mirrors, lie discarded on the pathways behind. This is no place for the organised mind, no consistency here, multitudinous contradictions abound. It's

bad news if you're looking for a direction home, or have something to achieve like a shopping list or an appointment for your hair. In that case best to stick to a known track, stick to foot, wheel or wing; here there is neither map nor transport – the only vehicle, awareness. Eventually the expanse of sea begins to fill his eyes as he approaches the highest point. Left or right is the only question. He listens for guidance - birds. One clear invitation in a bush to the left, twittering "This way," so left it is. On the edge, he walks a bit, stands, walks a little more, goes deliberately in the opposite direction; now waits for impressions; now feels the body's inclinations; now shifts perspectives, sees from inside/outside/outside/inside - lost in transformation. He remembers himself; forgets himself; stands; walks; eats; drinks: drinking everything – his mind, liquidity. Eventually, while walking this, the way of the every-one-walk, he arrives at the inlet called Mgarr Lx-Xini. Does he want to go down there where there are people or stay up here in the beautiful emptiness? But we're already moving downwards, there isn't a choice, never has been, and he's glad. He's doing the normal thing, doing the don't-go-down-theregoing-down-there; it's the practice, it's 'wholeing'.

On the way down a wooden cafe can be seen; people moving around; boats in and out of the water; children playing. Over on the sheltered side, there are a few boathouses and sheds huddled together for protection on bad weather days. The inlet itself pierces the land deeply like a knife, cutting to a narrow point where the 90 activity is taking place. He's out of sync. with this scene, he thinks, but there's no way around and anyway the only thing to lose is his state and that's truly nothing. The cafe seat is welcome, so too is the cold Coke. A usual conversation continues at the next table, the waiter is talking to an English yacht owner-type who has stretched and rounded braces. The waiter is building a house in the winter months it seems, and makes his money here in the summer to fund the project. They're talking to each other but nothing is happening between them, no contact, and walker likes it; the joy is in the superficiality of it. The conversation is aimless chitchat; they talk because it's a social thing to do.

Two children down by the water are pulling at a towel between them. One child hits the other – slap; slaps her on the face. Crying starts. The hand hit the cheek hard, the head snapped like a whip to the left. People sitting in earshot are unconcerned; could be the parents. The water continues to lap the stones, gently rustling and ruffling the

little pebbles with a renewed whoosh and then retreat, whoosh and retreat – a sound older than ears. A family on a boat, showing unfriendly body signals to each other, are unnaturally busy pulling at ropes and doing things with heads down – could be a storm around? On shore someone has piled single stones, one atop the other in a balancing manoeuvre across various parts of the beach. Done this morning, perhaps, maybe yesterday? The conversation continues at the other table as the children fight.

All this, everything that is happening here, is the walker; the thinker. He realises that he is looking at himself. Every thought, behaviour and action that is happening in this space is a function of his normal being. He can see it; it's obvious, but that world inside him has stopped only to continue on the outside. What is left is awareness that is attached to its own nature and that's no attachment at all. He has visions: thoughts, like dead leaves are falling from him, settling gently onto the soil that is his flesh and bones. Finished with the Coke, suddenly he's up, out and away leaving the world as it is: the journey is
9 1

everything, more than a destination - if there were one. Moments later he's up the steep steps on the other side of the gorge and back into nature. As he drifts, he comes across the purpose of his journey; the meaning and the holy direction that his body steered him towards. From the untold paths that surrounded him, he inevitably came upon this point. In front of him he saw a large, discarded, empty paper bag. It lay by the side of the path, no doubt the wind blowing it there on a blustery day. The outside was colourful, the inside plain white. In the moment of noticing it he became it, could feel the awareness of it - its essential nature captured by the free-floating awareness all about. What did this bag have in it? Birthday presents; a new dress; a dark suit; red high-heeled shoes; a cowboy outfit and gun for Christmas? It had been full of presents of various kinds for sure; presents that would clothe an identity. But now this bag is empty of them all. All there is left is the simple joy of the pure white inner lining, a clean sheet of pure quality; simple, uncluttered and ordinary. He sees his own state in this wind-blown shopping bag and realises again that the world is so beautiful; it talks to itself in its own language; it is magic for itself, awareness reflecting its own essential nature everywhere. But there was no hesitation in him, he didn't fix anything in memory; nothing preserved. Onwards, stopping for nothing, reflecting only on 'nothing', dropping everything, pressing onwards, up and down the hillsides, feeling unnoticed, unseen, obscure even – glad, nothing

could take us, nothing inside or out, detection impossible. He is as a written page rubbed out, left only with the smudges of his former self; enough only to maintain form. With a keen dullness of mind, awareness is hunted; the essence of nature captured and then dropped and all is safe from any other predator. His dusty sandals and tired feet are sore but happy. There is nothing now except the flirt from his dusty feet; a vector with nothing but faithful, laughing feet.

Further on he passes a grand house with its

9 2

secluded garden and numerous angled white walls under a jumble of terracotta-tiled roofs. It's overlooking the wide expanse of the glittering Mediterranean. There are palm trees, beautiful exotic flowers, rolling lawns and a swimming pool with plenty of gin and tonic presumably. A thought comes up: *Would I like to live there?* The answer came back fast: *I could live anywhere as long as my mind is pristine, uncluttered - at its own beginning.* A laugh surfaced and exploded like a bubble from the bottom of the sea. Who can enjoy anything for long if they are full? One could think that humans get used to everything eventually and it weighs them down and even that is welcomed. Every thought creates a consequence and there are no consequences flowing from him. There is nothing in him, nothing to gain, nothing to lose, there is only the moment and the delicious capturing of awareness; a hunter-gatherer of invisible essences.

9 3

Alive but Dead

Towards evening ordinary reality returns and I come back to myself; settle back into my normal identity, as I remembered that the bus leaves Mgarr each time the ferry docks. I can see the ferry turning into the harbour about half a mile away and suddenly there is a purpose and a rush as I hobble down the side of the rocky hill to the bus stop. The bus arrived soon afterwards and then I'm on it looking out at the vehicles and people on the busy road as we make our way towards Victoria. Rather than focusing on the hustle and bustle, I returned to my recent journey. I had walked off the edge of the earth and just kept going further and further into the unknown, walked right into the heavens and on into the stars. There was nothing in front of me, nothing behind me, nothing under. In such a place, how could anyone trip?

In a short while I'm jumping off in Victoria and hopping onto the bus home like a gazelle. The altered states keep bubbling up through the evening. I walk around the apartment; at times the normal everyday self

functions and every now and then emptiness takes over and I'm happy with both: *I'm a wave! No, I'm a particle! No,*
9 4

that's it, I don't exist. Throughout the evening a flipping is happening; a switching between the tracks that are 'thought', to consciously going along in the opposite direction of 'no-thought'; from "What does this mean?" or "I understand that," to the experience presenting and interpreting itself in a state of detachment. Neither side is struggling to dominate. I switch to no-thought and you can see me there, body empty, eyes vacant, picking things up and putting them down, walking here, walking there, noticing nothing, noticing everything - touching without contact. There's no inner chatter: beautiful visions, thoughts and movements come and go without wordy interpretation. I am open like a kitchen sink. There's an inexhaustible supply of water, the plug is removed, and the drain is clear and free. No blockage, no holding, no stagnant waters in the sink, the water flows from a magical, inexhaustible source and runs away clean.

I am clothed in the normal clothes of the day, but if you look you can see that the eyes reveal the real form underneath; a deep nothingness that would terrify some but not others. In choosing the state of no-thought you choose death; if the cat is either alive or dead, then this one has chosen death. Those who have died and gone to the other world are like this, I assume; magical awareness that is never-ending, blossoming like flowers. I'm thinking a strong thought that the living can practice being dead while alive and live in this way, communicating from inside the body and talking from a magical, irrational grave. Emptiness, what is it but a dull mind kneeling in front of body knowledge, the knowledge of bones; and what is body knowledge but the functioning of creation?

9 5

Wings of Clay

There is a lot of clay in Gozo, much of it in great mounds on the surface in some parts of the island; it helps to retain moisture, making Gozo greener than the main island. Where the clay lies on the surface, however, there is no greenery; nothing lives on it in fact. There are patches of this clay on the hillsides above my path today and last night there was an enormous storm that caused much of this clay to become waterlogged and slippery, creating mud slides. It is treacherous at times negotiating my way along steep inclines. Everything is slipping and sliding, nothing to hold on to, sandals thick with blue mud. Nevertheless, there are clear stretches as I walk. It's a windy day and the sea is crashing on the rocks below like a wild exhilarated

Anthropos. *How could it be that I am here quietly thinking, enjoying the sun, while there is such a chaotic business going on below me? How can it be that there is such a difference between that ferocity and me? How can it be that these two Beings are so separated, so different?* I wanted to be part of that joyous, exuberant celebration below but I was too much of something else, too much of a human being in an ordinary state. Before long I will change my
9 6

mind, as I get closer to that wildness than I care to be. Further on I descended through a very thick junglelike bamboo grove and eventually arrived at the sea's edge. Enormous boulders had crashed over millennia onto this beach from the high cliffs above and, together with the recent clay avalanches, this part of the path was particularly treacherous to negotiate. Walking through sticky, slippery mud and crashing waves, hopping up and over great rocks, I eventually trapped myself in a narrow, rocky shore with an incoming tide, too. Ahead was looking bad, but I decided to take my chances and go forward rather than retrace my steps; a bad habit often. I had hope that just around the next point, not too far ahead I'd get through to a safe beach. With clarty feet, I have to be careful not to rush in case I slip on the bedrock or fall clambering over the boulders; to break a leg here would definitely not be good. Seeing that the point that I am making for is going to be the most difficult to negotiate, I get a move on as quick as I can before the water advances much further.

I come across a narrow clearing, could be three feet between the sea and the cliff face but it stretches for quite a distance. Large waves periodically role over this area but I can move more quickly here, dodging the waves. However, I'm still hampered by my slippery sandals. If I hang around here too long then I might have to spend the night clinging to a ledge that I don't think even exists - I'm beginning to panic. With this in mind, I still have to take a moment to get some of the stuff off my footwear. Whilst washing the sandals I notice that I'm not the only one who is trapped in the crashing surf. A little way off is a struggling pigeon trying to fly, but can't. The pigeon has the clay all over it and I can see that it will die soon. With sandals clean again I carry on and leave the bird to its plight, intent on saving myself. Then I had second thoughts: *If I help the pigeon then some God might help me out of this fix.* I soon discarded that thought as a cynical ploy of self-preservation and returned and chased after the thing, 'cos I felt sorry for it. Its wings were thick with the clay, it could hop around but it couldn't fly. I soon caught
9 7

it.

Somehow the pigeon must have fallen into the soft rain-soaked clay in the night storm. The sun and wind of the day had dried the mud making the clay on the wings and chest as hard as a rock. Holding the bird in one hand and scooping seawater with the other, I spent half an hour scraping the hardened lumps off its feathers with my wet thumbnail, forcing it into the caked mud of the wing. It was a mess, everything was stuck together as hard as concrete. Luckily the tidal level in the Med. changes very little so, with feathers relatively free and bird in hand, I continued towards the point hoping for an escape – *Will we make it or not?* I can see it now on the local television news:

“Strange Tramp With Pigeon In Hand Drowns In Mud.”

It would all be worth it, I guess, if it were a Maltese falcon. Anyway, eventually we reach the blind turn of the bay but there’s no way to get over the rocks, even if I had two hands free - it’s just not possible. I’m cut off and will have to go all the way back, if I can. The only possible way might be through the crashing sea. I try it but soon discover that it’s too rocky, too choppy, and much too deep; the wind is howling, the sea is crashing and we are definitely stranded; there’s nothing for it, I’ll have to try to retrace my steps. However, I did notice a space between the tumble of rocks, which I discarded as being far too narrow. So, as a last effort, the strange looking falcon and I squeezed sideways between the rocks. In the end it was very easy as I manoeuvred down, around; squeezed through and out into a wide-open space and safety - relief. It’s weird how one can move from anxiety to normality in the blink of an eye.

I could see ahead a path going up from the bay to the headland. Up on the costal path I let the bird go. It hopped around trying to fly but couldn’t. At that moment a hunter with his gun and dog appeared. There I am,

9 8

standing between my good deed and a shotgun with a sniffer dog – and I’m saving the last Maltese falcon. I said hello. They didn’t see the pigeon, who had by now hopped into the undergrowth. They passed on and the pigeon had gone forever.

9 9

Naming: A View from Death

Leaving the pigeon behind, I continued towards Ramela - just a beach with a cafe, a place for reflection, a place that would see the end of my days here. *At the rate that I’m walking, I’ll soon be there.* I was thinking about the

pigeon and felt happy about its escape but I noticed there was a mood in me. It had been subtly around all morning and I hadn't noticed it; a heavy doom-laden feeling. I've seen people ignore their feelings many, many times, and I'm no different – it's the subtext to life, how you get by. In any case, I decided to focus on it as the gloom worsened. Pigeon saving doesn't bring elation; no protection from irrational moods; doesn't make you feel happy by rights. There was something weird going on, outside of me, coming from all directions - and I didn't like it! I felt that there was a presence watching which made me want to hide; I felt back at the point when I arrived on this island with the all-consuming depression. I tried to shake it off but it just got worse. *Here I am again back in the same spot.* When I got into it a little it felt like the iris blue sky was pressing down and peering into my very being. *Is this what paranoia is like?* I decided to walk off the path, sit, and try
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to find out about it. Close by there was a place, a place where you'd put your stick in the ground and stay; the 'right place', you wouldn't want to put it anywhere else. It felt good, so I sat down right there. When you're scared like this you better find a safe place quickly. *What is it, what's happening to me? What is this ominous feeling?* Eventually, I go into the experience and decide that I want to use my body to help; it's more tangible than thought. My legs are already crossed and I'm leaning forward. I am so confused and distraught that I have no choice but to rely on the wisdom of what my body is doing, hoping that it is already entering the process in its spontaneous seated position. My body is already aware of something which is making me fearful, so I totally trust that its awareness can teach me. A couple pass by and shoot glances across but I'm not concerned, pay them no mind, going for a place stronger than their curiosity. There is something more present pressing; something that's outside of or beyond human thoughts and reactions and the pressure has left me no choice but to open to it. I follow the body position and lean even further forward, bending over my crossed legs into a sort of ball shape; head bowed; chin on chest; elbows almost touching the ground in front of my legs. In this posture, I soon come to a physical limit, can't go further into the stretch. I bring the paranoia feeling back and decide to go through the limit and into the body stretch more fully, carrying the disturbing paranoid feelings with me. Breathing deeply I hold the fearful presence together with the unbearable stretch so as to enter the feeling at the same time as entering beyond the limit of my physicality – if I can go

beyond physical limits then perhaps I can cross the edge of my distress in the same way and at the same moment. After a few moments in this extreme position, I suddenly see a cell-like shape in my vision; the shape feels like my body in this position. The cell is oval and, unlike normal cells of the body, is undifferentiated. I can see that it is opaque, dark grey, dense too. This is more than just a vision, immediately I know what this cell/presence is - it is death.

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Now that I see it, it is no longer a frightening experience. Rather, there is suddenly a feeling of curiosity, excitement, and expansion. In my awareness, I perceive death; it's so close I could write books about its nature. I perceive it but that is not enough, I want to become it. I need to shape shift into it. Intellectual knowledge is not enough, I want its river; I want its full expression - I want to be it.

In spite of my desire, I can't go deeper in this stretched position. I come out eventually and get a notepad and pen from my rucksack and drew what I saw. Seeing and drawing the shape will hopefully help me access it more and become it. Perhaps amplifying the vision further through drawing it will give me more access to it.

Immediately I realise that I have to fill in the whole space of the circle that is the cell. Vigorously, I block out all the white within the circle, making it as blanked out as possible; no line marks allowed, no scribbles outside the sphere. My hand and arm get more and more frantic - filling, filling, filling, until it looks complete, undifferentiated, obscure.

Somehow in the realisation of death and the scribbling, I either rubbed out my own identity or entered the nature of death, or both, because all of a sudden, Death itself rolled out of me. It just rolled out, rolled out onto the ground, plain to see by any passers-by, and killing itself laughing: sprawling all over the place; rolling and tumbling, dying with laughter; laughing and spluttering; breaking its sides about the idea of death dying of laughter. I seem to be Death's funniest comedian because every thought I have makes it roll over in convulsions. All the effort of scribbling, of stretching, and feeling doom-leaden was enough to turn him into a pressured balloon that would go thwwwwwww as though someone had put a pin in him. In the midst of laughter the thought appeared that I could loose myself up my own backside.

Now a figure called Death laughing is not my idea of the dreaded death. This spectre normally causes fear, loss, calamity and terror; usually represented as a grave

1 02

dark form in a habit holding a scythe, ready to cut you

down - not a laughing, benign clown. Anyway, it continued this hilarity for a while and then, eventually, it became serious. Now it's on its knees crawling about, looking at little bits of rubbish discarded by people, amazed with the positions taken by the detritus. A thought comes up, "How wonderful that these positions were taken up, everything ended up in exactly the position it was supposed to." A piece of paper was thrown and its angle, direction, position and the several leaves of grass that touch it have all fulfilled their mission to complete what had already happened at the beginning of time. Next, it drops that focus and is on the ground with its chin rubbing up against the dirt. Every now and then explosions of laughter burst out as the world keeps dropping away in front of its eyes. Death has inhabited my mind and is in utter joy with human experience. At the same time, I am experiencing Death and have become utterly unafraid of it.

For Death, everything is known; the beginning and end of everything, but nothing is held on to. Within Death the world is always dying. Every time it turns its attention to me, whom it thinks of as life, it gets into another fit of its rolling, spluttering clown act. It knows that I want to hold on to everything, knows that I want to be acceptable to others - valued, defined, appreciated; sees my ambitions and my hidden motives; knows that I want to be acceptable; knows that I want to know myself in order to preserve myself; knows that in all this I'm just tangling with my father; can't help tears running out of its eyes at the sight of me - I'm its tonic.

Soon I look around and all the grass is in its place, each leaf pointing, bending, sun-hardened and gesturing towards its natural position, all situated according to this momentary appointment with time. Everything has finally arrived, the wind, the rain, the sun and the dirt in the ground, all toiling for this miraculous moment - a new sun has risen. Foot, paw and claw too helping to bring each blade to its fulfilment here and now on this rolling earth.

1 03

The rock-face, high on the hill, stands proud facing broad-chested towards the sea - the beautiful sea. Boulders, which in times past had tumbled fast with monstrous thuds to their destiny, their final love - the water, now sit in quiet contentment in "pigeon bay"; the gentle water lapping forever, re-wetting them. Pebbles' waves too sway with their chickle and chuckle under the protection of the boulders.

The surf is there, rising and repeating, and also the salt of the water insures life from decay, fish hidden except for the centimetre minnows darting, endlessly searching for

food and fortifications. The sun has risen, yes, and the sky clouds are up too. Boats sit still on the horizon steaming towards some anticipated home - I see it all. I see the path close by and I thank it, I thank it for its support – did the ancient walker make that way or did the dream path entice the walker in an act of creation? I see birds, big birds – seagulls, and small ones as well; I see grass, rocks, hills, sea, people and I see bays - one, two, three. There are bushes, plants, flowers, little weeds hiding. The dog shit on my shoe that has migrated to my cloths will remain; I have no qualms about it. There's Africa behind and Europe in front – Italy, Spain, France and the love in me of the sound of the Latin languages – Hola, Ciao, Bonjour.

Clear air: sea breezes; forceful winds; storm's havoc; collapsing cliffs and waterlogged clay. Sea calm: sea lapping; sea lifting; sea crashing; sea furious; sea devouring; sea spewing; sea holding and sea supporting; sea producing; sea laughing; sea touching; sea seeing. Sea living, sea life.

Sea of power and empowerment; sea of love and loss; sea of life, sea of death; sea of ancient and modern; sea of music, dance, hilarity, spontaneity, intensity; sea of you, sea of me, sea of all-us; sea of seas and seas of sea; sea of the minute, seas of difference, ah...difference, difference celebrated always.

I am aware that we are close, we two, and have grown closer in recent times; however we are opposite in
1 04

personality. Death is spontaneous, obscure, and essentially formless; whereas I am seeking clarity, power, and a more defined form. I have just as much right to exist in this duo, I assert to myself. With that, Death is on its back again holding its stomach ready to burst. It's laughing at my struggles to assert myself and at the idea of death existing, which of course it doesn't - existence is a life thing. I could say more about this encounter but what's the point, he wouldn't be interested, he's uninterested in anything that I'm writing about.

Which way should we go from here? I thought to myself, thinking death had quietened. "Which way?" he shouted, "Which way?" He looked at me with the force of the barrel of a gun, "There is no which way." He laughed again; this time his laugh was the sort of laugh that was unrelated to me. I felt stupid, frightened. "There is no choice, there are no ifs, there are no buts, you go always with certainty." I felt I would die if I thought like that again. There was no choice, I had to aim directly like a bullet, I had to pull together all my attitudes, all the voices, all the split-off parts and put them together into one penetrating

force if I were to live. Death is an inscrutable ally.
In this whole encounter with Death I have come into contact once again with the figure that saved me from the part of myself that had drifted away from its true path. Over the whole period here I have been emptied out of all attachments to the world and brought into a relationship with myself. On our first meeting he was an empty monk, now here, I can see that he is Death, the guffawing Reaper whose nature is to kill. The two of us merge again and he retreats into the background as I sit quietly contemplating. I realise again that I've fought every battle here with this being and lost them all, every one. I looked for recognition and never got it and I'm glad. From now I promise myself to fight the fight for the sake of loss, fight to lose for that is my delicious, my obscure, destiny.

Death says: go into the reverse of good times, good luck, and growth; look for the direction of anti-life. Dig
1 05

down into loss; welcome bad luck, inertia, depression. Go deeply into it, but do it fast. Don't fall for the trap of searching for good times only – no searching at all; don't react to the bad stuff but prosper in the shadows too – there is no time left. Welcome restriction, change direction from your precious thoughts and take the path of antiprospering – travel along it fast. When you put your energy into the direction of life, you leave death as an empty path which then becomes a troublesome ghost who will terrify. Death, however, as an inhabited path, becomes the deepest creative process of love, detachment, awareness, freedom and not least a different sort of life. It is vital life: not life as a reaction to death but life in death. Such life can never be taken away even if you forget it. Why hold at bay the ever threatening downfall when that downfall is a quick way, a vital way, forward?

I'm not sure how long I sat there but I ended up in a tender state; the tender intimacy of two lovers and out of this intimacy arose a declaration:

“...Then

I will meet you in our essence and if we want separation or distance

We'll shake hands as though we had hands

We'll kiss as though we had lips

We'll stand back and look at each other as though we had bodies

Meanwhile

Catch me at the corner of your eye

Catch me as a flower flirt

Catch me behind the eye of a bird, its wing movement too

Catch me, catch me

Always catch me coming directly to you”

1 06

The weather had changed by now and the heavy iris-blue sky had turned into a beautiful leaden-grey cover which began to fall softly. As the rain slowly undressed herself, she gently touched my skin, dampening me, enveloping me with her warm, wet fog, and I was quiet. I felt as safe as in the cashmere coat pocket of woman.

1 07

The Beginning

I’ve arrived at the penultimate day of my stay and decided to spend the whole of it on Ramela Sands: there’s nowhere else to go; done everything; know the island inside out, I’m content just to sit. Ramela is an hour’s walk east around the coast from my apartment. It’s November, my birthday month, and I’m still bowled over by the heat at this time of year. At home it’s shivers, shoes and perhaps sledges - sandals buried at the back of the cupboard long ago, but not mine. As I walked towards my destination, I recalled how much I hated being here on those first few days; the regret, the depression and the horrible emptiness. The month that was so dreaded at its beginning is at its end, and now I feel sadness; sadness at the loss of contact with myself that the everyday world will bring. Staying in touch with the dreaming in the ordinary everyday world is very difficult but real change and transformation within ourselves and within the outside world seems to require us to hold both at the same time.

I reach the bay about 10a.m., find a spot and set out my stall – books, towel, pad and pen, together with water and some oranges. The large beach is still empty except for

1 08

a little bird twittering in a tree behind me, which I didn’t take much notice of. I sit back in the shade and ponder over the four weeks. Together with sadness there is also contentment, my inner struggles have gone; a task seems to have been completed.

Tomorrow will be a different day – a very different day indeed. I will travel to the airport and get there about 3p.m. for a 7p.m. flight. There, I will take time to look around the shops hoping to find last minute presents and, eventually, will end up in the Hard Rock Cafe with a bottle of beer in my hand. That bottle will mark the beginning of the rest of my life; it sparked off the symptom at the start of an outer life-and-death struggle: the undifferentiated cell that rolled out of me as laughing death has already begun to shut my body down. It turns out that this is no hero’s journey – a journey of transformation and then ride into the sunset - no, not this time. The horizon that I’m now

approaching will take me all the way through the physical reality of disease, pain and the dying process; all the way through unbearable pain that would have me cry out for death to take me. The pain will be unbearable; it will break my personality, my strength, my spirit. I will scream screams of terror over long periods and the morphine that I will be given will, in its ineffectiveness, underline the powerlessness of the whole medical profession. Today there is no need for anyone to suffer pain from any form of illness due to well targeted drugs but my circumstances will be managed badly.

The Hard Rock Cafe is a theme pub. You might enjoy Bing Crosby here, sixties and seventies rock music too, but last year's hit would be out of place. There are signed discs framed on the wall, photos of guitars held by famous hands, and other rock memorabilia hanging about. All this, of course, designed to help you swallow the excessive cost of a pint of the light brown liquid.

The airport will see me back in the international scene, a star able to afford anything I want; I'll have another beer. Eventually I will get up and go to the toilet
1 09

and that is when the trouble will start. I'm standing there alone in the urinal, I'm in the right place, I'm ready to pee, but nothing is coming out. I stand there full and ready just as I have done all my life, but nothing happens. Not too panicked yet, I leave the toilet curious and still needing to pee, and walk around for a while. Eventually, I go back to the urinal, and still nothing. I begin to get desperate; I'm confused and rack my brain to try to understand. It's soon time to board the plane and I will not be able to get to the toilet on the plane until the seat-belt sign is switched off; that whole process would take twenty or thirty minutes.

Back on Ramela I have no idea about what I have to face, I'm a success story, done with the struggles of life - I've left the roles of fiction behind for the new role of the artist that can transform the material of personality; a new role that is freedom itself. The beach is attracting more and more people as the day progresses. Children are playing; adults are rubbing sun cream on everything while other families are grouping in choice positions and leaning against the rocks that are now beginning to warm up at the sides of the beach. This is a broad beach; a grand sweep of a bay which would take many hundreds or even thousands before it would look full. Colourful snorkels and goggles appear on heads and I notice a couple of phosphorescent buckets and spades that had lain discarded from the previous day are now in use.

My thoughts turn again to the past. This month has

been a special one, very different to what I'd expected, not so much a holiday, more a month long grappling with two minds. It feels like I've been standing on top of two disparate galloping horses, and trying to stay on for the ride – an adventure holiday. At times I've been able to hold back one of the horses that tries to stay in front of the other - the mind that organises thinking; the one that weighs everything up; balances rights and wrongs; does all the reasoning; feels the guilt; lives in uncertainty, insecurity and then misuses power when it gets it. This is Logos - the life of the spoken word: the world of explanation; justification; marginalisation; tribulation; mortification - and proof. This

1 10
is the left brain that they talk about and which tries to interpret reality with disconnected perceptions and word meanings. What can I say about the other mind, the so-called right brain?... Well, I've already said much, and again I say that it is the 'other'. It is everything beyond normal humanity; everything that is on the outside; everything that's in flux. This creature called the right brain is mad to create, mad to destroy, mad for everything, mad to love, to devour. How could nature have created such diversity on this planet without creating this multi-mind madness in humans? This crazy being sees itself from so many different angles that it is diversity itself. Picasso has it. In the airport I picked up a book on Picasso and opened it at a page showing the figure of a bull and when I saw the curls on the bull's forehead it made me burst into giggles. It was out of my control, seeing the curls, my stomach got tickled – the madness got me again. Picasso paints everything in sight; ripping paper into astounding shapes; fooling with photography; creating figures in different perspectives and angles; twisting clay into weird vessels and animals; every waking moment creating, creating, creating. I know that he learned to quieten the thinking horse and I know he's still doing it somewhere. James Joyce is another one, allowing the stream of consciousness to flow. Today, however, I'm not working on awareness, content to be simply thinking; today I'm really on holiday, enjoying people and just relaxing.

In the airport there is no relaxation; anything but.

I'm getting very desperate, my bladder must have been filling up all morning as I travelled to the airport and now the pressure is unbearable. I'm in what doctors call 'retention' but I have not heard of such a thing yet. Time passes, pressure builds and builds, and now I'm really panicking. There is a dam with enormous pressure, the release valve is somehow blocked and something has got to give. Eventually, however, I do begin to get a few drops

through and the relief is incredible - what would I give for a kitchen sink that is unplugged?

Time passes, and soon we're all in our seats with the
1 11

plane taking off. I'm next to the window with a couple beside me – they are unfriendly to each other. This is the beginning of a three-hour flight to London and I am, of course, still bursting. *What on earth will happen if nothing can ever come out?* I mustn't think about it. I'm wondering about asking the couple if I can have the aisle seat so that I can get to the toilet with ease, but then the seat-belt lights turn off and I'm up and moving straight away. In the cubicle I'm just standing there being patient, relaxing, but nothing happens as usual. Two minutes in the toilet and the captain announces:

“We're expecting a thunder storm and there may be turbulence. Can all passengers please return to your seats.”
Damn it! No chance of doing anything now.

Back at the seat with panic written all over me, the grim faced duo begins to get up to let me in.

“No please don't get up I'd love to sit on the outside.”

“Absolutely not,” he responded, “we wouldn't hear of it, it's no trouble to us.”

Out they came, I didn't insist, probably because I felt too vulnerable; I just took my seat. That seatbelt light stayed on throughout the flight with minimal turbulence, at least outside of me, so sitting in the aisle was irrelevant.

Trapped and cornered, I can do nothing but sit still.

Breathe, try to relax. Put all time out of your mind and stay in the present. I'm a pressurised balloon that can't go pop and it's getting bigger - agony. There we are, a couple needing a match to ignite their piled up resentment and me needing a tap to release an over-pressured tank.

I arrive at London and into the first toilet in the baggage area – a little dribble, just a few drops, pressure eased, thank God. I collect my bags and make my way through customs – nothing to declare but the fear across my face. Entering into the airport lounge my wife smiles broadly as I approach and we throw our arms around each other. In less than two months' time - Christmas Eve - she

1 12

will be diagnosed with having colon cancer. I will nurse her after major surgery and be confronted with the pain of perhaps living life after she's gone. By February we discover it was a misdiagnosis, a diverticulitis instead. A few months after that, it would be my wife's turn to face losing me; I will be diagnosed with prostate cancer. We will both spend a lot of time crying as we see-saw between loss and dying.

Coming out of the airport, the cold November night will hit me – boots; overcoats; gloves; pullovers; socks and shoes; hankies; hands fisted in pockets with elbows clenched, visible breath. Yet, back on Ramela, the sun is burning my legs; I have to keep moving in order to stay in the tree's shade. The contrast is stark: here, on this beach, I am flush with success, I've integrated my ghosts; they are with me as I face the future; the work is all but done. But I will soon realise that the events on this island and the experience of my life till now are all an inner expression of an outer process beginning the next day. I will need all the awareness levels that I've experienced here to save my life for my wife's sake. The last thing I want for her is to suffer the pain of my dying.

In the U.K. there will be no time to be depressed about the cold; the bladder pressure will continue building, releasing a blessed few drops of urine now and again. We go to the car outside the airport, drive to my wife's parents for the night and spend the whole of the next day making our way home, dribbling every few miles at the side of the road; pain and desperation eclipsing embarrassment. My theory at this point is that I have cystitis – men can get it. At home the doctor will have a different view. She will have me take my clothes off, direct me to the trolley with instructions to lie on my side and bring my knees up into a foetal position. I will feel a finger enter me.

“As I thought, you have an enlarged prostate, big as an orange.”

Perhaps it's the one I stole in Victoria. Normally the prostate is the size of an almond.

1 13

She explains that the prostate surrounds the urethra and if it becomes enlarged it eventually cuts off the urethra, creating a clamp, a crunch, a bottleneck. The diagnosis was an enlarged prostate, they didn't suspect cancer for some time yet, but that will come, accompanied by all the terrible pain that no body should ever tolerate. Even with all those inner figures revealing themselves in Gozo, I didn't suspect cancer - the word cancer is man-made, it is not the usual symbolic language of dreaming body awareness. An image, among many that arose with my pain, is often that of a man with a pointed beard on his way to death - he for me is cancer.

In time, through the physical reality of pain and lifethreatening illness, I will see the final meaning of these events on this island: the empty monk that brings one into the here and now; the spacecraft, bringing with it externalisation; the praying mantis with its obscurity and inner criticism, and death manifesting from an

undifferentiated cell (cancer is defined by the medical profession as cells that become more and more undifferentiated as they replicate themselves). All of these manifestations come out of the same process; all of them, one way or another, are elements of hidden awareness that bring psychological or physical death, so as to create new life.

I remained on the beach for the rest of the day oblivious to any cancer. I looked at my notebook sometime in late afternoon. *I have a lot to say but no reason to say it. What's the point, the objectivity I'm after is through awareness and experience, not knowledge – signed, sealed and delivered, the purpose was objectivity throughout it all.*

By evening I returned to the apartment for the last time, making my way across the headland where Melodious Monk had a belly laugh, then descended into the town, passing the ever-new floaters taking time away from their usual world and enjoying today's calm, flat sea. With the shops and the police station on my left, I continued under the lamp posts that had, at another time, looked down on me, and then on past the spot where I lost the key. Soon

1 14

I'm up in my apartment and watching an incomprehensible Italian language programme on TV. That was the end of my walking.

1 15

Return to Heeling

(Hear comes all the go-hosts from the prevarious wordlings; cohorts in disastablishabituals and their magical rituals of board-play. Interlaced speechings is their kind of spooking, all of them straight and true as the spirit-level.)

This is his-story so far at the time of writing. After the diagnosis of an enlarged pro-state, the problem nettlesettled for a few weeks as the intention became less acute.

However, in the underworld, over the next few moonths, the area became more pain fuelled because of the wild excited eyeknifer, producing the uncontrollable schisms – humping, squeezing, megaton pressure between a soft pressurised nerve bag and a hard lump obstruction (“Hee, hee, hee”). All this is taking place in a time crunch on the Somme bayonet field; freezing desolation; haunting pain; humanity in tatters.

It's going well when there is a quarter of a cup of pish passed in this period. Eventually an informed allopathic gnosis arrives: prosta'tatties - flaming pro-state - often inscrutable, nobody really knows what causes the empety of it all, but I know: it's the blight on my forefathers. From the moment the barra-cascading started

1 16

there was no interest in working on the progress underlying the Can-Sir. It wasn't like-a-bull for sure but still it roared with pain. I, the common one, wanted to get externalisations from it but I couldn't believe how interrestrial it was in me; couldn't believe the barnacle of it – the subjective hammer pulverising objocktivity - a sure winner. What do you do when a little girl's polite and gentle curtsy is performed in the face of a rapist intent on dismemberment? You can do nothing; it's all a hopeless, awful beauty.

Through different days along an unending string, I got excitable about the feeling of not working on the symptoms at all. Spacetaker stole my spacemaker stole my spacemaker who stole my space and everybody got their space, hurrah, hurrah, the spacemaker stole the spacemaker. It made the common one and some others so happy, so pleasureabold, to give lots of conch space to doing nothing to kill the Sir, *There is this condition*, I mumbled exinternally, *let's sit with the pain and enjoy the unfolding factual; that we will not work on it; won't even derange it, just let it manifold out of its own sum-ation. But we will hold the conch up close to the head in no time and let the awaremess solve its own priddles* - sorry if I'm disrespeakful, I love awarecare.

But there is a pit footfall. Consider: you have to be careful with conches; they sometimes trap words and that's bad because those wordforks lose touch with the great Oisin. The wordchains clank and bang about with the noise of their heavy claims in the echo chamber. But consider quietness: in your ear you have to listen absent-mindattentively to the silent universal poise until it gently goes whoooooooooosh and washes all the words down the whole. Do that and Can-Sir will heel-it, we believe.

On with the storfury. While listing to the poise, there was soon a focus on the symp-bums in a 'non-ruining' sort of way; without windwords or any wordchains – sound bites that eat you up - that let the factual expand as it naturally, do it. The enmountainorminous pro-state that was