

There can be no hope of a solution to the ecological crisis ( Ecology:: the study of plants, or of animals, or of peoples and institutions, in relation to environment.) without challenging the global economic system which is irrational at the core. But like the Ouroboros National States and those who serve them, are unable to stand outside themselves and witness the destructive follies they generate serving the system which eats itself.

## All the Heads.

### Once Dead and then twice

A portrait of the Doge of Venice Leonardo Loredan by Giovanni Bellini is on view at the National Gallery in London, He wears a hat, or two. Imagine the head minus the hat or hats, placed on it's sideways on, from portrait to landscape, putting him nose sideways out and up towards you., That is how his head lies in my head, the blues and skin colours go to brown greys going to white. It lies in a pale grey space. When sleep comes, a face, sometimes attached, to a body on it's back, a grey face, eye closed appears. Could be Ivan or an approximation, sometimes someone else , or a younger version of the same one. I don't see a body although there is a presence, something there. It doesn't breathe, doesn't move; a lump of a body thing. There is no deterioration, He is the same, wisps of grey hair, creases, furrows on the forehead, a large aquiline nose, thin lips. Ivan had a pinched look, with ungenerous thin lips small eyes and bad teeth.. This question of thick or thin lips suggests that the perception of generosity allied to the physical appearance as in full and generous lips is a relic from the time when identifying streaks of character from physical appearance was regarded as an objective science. Apparently that was not so long ago.

This is not an exact replica of the Doge He is not looking at me with his eye, the one eye, the other hidden by his nose, both gazing skyward, the parchment skin, balding head, wisps of hair lying light, feathery across the scalp. I see him in the after glow of a flash, of a camera or distant explosion, a flashback, film cut, in the aftermath. Fading into a dark space in my head.

. According to Michael Ivan he died, gasping for air leaving the world unreconciled "Turned his face away and petered out is what he did.". Did he really go like that? Who does? If it can be thought and said, it might happen. Willing oneself to death as a form of suicide is I suppose; a method.. It can "oh he or she just turned and faced the wall like those 'Musselmen'<sup>1</sup> did in the camps. It can happen!

Living out his youth and early manhood. Ivan was scrunched by the war. You could see that. Michael said that towards the end he went a grey yellowish colour and his eyes shone like coals burning glowing out from the dark sunken auras shaped by his eye sockets. The force of his life was in the end contained by the look in his eyes, beyond all that we can know. We are

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<sup>1</sup>The living walking dead of the Nazi Concentration camps, where all sense of individuality has been broken.

not like him different, though we are of his blood. There is no urgency in us for now. We are all bunged up, not burning out as Michael said Ivan was.

We didn't see much of him. He loved his work which took him away for weeks on end. When he would eventually appear suddenly like yjrm jack in the box he brought for us one day his affection was overwhelming and somehow we knew that excess becomes distaste. Later on we still deferred to him and Rose We consented. The power structure of family stayed with them on the tolp their home their responsibility they said. Michael was the first, to become a paying guest while still required to carry out domestic tasks tailored to his abilities as a child. Tet were set in stone.

I used to dream of Rose surplanting the amalgam of the Doge and Ivan, her top half sitting in a chair, sun flooding in through the window early in the morning, partially obscured by flowers in pots, Watching the birds. Looking down at her sitting in her chair, she isn't all there either, although there is more of her than Ivan, head and upper body, brown hair streaked with grey going on white, wearing a black dress. She doesn't speak. She like him is unaware of me. They are never together. In this their solitary worlds had they had been intending to die in synch? Were their exits so close to one another co-incidental?

I didn't go back for the funerals. It was easy to find reasons not to go. I had come over by boat which gave a sense of finality to the separation by travelling relatively slowly. I could feel the immensity of the distance between here and there. I am here now The pull was too weak, I was already separated, the gulf widening, emotional ties stretched thinner and thinner year by year. At the time of their deaths the time scale of the journey had shrunk to a few hours half a day or so. I was percieving a vast distance between us.

By chance I did go to a funeral a month later. I sometimes went to the waterfall in from the road by the edge of Lake Cayuga on the way south to town. Now climbing steeply leaving by the same route going south out of town I saw a hearse parked outside a church, and pulled over. A group of mourners were walking slowly into the cemetery nearby. I left the car and followed. Stop: Cut to X number of B movies, films, which include burials mostly in Californian cemeteries where the mourners are surprised, interrupted in their private solloquies, by intruders, a variety of criminals suspiciously watching each other looking for the signs of dark complicity signalling their adoption of the guilt of those who survive. Paranoiai not so far away. Where are we in the line of contenders.what number?, The deceased enclosed in the box dressed and powdered for the occasion are finally stowed in underground cadaver parks six feet or so below the surface, among immaculately coiffured conifers and lawns. This was no film. but reminiscence, limited, partial, fabricated, taking as it's models those events in celluloid. I was state of loss for Ivan and Rose. It did express the sense of occasion which comes from the publicl conventions hosting private grief and public recognition of the final consignment of the deceased to the other world or at least some sort of notion of another life in another world.. There was nothing casual about that. Drama does prospers among the living I had trespassed upon the aura of their shared private grief

We came to a stop at the end of the tarmac path in the corner of what had recently been a field, facing a number of graves in front of which was the freshly dug hole with three pieces of solid timber laying accross the open grave poking out from under a large blue plastic sheet covering the hole. It was late autumn, fall, autumn across the water, descending into winter, after the leaves had fallen. It had been raining for a week or so, and now with the temperature dropping near to zero it might have snowed. A tall figure stood in front of the grave facing

us, weather beaten, red faced, wind swept receding white hair half haloed in the wind, wearing a black cassock, hem wet, mud stained, and a large pair of muddy boots. Like Moses himself. He must have been the grave digger. Somebody asked me when the hearse was coming.

“Did you know him well? It was such a shock. He was so young”.

I introduced myself and made a gesture of sympathy. She turned away and wandered off towards the main huddle of mourners, dabbing at her eyes with a lace handkerchief. She broke into a conversation smiling attentively before turning to sniff into her handkerchief as one of the group peeled away to place an arm around her shoulders. The raw overflowing emotion brought my own grief closer to the surface. There were a number of hats with the tail feathers of birds, dead birds feathers decorating shiny grief ridden damp faces, some wearing the vestigial bits of the skins of animals: foxes mink etc. I retreated to a safe distance on the periphery. I wasn't dressed for it. We shuffled about facing the grave digger. Standing in that significant manner he was separated from us the mourners, not being one himself, a continual witness to fresh interments and attendant mourning. He had acquired a soulful looking manner by virtue of the abradant wear of flesh in time, the effects of this work in the open air, in accord with the circumstances brought us together. As I left another mourner approached and asked politely

“Pardon me Sir, but do I know you? I didn't know her and the deceased hadn't known me. Extricating myself for a quick exit I said only

“I was a colleague” and shuffled off into the background. It was easier to slide into a deceitful complicity than ruffle the unity among the grieving by any sort of intrusive behaviour which I could be guilty of. As the hearse arrived and the coffin manouvered to the front of the grave another older woman wearing a purple hat with long feathers and a veil dressed in black said that she had an object that she wanted to put on top of the coffin. She might have been the mother. It was something that they had bought together in New York some weeks previously. He had really liked it. She thought it could accompany him in the grave. The man standing next to her said that she should speak to the officiating priest about it or would she like him to do it? .

After a short service, commending body and soul to the almighty, and witnessing the smooth enclosure of this mournful group into the comforting arms of the American People we were invited to step forward and throw dark red roses into the grave. When it was my turn, I was surprised to see a sizable brownish lump of bronze standing atop the coffin partly obscured by roses. It was a big bronze lump quite textured and pitted like a scaled up excremental form., like a large lump of shit. I was somewhat nonplussed, wow. There it was, a large lump slumped above the eminently present body enclosed in the casket, and the exposure of the rugged earthy surfaces of the deep elongated rectangular hole, the raw tactility of earth, and the grave digger, Earth to earth, Ashes to ashes, Dust to dust.

Who was it now lying six feet under?

I went back a week later to see it was: Karl J Petersen born March the 15th 1951 died October 27 1997, roughly my age.

Blood on the mirror.

Ivan often cut himself shaving. His handkerchiefs were speckled with it. He was a bleeder, And metaphorically he bled all over the place.

It was Rose who said in response to one of my complaints about whatever came to my mind. "I had an unhappy childhood because the horse sodomists kept plugging me until I got away", I didn't know what she was talking about but it was something significant, dark and sinister and that it was an obscure reprimand. whether to Ivan or all of us. Now I know and see her differently.

Michael had taken charge of their final parting, holding it together for one more time. They had both requested in their wills that their ashes should be mingled together. And we decided that they should be thrown by the sea near to where we had played They wanted to be unified in death the way none of us are in life.

Two years later when I came back from the States, the first thing I did was to go to the beach. Michael and the others Harry and Michaelawe were all looking older.

Michael gave me the notes he had made showing where the ashes had been strewn. The week after my return I took his car, and made the journey to Orfordness on the east coast. He wasn't keen, but in the end he let me have it.

#### Shingle Street

I turned off the A12 the Ipswich to Lowestoft road to take the small B roads to Orford intending to buy some smoked fish from the smokery. After eating in the local pub and having bought some fish for Michael and his wife Vera drove on to Shingle Street. There was little traffic and it wasn't long before I could see the glow from the sea reflected from the clouds just over rising ground in the middle distance. I had been driving parallel to the coast and turning left along the approach road, passing through a copse, running down hill into open salt marshland over a small bridge, then turning right in between wooden fencing and up towards a row of eight or so houses. I parked the car on shingle some distance below the summit, and went up to the ridge, and round the side of the houses where the sea could be seen a about two hundred yards away.

Judging from Michael's diagramme I approximated where the ashes had been thrown "I bungled it" Michael said "the wind blew it back all over us. I sometimes feel that they are still stuck to me. The dead won't leave if they can help it". From his map there wasn't a point I could confidently fix where the ashes had been strewn, more a vague area. And I had no idea where the position of the tide was at the time. I should have asked.. My desire to fix the exact point as though it mattered, contradicts with the spread of chaos death brings anyway. The deceased is atomised while still exerting a hold on the living at least for a while, probably until all those who once knew the him, her or them die themselves.

I went down against the drag of the shingle underfoot to the last bank of wet pebbles where the tide was thrusting up in short runs against the steep rise of the beach. Shoes sinking in. The wind was blowing in hard. Standing somewhat precariously close to the edge of thesea, I intended to spend time in respect, in remembrance. The sea pounded the stones, running over my shoes more than once. The wind was blowing and soughing fiercely. Clouds were running in from the north east, and higher up more clouds were blown by other winds at a higher altitude. The sea heaving and swelling remorselessly bearing down, breaking its waves in short sharp bursts, thudding against the incline on which I stood having to jump back several times to avoid getting my already sodden shoes soaked again. It was cold in the

raw wind. I was absorbed in the movement of the wet surface of the shingle, and the fluidity and sinuous power of the tidal race breaking against the beach. Then looking out to the vast stretch of water receding to the horizon, where the sense of enormity was eventually lost as the view became delicately abstracted from the forces pounding away at the tide's edge. The scene stretched out from where I could see, touch, hear, and even taste it being in the air; to a scene where the fixity of the horizon is relative to the position and movement of the viewer. It can only be seen, never met, when approached, receding, when moving away it needs a third element eg a boat or buoy to measure it's position by, receding or progressing according to the movement of the viewer. I looked out to the horizon and into the meeting place of the sea and sky where I could never be, and yet could be seen by others to be there. We can never see ourselves as others see us. A figure seen on the horizon by virtue of being there relative to the position of the viewer does acquire a mythic dimension, is no longer just one of us, an incidental person who just happens to be there, but becomes a human sign, symbolic, like carved figures on the prows of wooden ships, or paintings of pin ups on the fighters and bombers during the second world war. Ships as they approach the horizon also acquire an otherworldly demeanour, and birds do so before they become invisible, shrinking in size to a dot which stays visible and then disappears sporadically like morse code until its final disappearance. So does everything and anything at all which is visible at such a distance. Does the symbolic require a certain scale and distance to generate power.

Ivan and Rose had become permanently associated with this place, while we live. Even though not one particle of either of them was necessarily here. There isn't any tangible mark or sign connecting them to the ground. I was disappointed, and relieved in a way. Without previously being aware I found that I was looking for some sign of their whereabouts, a stone, a marker of some kind. What I haven't forgotten is Michael's remark that when he released the ashes they had blown back over the mourners, as though they refused to leave. I should have accepted the epic dimension of the dispersion of human remains scattered in the winds. On my way back up the incline I came across cancerous looking cabbage plants resembling cacti. I turned and scanned the area where I assumed their ashes had been thrown. Was the aura of them now firmly attached to this place.? Or were they seemingly visiting me merely because I had focussed on them? This dilemma was confusing.

#### Earlier last century.

The sharp slope of the beach was difficult to sit on for any length of time. Ivan and Rose would sit much farther back up towards the top of the shingle bank from time to time warning us to be careful whatever the weather, and the conditions of the sea. They didn't come anywhere near the water's edge. We objected to their admonishments and warnings regardless of the conditions. They didn't understand us. We didn't want to be set apart from the adventurous bathers., and were intent on broaching the sea. There were stories of tragedies in the family and among close friends all of whom had fishing in their family histories. Ivan and Rose hadn't learnt to swim and couldn't even be persuaded to get their feet wet. It was contrary of us to have thrown their ashes into the very element they were most fearful of. We wanted them to be a part of what we are also inseparable from. Not the church or the crematorium garden, but the sea.

There was a diving platform anchored off the beach further up the coast in waters well out of my depth. I went swimming there after storms in rough seas, when the wind would still be blowing in hard, with short waves breaking fiercely on the shore. I was strong enough to swim out to the raft moored some distance beyond the breakers. I would stay there for a short time before diving back in to be swirled landward, taken by the power of the waves, then dragged under as they broke and drawn back under by powerful undertows, turned over swirling among shingle and stones, twisting out of control. Fearful and excited, both, swallowing seawater, airless-water filled, suddenly struggling desperately, kicking out reaching for air, arms pumping in surging cream coloured spray and foam.; driven under, pulled down into the ochre-brown-green depths among tiny particles of sand and other debris, myriads of shingle stones shells of dead shellfish and the fronds and broken branches of seaweed. I craved to repeat it. Unbeknown to me then it was akin to the *small death* of sexual orgasm. Stormy weather filled me with excited anticipation as I had learnt what the following thirty six hours or so might offer, half conscious of the dangers involved which only added to the excitement. Ivan and Rose had no real intimation of the dangers lurking then. It would have been too easy to be caught up in the undertow and dragged out to sea, or kept under until drowned. It almost happened more than once and I came actively seek out the thrill and dread of it, innocently dancing along a delicate interface between an enhanced sense of being alive and the near unknown proximity of death.

I had imagined coming to the edge of a tranquil sea in warm sunshine to pay my last respects. But the elements were so intensely pitched into each other that I had to retreat for my own safety. The sea and wind so collusive that any attempt to dwell on Ivan and Rose was bound to fail. What had the weather forecast predicted? I struggled up the beach musing on whether I should have come and that the period of mourning was over. There were a number of fetid looking plants, a combination of acidulous yellow green cabbage and cactus which had sprung up out of the shingle. They appeared as cancerously alien growths in that washed out field of shells and shingle. Towards the top of the beach they were displayed among delicate flowering pale green long stemmed plants with blue purple blooms. The shingle was mixed with sea shells and sand until reaching the edge of the gardens where there was a small muddy path. Had earlier inhabitants carried the earth up to the ridge to make gardens on top of the vast graveyard crustacean shells. On the other side of the great hump on which the row of houses was perched, the wind was blowing just above head height. The roar from the sea was muted though still audible, the wind strong but less turbulent, the air mild and damp from sea spray. I realised that the attempt to pay homage by going to the site of the dispersal of their ashes was thwarted because it had already taken place at the funeral of Carl Peterson in Ithaca. In the days following their deaths I felt their presence wherever I went and whatever I was doing. Not seeing ghosts exactly, but in the days immediately after their deaths something took their place as a presence which couldn't be located in any one place or thing. After the funeral in Ithaca it was gone.

### Blood Wise

I was taking a walk in the gardens of the County Dept of Mental Health Syracuse when one the other patients stopped me introducing himself as 'King John' saying in the most

imperious theatrical fashion waving his arms “This is my Court, the Court of King John. I am King John”.

I had seen him on several occasions. But his appearances were sporadic.

“I am extremely displeased with Samuel Butler, He is from Christchurch you know, in a most remarkable country, one in which I have felt myself to be so much at home. He insists on living in the nineteenth century. There is nothing I can do to dissuade him.”

I nodded wondering vaguely why he insisted on walking backwards.. The unexpected had become the norm, the routines carried out courteously enough, but they were still steely frozen cold, objective. The smiles were obsequious, cunning deceptive. Collaboration was needed, if not to avoid total isolation. King John would never work it out.

I had come to see the garbage truck leave again and as usual projected myself into it now passing out of the drive and onto the highway and so out of sight. I was the driver, and had therefore become invisible in the hospital. It gave me the sense that I had a secret power in the anti-heirachy of non persons whose freedom of movement was restricted by the implied application of legal force by the institution. We were all non persons, nonentities, noones, double no nos, The Force feeding clothing restraint bed chaining, forcible drug ingestion. Blood, shit and violence before and after visiting hours. The double negative suited my disposition. If only the garbage truck could be used to transport human refuse out of here. It was a sign of how desperate I was that I could also think of myself like that..

I said to `King John`

“This must be how it is here” I don`t know why. He was incensed, and reacted as though I had said something outrageous:

“I sire reside in England at the court. at Runnymede” I shall have none of that”. The date for him was 1215. He made as if to strike me with the emblems of his office. But I was ready and feinting to the left pulled back and ran round the right side of him knowing that he never knowingly put himself into reverse, going forwards in our world. He restricted himself to backwards movements facing forwards. I did try to explain that he was facing the wrong way. He then accused me of being the author of the `Unknown Charter of Liberties` and of taking diabolical liberties against his court. I was apparently on the side of the barons. He was confined. for the most part. His appearances among those of us who were amenable to social discourse was unpredictable In all his social activities he would eventually become intemperate violent even..

I left there a few weeks later. The doctors remarked on the efficacy of the treatment, but decided that I should be a voluntary outpatient for another month or so to ensure that my recovery was complete.. I was now much better. I knew it myself. Joanna who at one stage I thought was my wife had befriended me and said that as long as I realised that I had been ill and continued to take the medicine I should be ok. This is a hard act, this question of compos mentis is difficult to come to terms with. It is too easy to end up institutionalised in one way or another and difficult to get out. I should get a medal. It was there that I developed an interest in the last film Blood Wise by John Houston. `King John` regaled me with his interpretation of the blind preacher who he claimed as the Royal Chancellor at his court. I thought I would ask him if he would give me a medal for bravery.

Joanna was actually a recurrant patient. We made arrangements to meet when we were both out.

She said:

“You are obviously suffering from the recent deaths of your parents. And episodes like yours are often brought on by the stress of personal trauma. It s a way of dealing, or not dealing with it.” She played at being nurse. And of course she is supremely sane most of the time, just goes over the edge like everyone else, but with longer and deeper mood swings. But I am no psychiatrist and have only a modicum of knowledge about mental illness. The intensity of her manic phases had been controlled on different occasions by the use of Lithium Carbonate. But while on medication she was reduced to a life becoming dull and drab. Then she stopped taking the medicine. In the deep depressive phase she would become suicidal, or enter into an hypomanic phase climbing inexorably beyond he limits of the social contract. Out of sight. As she said everthing would accelerate where there would be a lowering of inhibitions, increased risk taking with a noticable disregard for the feelings of other people. In those phases she could easily die from exhaustion. She would attract the attention of the law, or it would be alerted to her behaviour, resulting in be institutionalisation, tranquilisation, re-balancing` and eventual release. The cycle would then repeat itself. But recently she seems to have coped with it more successfully so that when we were together she didn` t have any critical episodes requiring hospitalisation. I could tell when she didn` t take her medication. Something would subtly change . She would look at me kind of sideways with a cunning expression as if she knew something I didn` t. She was more aware than I was of what I had been suffering from, an undiagnosed form of depression I think and how to treat it. I should need further psychiatric treatment to get to heart of the matter, but I had no interest in that and left it where it was. She had made it her business to find out all she could about Bipolar disorder and was well informed on the general subject of depression. I learnt more from her about my situation than anyone else.

Joanna and I rented the house from Mr Jack an apple grower at Carlton between Ithaca and Syracuse. He regularly brought round second hand clothing for me, sometimes he wanted to sell or would insist that the item was a gift. I regularly wore the harris tweed overcoat I had bought from him and some leather gloves. It was good for the winter. I had taken to wearing polo neck sweaters, jeans, and boots of the kind I had seen in John Huston`s last film stimulated by `King John`s` reference to the blind preacher in Wise Blood. I bought the book by Flannery O,Conner, found it more compelling and was persuaded to make a last trip down south. The overcoat was dated to the period of the book in the days following the second world war

I wanted to do another road trip down the A95 then moving over to the A 88 to Atlanta. And we did that .... playing tapes That`s what I liked about it.along the way. I bought the stetson in Athens, in a rambling junk/antique store with a shiny black front like a funeral outfit on the strip mall on the way out of town in the direction of Atlanta. Being in the business Joanna would liked to have visited every every junk and antique store en route. Right at the back among a lot of junk which was as close to being unsaleable as I could imagine. She found two ill assorted crutches one for a child or very small person with a label saying -Tiny Tim`s. The other was for a person of average size made roughly but effectively of tree branches, the part used under the arm being padded with an ancient dishcloth type material of no identifiable colour formed by the pressure and weight of a body pressing down on it. It was the most ungainly unattractive thing. But it had a presence. I was tempted to buy the larger crutch. I put it under my arm and with care put my weight on it and took a few steps. She was fairly disgusted and said she wouldn` t have anything to do with me until I had a good

scrub and shower. Both of them would have been wonderful acquisitions for a museum of unusual artefacts if there is such a place.. She bought a small white porcelain nude of a child with painted eyes modelled to look like Jean Harlow made in Japan. The old lady selling it said in deep drawling voice“My oh my I’ve had that thing for ever more. I just can’t remember what I paid for it ” and charged what I thought was a high price, with assured innocence. She knew it was a good buy..

I found two toys in a glass case, one of Mickey and the other of Minnie Mouse circa nineteen twenty nine or thirty to thirtyone. They had lost their leather ears and Minnie was missing the button like nose and its ears. Joanna wasn’t interested. Mickey Mouse wasn’t in her heart. She was passionately involved in contemporary Americana in popular music film and shopping, but these early somewhat sinister versions of Mickey and Minnie repulsed her. It seemed so contrary to be so personally engaged with contemporary subcultural artefacts and at the same time have an aspiring career in the antique trade. But then I guess in time they would become valuable in the same way.. She reacted strongly when confronted with any ‘collectable’ which wasn’t pristine, virginally intact, seemingly untouched by human hand, wrapped and packaged as yet unpurchased. That’s what she went for- the object creating desire in her within the aura of strip malls, the huge department stores. It was the act of purchase which so excited her. She couldn’t bear the idea of being the last of many to handle tawdry worn out things, and hated the evidence of multiple handling. And yet even if the object was from an earlier period as long as it had the appearance of being virginal she would be attracted to it. I said she was a low life elitist. She sighed and said “sheeit”. But I was bemused by the fact that she was an aspiring dealer in antiques and yet found well handled things so hard to touch, unless the object was recently cleaned polished to show that the surface was in effect not exactly re-virginalised, but resurfaced enabling her to handle it. Even sex with her was like this . We prepared for it as though our natural selves were dirty and needed cleaning similar to her preparations for church going which I didn’t take to at all.. Washing and scrubbing, out of the shower and bath drying off in quick time, powdered and lubricated in the primary and secondary erogenous zones and into the bed before we could be infected with whatever she thought would invade us before we got there. I am more hygienic than otherwise when it comes to personal cleanliness, but this was out of my league. . And then post coitus more showering, bathing, and powdering as though all evidence and memory of what we had just been through would have to be eliminated post haste. She would then envelope herself in an elaborate night dress and fully made up, hair freshly coiffured, powdered and lipsticked would carefully interpose herself between the sheets. That is what she did every night. She wouldn’t talk about it. It was natural to her, initially quite amusing but all too quickly it palled. I might just as well have been living with a full blown Barbie doll. Joanna was really fond of Barbie. Barbies in various guises and conditions were lying about all over the bedroom, most still in their nasty little packages with the cellophane windows, little open coffins. She was particularly fond of Barbie dressed up in a Mickey Mouse outfit from 1976. Barbie was there alright. Joanna became more and more of a Barbie relicmonger day by day. When she joined the evangelical church it was the final straw. I couldn’t understand what the connection might be between Barbie as teen age virginal sex icon and Christ the Son of God. Joanna’s lips were closed. She either couldn’t or wouldn’t explain. I can see now that she was quite secretive, and I’ve begun to doubt the truth of what she chose to tell me was going on in the latter stages of our relationship. She could easily have been the one to alert the authorities to my overstaying in the country. It

would have fitted with her rediscovered passionate religiosity. I heard later that she had taken up with an antique dealer in Elmira who was a prominent preacher of the Holy Church of God. So I presume he must have convinced her to come home to the Lord. He must have saved her soul. That's what they say. "I'm gonna save your soul. put your trust in him through me".

Mr Jack brought round a donegal tweed overcoat he thought I could use. It hung down some way below my knees. The collar upturned fitted well around the back of my neck. I felt comfortable swaddled like a new born baby. We were living in the hills between Ithaca and Syracuse in upstate New York. He often brought something or other he thought might be useful. "Hey Mac you'll need this. It gets god-awful cold here in the middle of winter, like the hell it does". I enjoyed his dated use of slang. But can't reproduce it. He never did call me by my name. Back in the early fall we had endured a week or so of heavy rain. He appeared with a huge raincoat which he offered to me plus a bag of apples for 'Johnny Apple'. I looked like a drowning rat. He must have seen it was too big, although he tried to persuade me to take it. In the end he took it away because Joanna didn't like the idea of secondhand attire. The charity costumes is how she disparaged my wardrobe. But he left with no hard feeling. He was right, this overcoat would come in useful. My old Army officers' short coat which Ivan had bought in a second hand clothes shop near Leicester Square in London years before just after the war, was down to its last threads. Mr Jack's offering was in good condition, not worn much. It would go with the black stetson which was more like a flashy homberg. I offered to pay for it but he wouldn't have it.

"Just pleased to help son" he said.

Joanna wasn't keen but probably realised it was going to be useful. Maybe she didn't care one way or the other. We were not making a whole bunch of money, far from it, and coming from the region she knew all about the weather. We had coffee then Mr Jack left saying he would be back after Christmas to fix the leak shown by the damp patch on the ceiling.

The snow came suddenly, stealthily in the darkness one night in late November, all of five feet - Took me all morning to dig out the path to the gate and then to uncover the truck and the sidewalk in front of the house. Chillingly cold, the wind chill factor took the temperature down to twenty below. It stayed between five and twenty below for at least a month.

Joanna and I were often at cross purposes, any let up masking the widening gulf between us. The relationship wasn't strong enough to bear what I originally had intended to be a temporary parting. I didn't have a work permit and it was hard getting work in the black economy: I had done a lot of building, timber, restaurant, auto trade, gardening, dogwalking, couriering and so on, all cheap labour, whatever. I had wanted to go back to the UK for a few months. Unbeknown to Joanna I needed to get out of the country as my visa had run out a year previously. I wanted to apply for a work permit in London so I could return on a more established footing. Should have done it years ago. I had been been a temporary resident for ten years or so and I thought I stood a good chance of getting a permanent work visa, the desired green card. But I had overstayed my welcome by eighteen months. We had talked about getting married but it came to nothing. And while I was keen enough then, she was suspicious that I might be doing it just to get US citizenship. She said as much which I denied of course. She had a point.

I must have aroused her suspicions by continually deferring my application for naturalisation. It's just too easy to slip from being exotic to becoming undesirable. She

wanted me to take out naturalisation papers. Towards the end when we had exhausted all the arguments about my vacillation she would vent her frustration. She didn't like the idea that I wore dead mens' clothes."It's grotesque", she said. I didn't have an answer, as I was aware of it. Death was an aura that hung over the clothes I preferred. I did wear dead mens' clothes and often wondered who those dead men were. What had gone on in the space under my stetson when it had been worn by the head who had first bought it. And who had filled the overcoat? Was I in some way influenced, growing to be a composite of them all? Were they all really dead or was it a projection on my part? And they would be superseded by newer models as I exchanged one set of clothes for newer versions, one combination of styles for others. She wouldn't have been remotely interested in that. And I can understand that she may well have found me feckless, unambitious, and too impressionable, too easily led. But one can never really know oneself. What other flaws of character did she silently object to?

I grew more aware of differences between my friends and myself. They were very friendly provided I fitted a particular idea of the aspiring immigrant seeking naturalisation. I should have been an acceptable immigrant. "Have you applied for citizenship yet?" sang out at intervals like a broken record. Someone after asking the question followed it with-"we need your blood". I took that to mean that the questioner wanted to bolster the white blood bank. I didn't like it and was immediately less intent on making the application. In the end I knew that I had no intention of doing so. I would never do it. It was a great relief when I admitted it to myself. I didn't mention any of this to Joanna. she wouldn't have liked it at all.. Maybe that is where the separation showed itself in the absence of any discussion of what was important, to me at least. I wasn't being open with her and was still giving the impression of trying to jump the tracks.

Feelings between oneself, meaning I, myself, or individually you and what is- out there. I enjoyed that. Staying on illegally could have been the solution, to be there, but not registered, to be without the demands of citizenship. I wasn't keen on the requirements given by the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services on the web. Reading the first page showed turned me off

Quote:

*Welcome to the naturalisation home page. Naturalisation is the process by which US citizenship is conferred upon a foreign citizen after he or she fulfills the requirements established by Congress in the Nationality Act (INA). The general requirements for administrative naturalisation include:*

- . a period of continuous residence and physical presence in the united States;*
- ` residence in a particular USCIS District prior to filing;*
- . an ability to read, write and speak English;*
- . a knowledge and understanding of US history and government;*
- . good moral character;*
- . attachment to the principles of the US constitution; and,*
- . favorable disposition towards the United States.*

*All naturalisation applicants must demonstrate good moral character, attachment , and favorable disposition.*

It sounds reasonable enough, unless there are objections to the requirement to have an attachment to the principles of the US constitution which I don't think I have and a favorable

disposition towards the United States which I certainly don't have. Although I wouldn't have been averse to lying about it if I really wanted to stay.

But overstaying was not a solution either, that of not wanting to commit oneself, or even decide to be there. I enjoyed the non status of the non citizen, content to be in limboland beyond the wasteful tracts of suburbia to the refuse dumps, landfill sites, First Nation Reservations, cheap bars and all that stuff. It hadn't dawned then that if I was looking for a place to be and a someone to be with, then this was not it and Joanna was not the person. Should I be with anyone? I ask myself As Joanna's psychotherapist said "The mind is very conservative, it thrives on knowing what is what, resists movement and flow, inspite of what we think we think". Now we were far apart. "Shit". So I said "sheeit" just the way she says it and decided to "take it as it comes". This is where depression set in. Every time I heard Good Morning America it made me want to be anywhere other than there. And when I hear the word this nation, either here or there, or other phrases assuming a national unity, a nation, I want to retch like a dog. If I had stayed much longer it would have meant the hospital again. I am sure of that. This land of homeland security was not good for my health.

#### "Good Morning America"

Not that again. I switched it off, the radio. We were taking the dead freezer by truck to the nearest dump way out of town, out of town. In half an hour we are driving in through open gates faced with an enormous tract of land. Immediately in front some distance away is something like a village built of rusting automobile junk, swathes of massive elongated heaps of rusting metal shaped into auto forms piled high in rows making a semblance of terraced houses at least four storeys high, and forming streets on the American grid street plan. We drive up and take a walk along the avenues. 'Talk to the animals, walk with the animals'. It's eerily quiet except for the reverberating chimes of metal hitting metal in the wind, metallic bird sounds high up there in among tangled metallic conglomerations, black oil slicks and leaks on rich cloured rust, dull darkest grey to black opaque rubber contrasting with the stained autolack pastel shades of oldsmobils, chevrolets, plymouths, pontiacs and buicks. Each roughly constructed rectangular pile while carefully arranged appears to invite collapse. Joanna reminded me

"The last time we flew to Kennedy we took a taxi to Manhattan, you remember, we saw, glimpses of a dark rusting metallic ruin in the winter sun".

"The skyline was shining like the chromium false teeth of the old babushkas in Moscow-Moscaw- Russia. And in the Sahara where the blue Tuareg man all wrapped up in ricketts blue periodically opening and shutting his mouth flashing colgate glints in the light of the suns rays. Was he sending a message in code, those exquisite set of stainless molars suggested that he was Soviet trained, a tuareg socialist now a terrorist perhaps. The connection here is colgate of course. You remember". Well I didn't and she reminded me. "The rag pickers in Dehli have a generic term for waste metal. 'Colgate' they call it after the predominance of toothpaste tubes I guess".

Joanna has never been beyond the sea horizons, let alone to Texas or Utah. As we come over the...?..bridge and into Harlem that familiar sense of aging and decay is compounded differently in the drab unkempt streets bounded by tall run down buildings, dark skinned people skirt the walls and traverse the sidewalks, and then eventually we pass into the shining heartland a global fiscal centre where the white Barbie reigns. By now we have

shrunk to the size of midgets, as those other midgets receded to the size of march hares under the weight of the atrophying influences of steel and glass.

.... As Joanna and I cruise in along the freeway the city scape rises on the horizon reaching into the unremitting sky blue of the North American winter's sky. Joanna talked about the appropriateness of the gentle decay of the city's aging modernity, of suffering, and sufferance, aging and truth.

Out here in the dump where the freezer graveyard stretches to the horizon, resembling blocks of snow or ice punctuated here and there by tiny figures in ones and twos spread out under an enormous sky reflecting the curvature of the earth, the sky blue sky again. We look up directly above, turning our heads skywards and tottering on the verge of overbalancing peer into an intense dark blue vista bleeding into unfathomable darkness.

We push the freezer out and line it up precisely on the edge of this sea of enamelled metal and plastic cubes. It is silent apart from the cries of the gulls mobbing bulldozers near the horizon's rim. Returning to the truck we drive on by a number of bulldozers chewing the ground among careening seagulls and crows and then through a vast shallow dip of a valley hosting another cityscape mirage in timber and assorted building materials laying in regulated piles and heaps.

"Lets go".

"I don't want to be here".

The exit was hard to find. Time to leave. She wanted to leave, I should have liked to stay..

The death of objects writ so large, describes an awesome failure in the dreaming of things to come..

By March I was back in London, quite numbed by the return, and could only slide along on the surface. By the simple act of arial removal from there to here everything seemed to have shrunk to half size.

A year later Jose in Syracuse wrote to, say that Mr Jack had died. We had both moved out of the house when I left and I hadn't read the letter from Joanna, but I hadn't thrown it away. Jose heard that he had died in the winter. He'd been repairing the roof at Jason's place. I knew there was a leak at the back coming through the bathroom ceiling where an unsightly stain had been slowly spreading. He said he would get it fixed. I didn't realise given that he looked to be at least seventy, that the phrase *getting it fixed* meant that he was going to do it. There were places where the roof came down to the ceiling level of the ground floor. It seems he lost his balance, slid down and slipped off the roof to land on the concrete path. He came off at the lowest level, otherwise he would have been seriously dead in the short moment it took to fall after leaving the roof and hitting the ground. He just lay there, and in a state of shock- wouldn't allow anyone move him. Luckily he was with someone who worked for him regularly and he called an ambulance. His wife said it was a bitterly cold day, and she had told him not to go up there and to get someone else to do it. But he was as stubborn as all hell. He had been getting the house ready to rent again. When he got out of hospital having made a remarkable recovery for a man of his age He acquired a motorised wheel chair which was found near his body in Lake Cayuga in the early summer. There was something about him that I admired and would wish for in myself, as though he and I might have come out of a similar mold. Fantasies like that make life tolerable.

A whole lot of shopping going on

Beryl says she likes the look of me because I look “out of time”. Must be a lucky hit. I don’t quite understand what she means. Like someone who lives in the past, or is merely unimaginative, a passive surface moving more slowly than real time hence being seen to be out of synchronisation, or who has adopted a look an appearance coincidental with a current collective memory. A look, or the look of a ghost? How is it possible?. I guess living does take place in anticipation of a future or futures, but one can’t live in it. Obviously not. But then what about that marxist understanding of becoming. ykwim., or yukwim. Instead of accepting what was said as well meant maybe even positive commentary, I react stupidly. yk react against as against respond to...rti. That is for my own instruction. I said to her:

“ I’m trying to learn how to speak, more effectively how to use sounds identified with words. When will we ever learn? For example e.g. You come over to me in different guises. And I can never tell which or what mood you will be in”. Sometimes you play the role of an ageing mole dressed up like your grannie (you said) in fawns and browns wearing a viennese trilby replete with a band and feathers and those oh so sensible brogues with the heavy soles. Those clothes they last too long!”

An aging mole as in spy straight out of the ‘The Third Man’. Remember we are playing on the surface. This is flirtation of a kind. And she did mean to be kind. I think she was being affectionate when she said “you are out of time”. Thinking is helpful. I choose to take it like that anyway. And then I said less generously

“You’re a version of your own father, you told me about all him, his rural self, you a female yokel, down to the lurching walk and the long drawers for wearing when the winter nights draw in. You mentioned the sailors roll, something to do with your reactions to the conventions of a slightly earlier time, when you were a teenager perhaps”. French knickers then. As you know I haven’t met your father”.

Beryl keeps a snap shot of him posing with friends in a hay field, what Rose called the courting fields of her day. There is more to the sense of dress sense than mere style. ‘Being out of time’ is different to ‘looking out of time’ much more difficult. “I guess it is true that while we share the same time when together what you mean is it is shared from different perspectives which are derived from our respective pasts. Is that what you mean? She said “Forget it stupid. It’s just chat”.

“But I want to know what you meant. It disturbs me”.

“Forget it baby” she said mimicking my americanisms, taking the piss.

“ OK babe”. I said, my response ponderously repetitive. I am on a sharp learning curve.

It is difficult to be here again. I say that to myself too often, should rephrase it like “It’s like a piece of cake being here again”. Better but I `m not sure I can believe it.

Joanna wrote but I didn’t read it. That was then. This is now. What would we have tom say to each other? I must have given her Michael my brother’s address.

I had intended to come back so that I could make an application for a green card (work permit) and assuming success go back for good. But before I got round to doing it my visa had run out. I didn’t tell Joanna. My time was coming because when it came down to it I didn’t want to be there. I had secretly outstripped my welcome by overrunning the visa. And eventually I knew that the authorities would focus their attention on me. It came when least expected. I had been nervous to begin with but quickly got used to putting it to the back of mind. I ignored it.. She had also changed and must have sensed there was something unspoken growing up between us. I thought I was the one setting the pace for a breakdown.

Joanna who I see in retrospect had other fish to fry broached it some months after the visa had come to its end. She said that she was in a relationship with someone else. I was upset by that, but had no cause to be given the fact that I intended to leave when the moment was right, as I said to myself..Anyway she jumped the gun.The last step was to make all the necessary arrangements, division of goods etc. Courage didn't come into it. She had more demanding reasons for doing all this. I didn't want my share of all that stuff which had clung to us having been acquired without much thought or intention. I wanted to get away.

On the last day we met in the Gardener Museum in Boston She came to say goodbye. She looked pale and strained, a sixties phantom in her good for business dress of pale green velvetine, a walking living talking doll, the human Barbie. I was never out going like that. She could up stage me any day We said goodbye in a solemn fashion although it wasn't a personal tragedy for either of us.. This was it. I wanted to run away, from this obsequious performance. It was all my own doing. I had done it again. She thought she was the centre of the universe just like me. We deserved the worst of each other.

Next day at the departures desk at Logan Airport the inevitable happened. I was taken by two plain clothes officials to a room somewhere off the main concourse. I showed them the Final Order of Removal from the Court and for good measure a copy of the letter I had been required to write to the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services after the FBI had caught up with me, stating that I agreed to leave the country by the 14th of February 1999 St Valentines Day. I had two days grace left by leaving on the twelfth. Who were these interrogators? They weren't in uniform. I asked what authority they represented being in civilian clothes. That was a bad move. No response. They wanted to know everything I had been doing in the ten years I had been a resident in the country. I couldn't remember in detail being disaffected and dis-inclined to collaborate, how is it said in government circles here- The Prime minister is *'not minded'*. I wasn't *'minded'* to go through the same routines having already been through them all with the FBI and the Bof Cand IS, to their satisfaction I guess. I wanted to leave even though I had been caught overstaying my time, where on the contrary it seemed I should have preferred to stay. I pleaded that I had been an itinerant travelling around doing odd jobs here and there and all over, which wasn't entirely the case. I wasn't able to answer all their questions satisfactorily. I couldn't remember. I didn't want to. It was all over. Both the FBI and the BofC and IS had been through it all anyway. My passport had been renewed two years before in ninety seven so I didn't have the record of the times I had been in and out over the border as a courier before then. But they would have them. The events which got out of hand at a party in the trailer park a few months before where Louis and I were taken in after a fight also featured. The police had contacted Joanna to check on me then. Like to like. I didn't think Joanna knew at the time that my visa had run out. I kept it with other papers in the bedroom. She could easily have got hold of it. It would make sense because at that time we were discussing my probable application for naturalisation. It's what eventually alerted me to suspect that Joanna might have informed on me. The Police didn't take it further but they must have passed whatever they had found out on to Customs and Immigration and the FBI. Who knows.?

Cold comfort

We were with friends walking in some wild land under snow near the sea north of Boston . I was leaving in a month..

Two crows flying south south west fly straight`as the crow flies`, Minus twenty degrees centigrade on the path through the thuja trees, of frozen snow and hard ground cast in mud last month at the end of the year. Ice hard puddles edged blue and pink are locked in where the path slides through marshland as the levee loops in and out of the trees. A huge steel grey cloud covering the sky in the west is undercut by a thin strip of bloodied red, beyond the ice and reeds at the edge of the water. It meets the horizon on the far side of the estuary. Looking out over to the burning strip, nothing moves. The first stretch of trees peters out into a broad expanse of reeds crossed by the levee and slick ditches of oily sink water a metre or so below mean height. The ditches are iced at the edges but not in the vicinity of the metal cylinders carrying water under the levee. Looking down, the surface mirrors the sky in between broken ice. The red strip falters, slowly sinking into the horizon. Elsewhere remnants of a snow goose, grey, pink and blue wreckage lay among the reeds on the other side of the stagnant ditch. Fingers ache. A dog skips on the ice puddle near the edge of the levee. The thin line of the open sea has lost its colour, taken up, absorbed into the gigantic cloud. We skirt the marsh, on the one side passing to the estuary and the open sea to the east; on the other into a morass of reeds, ice and open water, at first intimate and inviting, but for the dank stagnating ditch water faintly reeking wisps of stench. Water, ice, reeds, posts, trees and sky recede in perspective and fading light into the horizon. No birds, no aircraft, nothing like that. There are some posts, signs distributed across the marshes..

A day later: The dog breaks the ice, licks the snow, snatches a long branch and rushes into the trees as the levee becomes a path through solid ground. We pass through several groves of living, dead and dying trees. Eventually the levee takes us to the entrance of a larger expanse of woodland where the path curves up and away to the left, to the east. Out of nowhere two two toned crows are flying south east above the posts towards the open sea

A large moon was laying diametrically opposite the red strip growing dim in the west, seen through the traceries of branches and broken cloud, glazed in milky light, surrounded in a lavender mist. Having come to a halt we compared notes. One of us had instinctively wanted to orient east as west, the moon hanging over the west, crimson traces of the sun in the east, which would then have been rising in the west. Dawn would be breaking backwards. We turned and were coming back in ones and twos wishing that each successive twist in the path would be the last one. The moonlight cast faint shadows before us. A wind rustled in the reeds at the staging post by the levee. It was dead in the water, hypothermia in the air. Someone said it must be twenty below. The dogs rushed on led by the calling of their noses, scouting the forward peripheries. Suddenly halting they signalled the need for assurance..... There were five of us and three dogs. In all conscience there were only four. I was leaving, and not coming back. The decision was made. A shadow, like a halfling. I was not there in the full sense of being or time, a halfling of my own making. I didn't carry visible hereditary marks of ancestor violence like some of the others. Whatever was on me like the sicknesses born of intemperate behaviour back in the eighteen century or whenever, and now transmuted into a fixed set of signs and symptoms. It wasn't so easy to read. It was neither here nor there. The others were the descendants of martyrs to the cause, the difference between profligacy and victimhood. I was feeling remorseful. These were the last days before

the interregnum , flying away,. ``There were people I should thank, but not those here. It was too late for that.

### Homeland security

I was left waiting for an hour or so, being `given one` as they say. I could see what they were doing , but it was still upsetting. They knew how to do it. By now the plane had left. After what seemed an age but probably no more than an hour or two they came in with the papers, details of where I had been, doing what and with whom, together with my dismal police record of speed violations, parking offences all 2,375 dollars worth, which I had now paid, driving violations and the fight at the party over noise. They were particularly scathing about my stay in the mental institution for three months in 1996. What could I say about that? It wasn't much after all, but enough to show that I could be seen to be on the verge of being a petty undesirable. I didn't look like an honest and upright person in their terms.. True enough, and it was, as Joanna later admitted the conclusion she had come to. They had been in contact with the FBI, and that part of their organisation which received the information on my case prior to the court hearing. They played back some of the less than truthful replies I had given at the earlier interrogation, and said that perjury was a chargeable offence. They didn't have anything of substance to hold me on. It had already been gone through. It was easier for them to let me go. I was on their black list so they said. I asked how long this judgement would affect re-entry. "It's a life sentence" they said. I took that as a joke, ha ha. The FBI had been through it all and given me two months grace to get myself together to leave. They weren't unreasonable I suppose. But now I was in the hands of yet another agency with a different perspective: Homeland Security is the old new thing.

At the time I didn't think Joanne knew about the visa and therefore couldn't have told the FBI, but now I'm not so sure. She was the pragmatist. Her enjoyment of what she perceived as my exoticism had long palled, and rightly so. I thought I had adjusted to her reasonably well. But in retrospect I can see that I wasn't exactly rational let alone objective.

I had been hanging around the the trailer parks as she had said, where curlers were worn from dawn to dusk, among the addicts, the drinkers the difficult the desperate, and those who had given up various ghosts. It was there that I found out where to find casual work. She despised the trailer parks, and how I earned a dollar. That did it for sure. It didn't fit her aspirations. I wasn't going to act the grateful immigrant and climb the social ladder by dint of slave like labour. The dream she had grown up with in my experience had become a dystopian mire although it could still be enjoyable perversely, to be sure.

### Homeland two

Words won't come out of my mouth the way they should. I am for ever not telling it right - As soon as I open my mouth- bad black molars lurking behind the front teeth, lurching into badly timed interjections, feeding off others` remarks. It really costs to have dentistry done over there. Bad teeth, poor health, bad education et al. Joanna was right. I am trailer park trash, but not back here. That phrase doesn't travel. She wouldn't recognise me, not right away.

We're in the local pub, brown painted wooden panels, low wall lights with honey ochre lampshades, dark wooden tables and chairs and a dirty floor, undercleaned and overused,

drab dark and full of grime. There is a blue neon insect zapper hanging over the bar. We like it in the local pub. No- they like it Beryl and her friends.

I began "You know..."

She interrupted "Yeah." Take your time, no snakes, think about the ladders, not the dice. Try me."

And then as I made the first sounds

"Youkn..." she turned to someone called Mike across the table. All of a sudden it's like shit, I'm already not saying "sheet" like I did. What the fuck is she playing at. I didn't say it like "what the fuck are you playing at Beryl" in the tone of voice I know really irritates her, which I can't stop at times. I didn't say it out loud. He is coming on hard and cocky with it. I had been trying to say something to her for Christ's sake.

She turned back to me as though she can read my mind

"Go on then. Spit it out"

Impatient. Impatient, and irritated, By now I am really pissed off. What am I doing here? I don't like this place. The noise from the juke box is too loud and there are too many drinkers crowding the bar. We are sitting down at the table by the wall next to the toilets. It doesn't smell exactly but I certainly know its there, toilets lavatory paper, urinals and grimy basins. Not good,. too close to colonic gymnastics I think.

"Maybe I should see how they do it in the soap operas"

"Don't bullshit me Johnny. You know nothing about them- You've been away, remember, and you haven't watched them since you're back. You wouldn't know one from another". Is she speaking to me or is this a public pronouncement for that Michael's benefit to put me down and let him know where I stand with her at least for this evening?

"Don't bullshit me"

She is equally irritated. Not all Michaels are the same, my name is John. Johnny Christian Styoner..

"You are taking the Mickey" she said and turned back to the other Mike.

It's true. Just came to my mind and I said it without thinking, just reacting. We aren't really concerned about this. There is something else I am trying to get at, in words and images before inchoation takes over and I lose myself in confusion over the influence of gravity. The gravitas went some time ago. Stand up. I just can't do that this minute, skating or at least sliding, words coming, this room is too small. Why had I mentioned the soap operas when I know she watches them avidly and she knows I don't, and haven't. It must have irritated her to hear me say that. I could have been taking the piss out of her as a matter of course. She knows me better than I know myself and her, more or less right about everything except when it comes to she, her self. And there I can - but more often than not when I do, I put her back up Sometimes her intelligence overcomes the need for self protection, self preservation.

.

On the bus going to the doctors, I heard myself say to noone in particular "I might become a student of Soap Opera, the phrase appeals".

"Work without an aesthetic dimension is slavery of a kind don't you think".

And then in the surgery out of the blue I said even before I thought.

"I must be depressed" .

The doctor replied "Your ears are in perfect order. You can hear a whisper from ten feet".

“I haven’t really come about that Doctor.” he had immediately looked at my ears poking and prodding away. “You should have them syinged”

“I want some pills for depression.”

It was a new idea.

He doesn’t look up. Should I call this Doctor bastard, Doctor Bastard? He doesn’t meet my eye. I am sitting in front of him wearing a pair of dark glasses looking cool I hope, but feeling like shit.

“I haven’t got any energy Doctor.”

“No time for that now. But be assured that your ears are in working order”. I’ll arrange a time for you to have your ears syringed and send you a letter”. If you want me to deal with what you call depression, you should make another appointment with the receptionist. Good day now”

Like gday neow in Strine. I’m deaf in the right ear sometimes, but I could hear him alright. He must have got me mixed up with someone else to play Roll over Beethoven to. Is that appropriate? like the blind bleeding the blind. And the dumb- a speechless crowd: seeing monkeys listen and speak. I can hear relatively well, and more or less see the world, but not necessarily for what it is.

Beryl says sometimes she finds me depressing. When she’s around her energy and spontaneous humour contrasts in her favour against my more saturnine complexion. I like that phrase it suits the darker moods. I quite enjoy what she calls depression, on a par with the satisfaction that comes from doing the most menial repetitive labour well. But is that a kind of depression. “How are you to know?”

“Because I know about these things.”

“Well you could have fooled me.” “?

“Thank god I don’t have you as a client, you would drive anyone to drink.”

“If thats what you think why in the hell are you here Why are you bothering “?

“Those are my words exactly darling”

Does she have a penchant for the Mikes of the world or just for depressives? I think she does. And I said so. I had long since learned on the face of it to defer belief. She didn’t reply. As alcoholically stimulated rhetoric it required no answer. I know that since Ivan and Rose died I am doing this more and more, drinking and sinking. It’s all since rhe return.

“Johnny Take your time”.

What else was there to do. She was right but I intended to go on to where there was no understanderable conclusion, and ordered another pint with the whisky chaser. This would truly put the cat among the pigeons and send me up and down the snakes and ladders in short order. I bought another glass of red wine for Beryl, a vinegary. masquerade

“It reduces the chances of getting breast cancer”. In this instance I chose to believe it, and in what I thought was a subtle satirical move asked the Mike accross the table if I could buy him a drink.

He declined.

“If you are going to leave why don’t you”. She wants me to go, and I didn’t want to leave her to the mercy of a fate that’s on the cards, He is the joker. No she is. I wanted to get away to go somewhere, anywhere. What did she mean back where, there over the sea, around the corner, or just anywhere? This is a another bad night, too late now. With a great show I stood up on widespread unsteady legs, drank the pint in one, followed it with the whisky chaser and found a way to the door. I was wandering through the car park when this Mike

suddenly loomed up in front of me with Beryl behind him. I tried to take a swing at him. Fuck him, and ended up spreadeagled over the bonnet of a car, my car, or rather Michael my brother's car. Beryl must have persuaded this Mike to come out with her after me. I took a swing and he just laid me across the car. It was undignified, a fait accompli. Next day Beryl said how ashamed she was. But I was unrepentant, boastful even of my drinking prowess. Clutching at any straw I brushed aside Beryl's account.

"I even found my own way home".

"You actually think you found your own way back? Take a look out of the window and what do you see- Yes! you see the car- and how did it get there do you suppose? well I'll tell you You were spark out there in the carpark. Lying on the ground You could have been killed, run over. Mike drove you back here. We got you out of your stinking clothes and put you to bed. You really made a complete idiot of yourself and me too". This was an impressive head of steam. She was very angry.

"I did no such thing. I remember finding the keys and...". She interrupted.

"Oh yes you found the keys all right by pulling everything out of your pockets dropping money and condoms and god knows what all around the steps. And then vomiting all over the place- Remember that----- No- well I do. And who cleaned it all up'?"

I wanted to retire. It was no contest, but there was no let up.

"When you are drunk You are just disgusting. You need help".

I thought to myself that I have a few too many now and again, like having accidents. Comes and goes. Know when it's coming and relieved when it's gone. But that doesn't make me an alcoholic. It just makes me accident prone. I didn't reply. There was nothing to say. She was right. But I wasn't prepared to admit it, not yet.

I can't recall the time when I finally got up, I could hardly stand. My hands were shaking and I felt terrible. On the brink. I staggered into the shower and tried to forget, as though nothing had occurred.

"Why did that guy drive a nail through his hand? Was that last night?"

"Why did he do that? Wasn't he a friend of yours?"

"Yes, well not exactly. He was someone... I met him once or twice.

"I thought it was horrible. It wasn't last night, it was last week".

"When I think of what our immediate forebearers must have gone through I can't help feeling that I am living in a very sloppy scene."

"And I feel as though I left unfinished business behind".

"Behind where?"

"The States"

"Oh you're missing that crazy woman Joanna and her Barbie dolls".

"No not her. I wish I hadn't told you about that.. I could have done a lot more there than here, that's clear and I screwed it up. I should never have come back."

"I think she was the one who did the informing, the grass. You were getting on her nerves, that's the gist of what you keep telling me."

"No I know it wasn't in her mind".

"How can you know that? "

"His wife is a doctor and she supervised the nail going through his hand".

"We all just stood there while he studied this massive nail sticking up from a table, and then did you notice, how deliberately he placed the palm of his hand over the nail, felt for the

right place before pressing down and allowing it to pass through until his hand was pressed down until it was flat on the table. He stood there stuck to the table. It had all gone quiet before pulling his hand off it. There was no blood”.

“But why did he do it “?”

“I don` t know. Why had he made such a spectacle for people to come and gawp.”

“I don` t know. He`s from the east grew up behind the Iron Curtain, from Kiev in the Ukraine ”.

“I wasn` t impressed by that speech. Who was that guy who said that we should all be more consequential about what we do. That we should pay more attention to our actions and their consequences. And?”

“He was a Professor of Philosophy from somewhere .....Leipzig, or Lublin I think”.

“Sticking a nail through your hand seemed a peculiar way to--- it did bleed afterwards, I saw the blood on the towel she was carrying but not much”

“Jesus I thought I would die it was so tense and awful I left that place and fell off the kerb hit my knee and thought I was having a heart attack.

“ Do you remember how it was set up like a play on a stage.”

“She stayed in the shadows until it was over, and calm as you like he just wandered off stage like nothing had happened and she got hold of his hand.”

This didn` t make me feel any better.

“ He walked with the aid of that knurled stick like a shepherd. Do you suppose he thought he was a shepherd of men as it says in the bible or is it a fisher of men ”?”

“How would I know”.

Actually I wanted to forget it.

“ If I hadn` t been there I would have thought you` d made it up.”

“ But you were .”

‘The skin on the top of his hand responded to the nail pushing upwards making a sort of pyramid before it broke through. that was excruciating. You remember the silence in the audience after the skin was broken”.

We replayed it in our heads until it was exhausted. and that is what is happening now that insistent replaying until the memory of it loses it`s freshness , and eventually becomes paper thin and there isn` t a need to recall it any more.

“There are no scars on his hand She must have done a good job. He has done the same thing several times it would really bleed if he didn` t find he right spot”.

Oh these bloody christians making such crass acts of redemption. Suffering that we might be saved. Onanistic blood letting.

#### Feet missing

It was bitterly cold in the snow which after a few weeks was still on the ground, dirty, stained and grimy under low light and impending heavy snow clouds. Rose`s mother had her apron on, was wearing a turban, skirt, short sleeved blouse, cardigan and cut down wellington boots. She shuffled about looking for the spade. Recently in the cold weather rats had been getting into the chicken run. She had put a few traps down, They must have been desperate. But the traps were empty. She opened the chicken wire door to the run, Rose standing guard by the door to stop the fowls and the rats from escaping. She was after them with the spade, raising it to head height and with murderous intent and bringing it`s flat blade down on the skittering pack. She managed to seriously damage one and with another blow accurately

cleaved it in half. The other five managing to elude the assault, and get out somehow, one with both its front legs missing, amputated, by a trap no doubt. It could still hop and use its stumps with speed and agility. She cursed them, picked up the carcass and threw it after the other five who had run into a large briar patch at the edge of the copse. They collected eggs from the henhouse and went back into the house. Inside the windows were dripping with condensation. Rose tried to wipe it away, watery streaks all over the glass, She couldn't see out into that desolation. Her grandmother was sniffing in the background, saying she wouldn't see another summer. She saw the maimed rat once in a while. It was cunning, must have been the life force in it that was so impressive. She was quite frightened by the power it had out of all proportion to its size. She wanted to see it again and again. She didn't know why, this unquenchable fascination. She was old enough to be aware, to understand. Its life force had somehow impinged upon her.

One day She just knew it wasn't there any more. It was a powerful reminder whenever she felt weak and self pitying. Rose gave it to me like a virus, my inheritance, one of her gifts to me. When events prove difficult to handle I wander about looking for rats, and other animals, birds and insect life. She told me about that rat as a recurring theme which affected her attitude to everything, including us. I like to know they are nearby. They calm stridency, pressure and tension, worms in apples. Like black butterflies on pock marked portland stone, showered by shrapnel, mutated in the era of soot.

On occasion I would leave for a day to go where I used to live as a child, somewhere which used to be remote, in those other days, decades before the millenium. Perhaps it is a true representation lived again through imagined scenarios. The yesteryears. None of us can unless we imagine that going back to where we assert it all took place implies a reconnection with what can be remembered in the past of early individual life, on the assumption that it is authentic, even if untainted by evidence. It would have an internal connection with the recollections of involuntary socialisation.

We go by car and drive away within minutes, not even coming to a halt, just cruise glimpsing landmarks, markers for the memory, avoiding unwanted recollections, and the feeling that it had been an impossible task to grow from one body state into the next without doing serious damage all round. Whatever possibilities presented themselves were clouded in a fog of uncertainty impossible to attain, and equally an intimation that these were false intentions, flawed ambitions. Now I pass through these villages which lie flat as old black and white photographs without substance, frozen ghastly moments of then and there. The oak, beech, ash and yew trees the props still stand while the actors have left the stage. This time I wander, and leave, returning when the desire overcomes the futility of memory. This is where Rose's mother waged a never ending war of attrition against rats. And then growing too feeble submerged into the slurry and swamps of verbal assault on all and sundry, anyone coming into earshot; eventually dying in choleric rancour, a rage against the natural order. In her dotage rats and human kind somehow acquired a common baseness, one and all of a kind.

Beryl said she collected, 'oddities' she called them Who doesn't?. They are in her mother's house in the north east north of Hartlepool.

'What do you mean, oddities?'

She was silent still not seeing and then she said "I was going along the beach I must have been about ten looking at what this tide had brought in, higher up beyond the regular tide

marks. It must have been a high water mark of a very high tide. And there all in a bunch I found nest of scaly tails, rats tails.

We sat together silently in harmony. I liked the idea of rats tails.

And then she said "Would you like to go there sometime? We can stay with my mother"..

"Well I would like to go but I have pressing things to sort out here. Nothing is coming in. As you know I have funds, but they won't last for ever. I like the idea of having something to fall back on". Going on a trip meant again postponing the prospects I have been working on. But not going meant I should breaking my word again. I had tried to explain but she didn't want to hear. I could tell I wasn't telling any sort of truth.

'Get lost". her final words that morning.

In the evening we agreed to drive up there after I have found out how things are going.

Beryl knows there is really nothing in the offing.

She said that it would be in my interest to apologise to Mike and thank him for getting me home. "Who knows, he might be able to help you".

I didn't much like the sound of it.

We met in the bar of the hotel across the road from the flat the next evening. She is quick off the mark. I bought him a pint, Beryl had a glass of dry sherry and I had mineral water At least to start with. Is beer good for breasts? It is supposed to clean the intestines keeping them in the pink. He said he was an entertainer of sorts. Beryl hadn't told me anything knowing that I had taken against him. He said "I'm just starting to put together a new production based on the idea of 'filthy words'".

"Uh huh"

"I've been thinking about the way we use language, you know how everything is codified. Like for example in english, it's the only language I know well enough to be able to speculate like this. There are so many ways language is stratified, codified. And it is a code in the first place. Lets take a simple sounding phrase like *You think I am an arrogant bastard*".

"I don't" I responded almost too quickly. He knew otherwise. and laughed. "Don't worry I can't read your mind, only your body language and what you say, what you don't say and what you mean".

There you go I thought: arrogant bastard. I was getting out of my depth again.

"What I want to do is to take a simple sentence like that and consider what other meanings it might have other than the obvious. Lets take the first two words *You think* for example. There is the word *you*. We apply this word to each other. When I say you I mean you, me pointing at you. You recognise in that specific condition you applies to you. But we both think of ourselves as I, me or myself. So as an I, me, or myself, you accept the word you as meaning I. I could easily turn the sentence, and myself, so it becomes *I think You are an arrogant bastard*. But if you is I, and I is you the meaning breaks down".

I didn't say anything but indicated by nodding that I followed what he was saying, although I was mistrustful. We did communicate when there was something to exchange, like when I offered to buy him another drink. That was simple enough. And he reciprocated.

Suddenly he said

"Look. When I am cut I bleed".

He opened a large lock knife and expertly sliced his arm open. He took hold of my arm and pulled up the sleeve, I didn't react or pull away. He was quick. It wasn't a deep cut, enough to make the blood flow freely for a short while.. He knew how to do it.

Beryl said

“D`on`t do it for Christ`s sake”:

Too late

“I don`t like that sort of thing”.

We said nothing, just sat there cradling our respective arms wrapped in handkerchiefs. Red with blood like the flag. In a few minutes the blood had coagulated.. Mike bought another round of drinks and we sat there quietly.

We didn`t get round to considering the word *think*, but what happened really alerted me and I found myself considering both what he said and the actions which followed. It was the cutting that did it. Up to that point I wasn`t feeling much about what he had to say. Maybe he could see that. It wasn`t so interesting. Is he some kind of autodidact?

After we left Beryl said she was sure he was going to cut her too.

“The wound is superficial. All it needs is some elastoplast. You know those stick ons which act like stitches”

“ No I don`t ”.

“ It was a bit like an initiation ceremony” .

“Yes it was something like that. But what were you saying ”?

“You know the scar the scar on my thigh, on my right leg”?

“Yes, couldn`t miss it”.

We sat there for a while, silent.

“Did he do that?”

“No, but he was there when it was done”.

‘Who did it then’

“One of the group, someone who works with him. He was just testing, trying you out. I thought you did fine”.

“Oh well that`s all right then. I`m glad he didn`t make a deeper cut though, It could have changed everything”.How deep would the cut have had to be for an involuntary reaction to change from acceptance to one of horror. The speed with which it had been carried out hadn`t given me time to register what was going on, other than flinching momentarily. Although I didn`t actually see what he was doing I instinctively knew what he had done. It was a case of body knowledge occurring simultaneously, marginally faster than mental registration.

“ I could see that Mike was pleased you were cool . You passed the test.”

“ That`s all very well, but why should I have been set up like that in the first place”?

“He needs to see how you respond to unexpected events if he is going to consider inviting you to take part in his project”.

‘Fuck that’ I said with some feeling.”

“Don`t forget you need to make some money, and this might prove to be more interesting than being merely tedious.”

“ I really don`t want interesting work. It takes up too much energy. I just want a reasonably paid part time job which doesn`t tax my brain or give me too much responsibility. I know nothing has come up, so I should seriously think about it, if he makes an offer”.

“Yes, you could do a lot worse”.

“But he hasn`t offered anything ”.

‘He will’.

*It was late that night . We were in a dark house somewhere in Manhattan. I found a jacket. We were leaving and I needed something warm. It was a three quarter length canvas coat I couldn't tell what colour, well worn,. I put it on and found myself in a small village somewhere in the Sussex weald. I was feeling the patches on the arms of the coat and walking along a street with a long row of houses on one side and a large unkempt hedge on the other.. I found some phials in the deep pockets. I took one out and undid the cap, and sniffed the contents. I didn't recognise the smell and threw it into the hedge. As it fell there was a silent explosion of low bluish light which spread in nodules and filaments at speed along the ground accross the fields to the woods. By the the time I had reached the village green the whole ground was covered in fluctuating conglomerations of mutating blue fog light. Sneaking low, skeins of filaments lighting up the ground in all directions.*

*My left hand lit up as though on fire with white light. It lasted a few moments and was gone.* Nobody commented on it. Perhaps I imagined it, but even so it has a given reality. I mentioned it to Beryl who spoke to her reflexologist and reported: "She didn't comment on the first part and said that the white flames burning the hand sounded like a sign of the power of healing. Stop thinking about it, just accept it for what it is". Yes I thought, a relexologist might just say that as a healer. I wanted to know more. Beryl gave me her number and I called her. I introduced myself and described what happened. All she said was: "The white flame surrounding the hand is the sign of the power of healing". She didn't want to talk about the rest. I was disappointed. If it is a sign of the power of healing, what did it mean to me?

I liked the jacket, have been wearing it every day.

#### The Doge Leonardo Loredan / Ivan Styoner

The Doge was regularly appearing as our father Ivan. I'm getting bunged up, no space in the head. Do you have to take stuff out in order to put things in . It makes sense.

"Ivan appears to have taken residence in the Doge who has come back with a vengeance after my visit to Shingle Street". You can see that Loredan was a politician.

Beryl said "Why don't you go to the National Gallery and see it again. I'll come with you. What does it look like"

She is a natural born again homeopath. A little more of what you have too much of can do you good she says. I was a bit sceptical it's true, but acquiesced.

"I think I could go straight to it if it is still in the same place as it was twenty years ago".

"What does it look like?"

"Well I'm not sure really. And the image of Ivan isn't how I remember him either though I know it is of him. And he does seem to be mixed up with the Doge.

There was a long pause.

"Ivan is always the same. It is as though the painting has been laid on it's side. In the trade it's called landscape, as opposed to portrait. So the portrait has been landscaped. The head is lying more or less face up tipped slightly towards me. It is quite close up in a cool austere space as far as I can tell. He is not looking at me but up into the air. There is only one brown eye visible, the other hidden by the aquiline nose. The colour of the head and the background are quite similar. The Doge wears a hat close to the head reaching up to form an asymmetrical dome, and it covers his ears. In the dream Ivan is not wearing a hat and the colours of the painting have been leached out to a large extent. But I can't recall an ear. There are some

wispy grey thin locks of hair partly covering the scalp. The mouth is closed and the lips are thin. Shall I go on?"

"Yes".

"The bone structure is quite pronounced with high cheek bones and sunken eyes. There are strong lines and folds of skin around the mouth and chin. Then as the head is attached to the neck and the neck to the torso it becomes indistinct, all fuzzy. I am not sure but I doubt whether the body is there at all." They haven't been merged into a composite of equal parts, fifty fifty. More of Ivan than the Doge I think.

"Well, let's both go to see the painting. I'm interested to see what it looks like".

"Yes that's a good idea.

I saw it first when we all went to the National Gallery with our mother Rose. She liked museums and galleries. When we got back Ivan asked what had caught our attentions. Michael tried to describe the huge battle scene the Battle of San Romano by Paolo Uccello. He said to me recently:

"Being forced to describe what I had seen was an agony. It put me off going to galleries ever since. I just have to walk in and I get the feeling that I'm going to have to account for myself in there".

I had been taken with something different, the portrait of the Doge Leonardo Loredan. But I didn't know why. I tried to describe it but the words wouldn't come as intended. Ivan took pity on me and spoke of his own father who had died before I was born. When he was drifting into sleep the face of his own father would appear in the middle distance in a dark atmosphere clouded in thick mist. But his eyes were unnaturally bright, blue. That is how eyes sometimes are in dreams. And he was smiling. There was a thin trickle of blood running down his cheek from his left eyebrow.

Ker..plunk. The sound of wood hitting flesh came in a long delayed repetitive echo. The circumstances of cause and effect were suddenly out of kilter, followed by a series of crashes, the building collapsing falling in on itself. Ivan was under the table with his sister. Rubble spilled out from the fireplace, accompanied by clouds of soot. The roof and top storey collapsed. Ivan said "I've never told anyone about this. I don't know why. The sirens sounded and we went to our allotted places for safety. I was to sit under the table. For what seemed an age nothing happened and out of boredom and bravado I crawled out pushed a chair to one of the windows stood up on it to get as high up as possible to look out. The windows were patched with sticky paper in grid formation with wire netting pulled across and nailed to the window frames to stop shards of glass from flying into the room in the event of an explosion. It was one of those cold grey dull days you get in the November or February. I looked out to the hedge of conifers and the orange coloured pantiles of the roof on the house next door, when I suddenly saw two separated parts of a plane falling out of the sky. Flames and trails of black smoke, black and orange red, one wing falling with an action similar to the movement spermatozoa, or droplets of rain running down a windowpane, the fuselage and wing spiraling down into the woods, followed by black smoke rising at an angle blown in the wind. I heard nothing, the window screening a framing the scene as in a silent film".

He said the flaming piano accompanied the silent scene with its own symphony as heat exploded the strings and wires" the music box opened and eventually imploded into a heap of ashes blackened metal and ash. The table held up among the exuberant layers of dirt rubble and broken artifacts of family life.

"My sister and I survived dirty strewn with detritus but unhurt".

“What happened to the pilot”?

“News of the crash spread quickly. The neighbours were all agog. Some had seen the pilot parachuting down confirming and exacerbating the anxieties we all felt as the participants and recipients in titanic struggle which unlike the wars of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had spilled over out of pre ordained killing fields and now included us all. The search was on for the pilot. I was a member of The Home Guard. We were still drilling with wooden rifles and carrying pikes. I wanted to take part in the search but got drawn into conversations about what had happened. A machine gun was stolen from the wreckage. The police threatened to prosecute anyone found with it in their possession. Later bits and pieces claimed to have been taken from the crash turned up in the village adding to the mix of wartime trophies, bullets, shrapnel, military buttons, cap badges knives, bayonets, caps and so on, and a malevolent looking mauser pistol. which I didn't want to touch, lying dead, inert”.

The house hadn't collapsed. The terrace across the street had taken a direct hit during a raid some weeks earlier. Ivan's drifting retrospective views had incorporated what happened there, into his own personal history. If repeated often enough flights of fancy crystallise into apparent truths, apparently, part of the teller's authentic record of a personal history, in tales well told. Or in being spoken of for the first time so long after the event, the whole made out of the sum of it's disparate parts displaying an umbrella like authenticity in some ways like a dream but bearing the order required of narration. The mind exploits dream fragmentation by using the concept of time passing, which is essential to narrative flow. Order is brought to bear upon dream recollection where the dream itself is characterised by disorder, and chaos.

I don't know why he suddenly talked to me in that way. The floodgates had opened. He knew I was leaving for the States in the next year and might have seen the separation as irrevocable, an ending somehow, which it was. Our contact would inevitably change, seeing each other from over the horizon at great distance. I was looking forwards not backwards. I couldn't imagine what might happen. Careless of the feelings of others, I was too self involved. And perhaps he was using me as a sounding board knowing that I wouldn't be capable of properly understanding the full import of his words. I think it was a gift, giftig as in German-poisonous, Gultig-valid, and schuldig- guilty. Another language learning is so hard.

The image of Ivan in my own head peering out of that foggy atmosphere bears an equivalence to the way I feel about him, comforting in its way. What is disturbing is the frequency with which he appears. I've come to dread going to sleep.

Beryl said

“I don't know. Noone I've been really close to has died”, except my grandmother when I had just started school and was too young to appreciate what was happening. And two boys from our street who drowned when their dinghy capsized in sight of the beach.”.

“I remember when Rose's mother died and wanting to go to the funeral, and was told better not”.

No more to be said.

Would what I had seen cut the ground from under her feet. The bag her mother carried up to the room that day we visited her contained what looked like the small mummified body of

something or other, the top surface of something that looked not unlike a smoked Beijing duck or something human?. I couldn't say.

All this death and destruction. Walking on scarifications, newly fabricated old looking rough ground where fire storms had ravaged everything, as all semblance of law and order had been deliberately abandoned, all diplomacy long terminated. Walking around the site of the Tyburn Tree my feet weren't touching that 18th century ground, held down under, suppressed by hard concrete slabs and tarmac. But the phrase hung drawn and quartered still resonates, smothered but not diminished by the obscenities of the machine age coking up the atmosphere over that particular killing ground. Elsewhere in the south eastern corner of Germany in Dresden stones were laid out in a master builder's yard to be re-placed among what had survived and is now being restored fifty years after the fire storms. Chiselled white stones blackish round the edges water cleaned like skeletal remnants bleached in the sunlight. Ivan telling his recurrent memories merging into visions of vast conflagrations the likes of which I was able to imagine through the vectors of Ivan's imagination and the pictorial dramas of John Martin. Drifting narcoleptic visions of the end of the world as pilots might have glimpsed from their high seats riding the sky, their loads having been dropped to order through the gap in the clouds. When Mad Meg large as Gulliver strode across the fiery world in Bosch's (Breughel's?) mind. Dresden chimerical, historical in the flat saxon landscape. And Coventry re-made, somehow. Plymouth rebuilt, Munich re installed. I heard that someone released cockroaches in the Hygiene Museum in Dresden to match the Neo Nazi graffiti gracing the male toilets in the basement.

After the ice was broken Ivan told me about himself and his life in no particular order, episodic, usually stimulated by something which came up seemingly incidental in the conversation and said nothing about the diaries he had been keeping.

"I was seventeen in 1939, living at the weekends with my parents and training to be an articled clerk in a solicitors office in Ipswich where I rented a room during the week. I was in a state. Should I volunteer, join up? At eighteen I did go to join the Army, and was refused on medical grounds because of chronic asthma and periodic excema. Annie said I seemed to change after that, lost my natural exuberance, and became quiet and introspective. like everyone I suppose I was consumed by events."

The decimation of the village Lidice in Czechoslovakia in 1942 must have changed the course of his life, although he didn't say as much. There were of course and are many well documented terrible, tragic and horrific events, not least the Nazi programme of the Final Solution the genocide of the Jews, the Gypsies, the eradication of more disparate groups, Communists, Socialists Sexual transgressors and other 'anti social elements' categorised as 'untermensch' subhumans. Lidice was personal to Ivan. As he said, it came at a time when he was particularly impressionable, and frustrated by not being in the thick of things.

Radio or wireless as it was commonly known was the most publicly accessible instrument of communication at the time. Public consciousness of the applications of propaganda in communications media was at an early stage. Lodged in Ivans head were the broadcasts over the wireless of the BBC news bulletins of the first stage in the assassination of the Deputy Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia SS Obergruppenfuhrer Reinhard Heydrich in 1942 and the subsequent response of the Nazis. Two free Czech agents trained in England Josef Gabeik and Jan Kubis, were sent to Czechoslovakia from the UK. On May the twenty ninth they shot Heydrich as his car slowed to take a turn in the road, en route to the Castle in

Prague, and then threw a bomb which severely wounded him. He managed to get out of the car and return fire with a pistol before collapsing. He survived for several days before succumbing on June the fourth to blood poisoning as bits and pieces, car upholstery, steel, and his uniform had penetrated his spleen. Ivan replayed this scene time and time again in his imagination. He said he wished at the time that he had been one of the assassins.

In Berlin five hundred Jews were arrested, and on the day of his death one hundred and fifty two were executed in reprisal. Hitler decreed that the Czech mining village Lidice should be liquidated on the grounds that the village had supported the assassins. As with other reprisals, notoriously the burning of the Reichstag Berlin in 1933, the allegations had no basis in fact. On June the ninth ten lorryloads of the Security Police surrounded the village. All males over the age of sixteen numbering one hundred and seventy two were apprehended and locked in a barn. The next day they were shot in groups of ten beginning at dawn and lasting until four pm. Nineteen miners also from the village who had been working in the mines during the killing were also rounded up, transported to Prague and shot.

Such detail.

Seven women were taken to Prague to be shot. One hundred and ninety five were transported to Ravensbrueck Concentration Camp near Furstenberg in Prussia. Forty nine died there, seven by gassing, the others from inhuman treatment. Ninety children were sent to Gneisnau Concentration Camp near Lodz in Poland and subject to selection by racial experts to be distributed among German people, given German names and raised in their families.

The village was burned to the ground, the residues dynamited, bulldozed to remove all evidenc of human presence or occupation. Grain was planted over the site, and the name removed from German maps.

Having lived in the same village all his life Ivan associated the annihilation of Lidice with what could happen to villages like his after a Nazi invasion. He left the solicitors and joined the Admiralty. At least it was aiding the war effort he said.

I didnt` know him well. None of us did. He came and went, entertaining us on his regular visits home. That is how I knew him as an exciting regular visitor. Rose said he claimed that it was home to him, that he considered that lived there with us. She didn`t agree. Although later he came to spend more and more time there gradually merging into home life as we one by one were leaving.

Grandfather, on Ivan`s side of the family had been a trawler skipper. I see him as blue always in blue, like that other old trawler hand Ivan knew who used to curse his dead wife by talking at her into the closed cupboard in the corner of the room. For most of his life Ivan lived within walking distance but never right by the sea. He always wore pale leached out colours pale blue, green and fawn.. I don`t want to have too much to do with the sea now either. In all that time it filled him with dread the closer he got to it. He didn`t hide his fear, readily speaking about it.

“The family would go to the fish market on the jetty at Lowestoft. I remember I must have been about four. I would be attracted to the edge of the jetty confused by the desire to get as close to the edge as possible, and the urgent livid fear of falling into oblivion. It happened every time I was taken there until I was at least twelve”.

MichaellahciM

Beryl suggested that we should go to the National Gallery to see the Bellini. It was only about five miles as the crow flies.

I turned the postcard of the Doge right way up.. .

“I should be able to do it. ”

Beryl was adamant. She had bought the postcard at the National Gallery. I had been looking at it on and off for days. `It was so much more interesting than the painting itself. I could put it in my pocket and look at it when and wherever I chose.

“ Sit down and describe what you see” .

“I can` t, still can` t”.

I had been trying. It wasn` t exactly like the image in my head, but neither was the image in my head precisely how I saw Ivan. It was an amalgam of the two. And now it had begun to move, the head had begun to sway from side to side. I didn` t like it.

“Try” .

“It` s no good. I just can` t do it”.

“Perhaps you should try describing it to me”.

“That won` t help. It` s the translation into words on a page that the problem ”.

I stubbornly thought I was beyond help.

“Turn it upside down”.

I did.

Does that make a difference?

“No”

“Try it on it` s side”.

“I already did, but I` ll try again”.

I knew she was trying to help but it didn` t feel right.

And then it occurred to me that I shouldn` t sit in front of it.

I stuck it on the wall sideways up, well to the left but within peripheral range of my sitting position at Beryl` s computer if I kept my vision directed straight in front of me. From there I could see it through a haze made up of out of an out focus spectacle frame of the glasses I wear, and a fuzziness when looking out to the left in the left part of my eye.

“Why don` t we use a tape recorder and you can describe it on tape as though we are having a conversation. I could ask you questions about it. And then you can transcribe it”.

“I think I` ll try to describe it when I` m not looking at it` .

“Ok” lets get some coffee..

We came back about an hour later. I sat down and tried to remember where we were, what we had been saying

She prompted me.

“We don` t have a tape recorder”.

”Why don` t we get one”.

“Ok maybe we should”.

And then I turned to look at the postcard Before I began to concentrate something happened. The head was lying horizontally, head to the right, neck and shoulders the other way. It was something to do with ears. Was he wearing more than one hat, like an under hat and an over hat? In the painting the under hat bulged out over his left ear. The other ear wasn` t in view. This was a man who didn` t need to listen perhaps, an authority. Poking out from the top of the embroidered band which covered the top area of the underhat and the brocaded top part of the over hat was a protuberance like the budding horn of a rhinoceros covered in brocaded cloth. A one horned Michael, lopsided unicorn. As it faced out horizontally above the head I saw another face in profile, a medaieval looking apparently eyeless Californian cartoon duck

surrounded by a dark greyish blue background. This swelling, a covered ear and the 'horn' was suggestive of a larger swelling, more akin to marine life. The head was beginning to talk. Now the duck was the primary image, the human head a subsidiary addition. The painting in the National Gallery was obviously hung upright as the artist must have intended. In this new landscape position an extraordinary marine creature emerges dolphin like with a human figure Leonardo Loredan attached at the side of its head. Then drawn into a neck which fitted into a dress made of the same brocade as that covering the horn at the prow, the duck's beak or mouth. In this new configuration Loredan's nose became an ear. two eyes like those in the head of a flatfish, the closed mouth reduced to a mere fold of line in the skin. The colour of the background medium assuming a watery bluish foggyiness. This creature didn't resemble Ivan my father except for the face of the Doge whose eyes in the new horizontal position were looking out to the left. Our eyes would never meet as in life. I realised that when Ivan visited, came into my head as he did, too often for comfort, he was immersed, suffused in a watery medium. Or I had been dreaming in a medium suggesting an environment closer than air, like being under water. What is missing is Ivans head.

I didn't want to go on. It was upsetting to think about it.

I repeated what I could remember of what I could recall. But it wasn't the same. Didn't sound right.

And then there was something else, a horizontal thread or thicker pale cord slightly bent but generally quite straight was lying, coming out from the back of Loredan's cheek bone stretching to the brocaded dress then bending up and to the left on what had been his shoulder. In this other medium there was no reason to assume that it would obey the laws of gravity. It gave an order to the image, as though the malignant duck was on a leash. Luckily it was looking away. I didn't want to be faced with it head on, dream or no dream.

that was more than enough for the moment.

"I'll write down what I can remember but I'm not much good at it" I said.

"Never mind. Do it and we'll see what comes out".

When I wrote Michaelleahcim ie typed into the computer it came back off the page at me like the image of a broken down street, ruins in the desert, or a set of badly grown teeth.

Michaelleahcim.

But I was intending to think about Leonardo Loredan/Ivan Styoner our father lying on his side as their fusion came into my head. A name emerged calling itself: Michaelleachim. The duck poised as a human thing. What is the connection between The Doge Leonardo Loredan, Ivan Styoner and broken down street ruins in the desert and badly grown teeth? It wasn't a thought as in the process of a train of thoughts but came tangentially, out of nowhere.

I wrote the title: Michaelleahcim, The Duck posited as a Man Thing:

But what to write.

Beryl was really getting in to it. But not me. It was painful, threatening.

She said. "You are back here now. This is where you were made". I ignored that.

"Look I can't do this. Nothing stays still long enough".

I looked again out of the corner of my eye. There, not quite in parallel with the thread was another in shadow. The head being both the Duck and the face of Loredan was held in place by these two strands.

The still image on the postcard with old Loredan not meeting the painter's eye was in partnership with the motionless baby in blue in the house of Rose's relatives.

Ivan Rose and Michael see Delia for the first and last time.

In the last year before I left Ivan told me a lot about himself. He gave me his life's story bit by bit just as it came to him. I was an avid listener, I could see he needed to tell me. He wasn't conscious of doing it. For example after an argument I had with Rose about something trivial he was prompted to tell me about Delia:

"Rose's family met once or twice a year in Rose's aunt Sarah's house on a desolate part of the coast south of Lowestoft. The graveyard of the local church was crumbling away into the sea, although the church was still intact it was in too dangerous a condition to approach. That part of the eroding coastline was 'out of bounds'. Some of the family's forbearers' graves had gone and others were being washed away. There had been attempts to make new sea defences, but a year after completion the prospects were grim. It looked as though a giant had thrown the lot up into the air and let fall where it may. Twisted iron reinforcements running in and out of massive chunks of reinforced concrete four to five meters in girth and height concrete and huge twisted metal girders rusting away from exposure to the sea and salt sea spray, Michaelleahcim in another form. There is no power to stop the sea eating the land. This is where I used to swim.

We were having morning tea in the parlour. Rose and I with Michael who was fifteen and you. I think you were five then, yes, you were five, and some Rose's relatives. And I must have been forty two, sitting round an oval table a little too big for the room eating buttered scones and jam, chocolate digestive biscuits and drinking tea. The tea pot was covered in a big dark brown woollen tea cosy and there were white china cups with pale blue rims. Their best china. The gossip passed me by. I remember looking at a jungle of pot plants, then someone mentioned the baby. There was an instant hush, blank apprehension like panic running through a crowd faster than anyone can run. Rose's Aunt Sarah left the room and returned in an instant with Delia. She was flummoxed trying to hide her embarrassment by being so decisive. She sat her down in the empty space right in the middle of the table among the cups and saucers, plates bread, shrimp paste biscuits and cake. Was this a sign of panic or rising hysteria. She didn't belong on the table amid all the paraphernalia set up for social eating. Delia was a solid eighteen month old would be or could have been toddler, dressed in a pale blue dress with white socks and sandals, with plump pale arms and a round peaches and cream cherubic face surrounded by wispy white blond hair and large light blue eyes. She stayed exactly where she had been put. Sarah must have known it was safe to place her there although it was unusual. The baby showed no signs of curiosity. We complimented Sarah on the way she looked, how plump, how healthy, how well dressed, and how well behaved. In fact she sat there, motionless like a china doll surrounded by a full size china tea set. The conversation lagged and then Sarah said "She is such beautiful child; it's such a pity she's not all there". On hearing that I focused all my attention on her to look for signs of being 'not all there', of what I imagined that to be. "Doolally taps" as Rose would say. How still she sat, stock still. She did move her eyes to look some of us squarely in the face and then away. She met my eyes for a long moment. I wanted to fall into her eyes, to know her. What kind of madness was this that we were sat there surrounding her as though she was the cherry on the top. I couldn't break into the conversation.

Delia was a closely kept secret. Rose did say that the father might have been drowned when a locally registered trawler went down, in a storm off the North Eastern coast of Scotland

with four hands lost. It was when her mother was pregnant with her. Was her father on that boat? Sarah would have known who the father is or was. She knew the moment he went under, that drawing twisting turning in her stomach, she said, just below the navel. She knew it. He wasn't her husband or son, but she knew him. And she would certainly have known the mother. Delia was part of the family so why the secrecy? There was some vested interest, like trying to avert the stigma attached to mental illness. They must have registered the birth. Rose refused to talk about Delia after we left. And I never did find out what was wrong with her. They weren't expecting her to live. I don't think they wanted her to.

This world of fish, fishing wish bones, fishermen and the Scottish herring girls thrives on superstition, myth and gossip.

It was around this time in 1960 that I began to get the blackouts and what is called nervous stomache".

I was telling Beryl when the shifting scene of Ivan's head in my dreams came to mind

"Last week Ivan and the Doge began to shift and rock from side to side, and then a few nights ago a black hole appeared with some fissures around the crater, disintegrating, fracturing, falling into itself". It was after we had been to the coast when it started to wobble and implode being sucked into a toothless mouth or maw. I can't see it anymore. I am more consumed by it. and aware that I am in the centre the surroundings glimpsed in passing as the periphery.

"Johnny I'm quite sure that the head in the dream and 'Michaelahcim' aren't identical".

"You're right I think. Now Ivan/Leonardo Loredan have given way to a dark chasm, as I said a toothless mouth, a vagina an anus or mouth, an orifice of some kind. It hovers in that unnatural way that images become unstable on the digitalised screen. The light greyness has become a dark brown entanglement confusing what had previously been a quite clear sense of space as found in paintings in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries by artists like Bellini of course and Mantegna, Durer and Cranach in Germany. Actually it's not confusing what was there before because it has become something quite different. I conflated the two. Without thinking I accepted that the narrative stretched over the change of imagery. And it doesn't. Now I could be looking through a tangle of pubic hair, through a briar patch into the dark entrance to a wound. I hover on the rim neither entering or emerging being present as though that is where I am. And there is a new merging of senses located in the head with an amalgam of orifices all taking place inside the cavity of the head. This weaves in and out of the outer surface of the body with the internal head cavity. Beyond that I don't know where to go."

Beryl followed this up by asking "Is this a diary of the head space when you're falling asleep?"

"Uhuh. Yes. This is a day by day or night by night diary. Could be a new vocation, don't you think?"

"What happened to Delia?"

"We lost all contact with that side of the family long before I went to the States".

"But didn't your father or Rose do anything about it?"

"Not that I know. What was there to do? Rose was never that keen to keep in contact as far as I know. She rarely mentioned her parents. I was curious about Delia and the rest of them.

I should ask Michael, my brother".

## New Chapter.

“I know this sounds absurd. I think that’s what I’d really like to do.” It came out as though someone else had spoken. Like “Who said that?” I still had some money, so it wasn’t that urgent to get set up. But I wanted to get into the rhythm of working, which had never really happened. I wasn’t like Ivan who had always worked, god help him.

“Another pint?” Jerry said. We had already had a few and I didn’t want to repeat what happened before, so I had to go carefully. “Thanks”

He went to the bar. I didn’t know what to think of him. He seemed fine on the surface but it wasn’t the way he looked, heavy, kind of rough, not badly dressed, and not stylish, black jeans a bit dirty like he was used to manual work unshaven, and yet at the same time polite, and solicitous.

Jerry said “I could do with some help with the project I was telling you about” I scratched the scar where the knife had gone in.

“What would you like me to do.”

“Well I’ll think about it but if you’re interested then I’m sure there’s going to be something for you. What do you say?”

“I don’t fancy being cut up again “

“Don’t faze yourself.”

“I don’t want to carry a crossword of scars or tears”.

“Let’s meet this time next week”

“OK”. I drank the rest of the pint and left.

## Action

By almighty God Ivan’s father couldn’t swim. But he wore sea blue instead as a talisman to ward off “the danger of going overboard” he said. To be eaten by fish then, a terrible revenge is wrought. I was always fearful of the touch of something else in the water. Dread of whales, sharks, sea snakes, electric eels, congers, octopi and small insidious ones transmitting of bilharzia, of fishbones in the mouth and throat. Oh and stingray. All that cold wet stuff. Further down is darkness itself. Cadavers filled with shrimp and other nasty confections sightlessly drifting. Little brown shrimps, delightful in pots, potted shrimp a treat on toast. Lobsters, and ad infinitum.

At least our blood is warm. I am a dryish entity, unless laid out in the sun.

Ivan hated the trawlers’ lot. That’s what he was frightened of, going down at sea.

Cut for Christ’s sake

Is this m? a film, often said by those whose understanding of how brutal convention can be is limited, the Believers. It always acts against their interests.

Is this a film? Am I in the plot? *They are kept out of harms way.* (note they being those who only function in dreams). As for me I don’t. Not a thing am I, i.e no thing. Sell by date all gone. Take those persons out. He doesn’t.... She isn’t.../ (beauocratic strategem), where are we, in a film?

They didn’t cut, the camera was shooting all that time. And the whole street flooded in a cold white light just like the depths- in negative.

These are the moments Beryl worries about when I go for a stroll. She thinks I’m not safe to be out there on my own. Anything could happen she says.

Maybe.... And the last time she left a message on the answer machine. What news she had: "I am going to the funeral of my brother James. He died 7th of September by the hand of a man with a stingray tattooed on his chest. I think he was a trawlerman. The man didn't come to get him, but someone else. He had agreed to stay in the building, James had left with the others to go to the warehouse, but had hesitated standing outside the door when all of a sudden a hail of bullets was fired through the front door the killer then threw it open and came out. blindly shooting, blind shots. James died immediately". My God.

It's true she had suddenly gone leaving the message that she would contact me as soon as she could. I didn't know she had a brother. She hadn't talked about him. She said she would be back soon.

I phoned Jerry to say that I couldn't make our meeting but would be in touch.

He said "You know what has happened to Beryl?"

I didn't know what to say.

He said

"I was there".

"Uhuh".

"We were going to a meeting of the group and had met together in a friend's house in Stoke Newington, and then we were going over to the space I have just rented.

James, Beryl's ex boy friend was there. I was on the second floor talking with some friends when apparently there was a commotion in the living room. James was sitting by the door when the women came running out of the adjoining room through the living room and down the stairs. They were highly agitated, shouting: "Get out. There's someone with a knife". It seems that James picked up a screw driver which was lying on a table in the stair way. He is good with knives. Whoever it was came into the living room and went straight for him. James grabbed the sleeve of his arm holding the knife and stabbed him in the side with the screwdriver. He fell into James's arms, mouth retching, in a horrible embrace, and then ran out of the house. James got a superficial cut on his left arm, nothing serious".

"But I thought James was dead".

"Oh no. He's ok" Who told you that? He was a bit shaken up but he's fine".

"I see".

What to think, who to believe, I didn't know. neither of them?

"And what happened to the guy with the knife?"

:Don't know. Haven't heard anything".

"We patched James up and went off to the space".

'Was Beryl there? Must have freaked her out".

"She was really cool".

"Did she see what happened?"

"Yes she did and she gave a good description of the guy who did it.".

"Do you know where she is?"

"No, but she'll be back".

Badly misled.

Did I make her up? Beryl. Was she some apparition gone in a puff, after a few words about murder on the phone? It's what she has become now that I haven't seen hair nor hide of her

from that day on. I phoned Mike several times but got no answer. And I went to the pub but they hadn't seen him. .

I've recast her as an actress in the film. It's what you can do when someone has gone It had all been in a film. Entitled Brainstorm made in 1965 with the Swedish actress Viveca Lindfors and Dana Andrews. He is not me. I know. And Beryl wasn't Viveca. Come to that she does bear a slight resemblance. It gets stronger each time I think about it.

Brainstorm (1965) (I call it Brainstorm One)

Running time: 114 mins.

Distributor(s):

Warner Bros. Distribution

Theatrical Release:

05/05/1965

#### Cast & Role

Jeffrey Hunter James Grayam

Anne Francis Lorrie Benson

Dana Andrews Cort Benson aka Michael Brace I think and Mike in Brainstorm 3

Viveca Lindfors Dr Elizabeth Larstedt aka Lillian Reynolds I think and Beryl in Brainstorm 3.

Stacy Harris Josh Reynolds

Kathie Brown Angie DeWitt

Philip Pine Dr Ames

Michael Pate Dr Mills

All in a film.

A short description of the second film Brainstorm (2)

*Lillian Reynolds and Michael Brace are research scientists working on the same experiments when they make a major breakthrough with a device that can actually interface with the human brain.*

*This system can apparently record and play back the actual experiences of real people. Once the capability of tapping into "higher brain functions" is set up, anyone will be able to literally enter another person's mind and record the subject's memories, emotions and sensations at the time of the recording.*

Simple enough, but hardly plausible. Will it be able to reproduce thoughts as well as feelings and emotions? I doubt it.

I am still paying rent on the flat. There is a rock bottom concrete reality .to all this. She did say "It all comes down to money".

Thinking and fucking don't go together, one comes after the other. Fucking first I think then fucking thinking I think. Yes". And money is always here or thereabouts.

It does come down to the lowest common denominator if you want, Beryl aka Barbie. Beryl didn't look like Barbie. She hadn't gone apeshit over her as far as I know. She did have an undeclared collection of whatever in her mother's house in Hartlepool. So she said. What I imagine to be a collection of Beijing (Peking) Ducks or what ever it was her mother had half wrapped up when she passed me on the stairs. Did they make up a secret hoard of smoked

flesh Barbies?. Or was this simply a hoard of smoked haddocks? I had the telephone number of Harriet her mother's mobile phone, and called her.

She wasn't surprised to hear me although she didn't recognise my voice for at first.

"I'm not surprised" she said.. "She does this kind of thing from time to time. No she doesn't have a brother. Yes She's my only child. She is for ever making all up all these stories one way or another. I don't know where she gets it all from? Not from me. Let me know what happens. Don't worry she'll turn up. She always does". And goodbye.

What I remember might not have happened at all. I could have somehow imagined it because I've got confused with Brainstorm 3. It plays two parts, as the film Brainstorm 3 and also stands as the material I must have somehow taken to be what has happened since I got back. But it doesn't fit, because I can remember things that aren't in the film like going to the coast. The film set is identical to the flat here where Beryl and I were living together. When the film ended she had already left, or was that some days previously. This did actually happen. Beryl was and hopefully still is, a real living doll, a Barbie,. A different Barbie? Not like Joanna. Surely all Barbies aspire to emulate the generic Barbie model. and will be familiar each to each than otherwise. Differences would be the lesser part of it.

Beryl hasn't left any evidence that I can see of her occupation, like traces of female life, hair and so on. Maybe I should call the police. They could fine toothcomb the place to see if she was here. Because if she was, then although we are not married or have a formal registration of the relationship, she should probably be registered as a missing person.

From noun to verb i.e to toothcomb, meaning to go through everything with a fine tooth comb. The toothcomb is good for scraping lice out of hair. What does it say in the dictionary?: toothcomb: *a comb with fine teeth placed close together* is all. What else? What did Beryl have to say? Or Viveca Lindfors in her role as Dr Elizabeth Larstedt in Brainstorm (one)? I might feasibly have met her in the guise of Beryl. There is no knowing how ingenious the human brain can be even if interfaced, really interfered with as in the film. There are two films made in Hollywood under the title Brainstorm. There might be third: Brainstorm 3. though that could be mixed up with what I have just been through with Beryl. Did they all use the same script both in Hollywood one in 1965 the other twenty years later trying to emulate the success of the first, and the last one I know not when. I rest no case. Rose mentioned a relative who became an actress in the thirties somewhen or other. That static blue eyed baby Delia could have been renamed: Irene her stage name, the living baby doll nerveless among the fish paste, cakes and tea cups would go down well in front of the cameras. They say in the acting schools that the most telling film acting is the most minimal. This advice is repeated ad nauseum by the British stars of screen and stage when interviewed as though it has been beaten or drummed into their heads. Tapped into the brain like morse code, resonating through the bony encasement. Remember Irene Harvey of screen and stage? I think she was related to Rose according to Michael my brother. Ivan didn't make any comments about her.

The advertising said *Download Digiguide and never miss Brainstorm again.*

I went to see the Doge Loredan at the National Gallery and the painting wasn't there. A small typed note had been put in place of the painting saying that the portrait of the Doge Leonardo Loredan by Giovanni Bellini had been removed for security reasons. What? I was distracted wandering through those rooms occasionally attracted by a painting and forgot to leave, almost the last one through the doors at closing time. Is it amnesia or a touch of forgetfulness. I am being recorded, leaving these awful neurasthenic gaps filled with the

sounds of that Russian invention the ghostly electric musical machine. The envelope contained a letter Beryl had passed to me which she had found on a seat in Griffith's Park in Los Angeles in the film time I think. She had made several trips to L.A. And she deliberately let me see the revolver snuggled in the depths of her bag, saying. "I'm not going to let you wander about without some protection". Double film time..

"You couldn't make it up" she said.

"I think I've made you up" I said. She wasn't listening. It was a sequence from Brainstorm 3, parody of the B movie genre in black and white, dramatic lighting, film noir.

Rose had taught us not to read letters not addressed to us.

I'll give it back when Beryl turns up again. She might be back.

I haven't read it yet. Rose would have said I should read the tarot cards.

I burnt the saucepan cooking rice, smoke everywhere, the most horrendous stench. Had a bath and went to bed. The day after next a representative of the local Council came round because of complaints from the neighbours. I just said to fuck off being otherwise more or less amenable, but I didn't want them to get the wrong end of the stick. They advised me against the use of intemperate language, wrote something down on their clipboards in unison and left.

Now I have had enough of the Doge who had duplicated himself one head to the right the other to the left, passing ships in the night. Ivan was there throughout, neatly decapitated. Wow

Since Beryl has gone the Michaelleahcim is visiting me less often. I want to see the films entitled Brainstorm one, two and three. Looking at the entries in the diary I can see just how improbable Beryl's disappearance is when our time together is seen as having been imploded into a film, e.g. running time of Brainstorm two being one hundred and fourteen minutes, i.e. one hour fifty four minutes. Add the times of the other two and it still doesn't add up to much. other than a mechanical view of time. Otherwise time can be so elasticated. you can chew it and wrap it round your head. Of course it is more convenient to suppose that our shared time was stitched up as the film came to an end. Then the outcome is in other hands. And I don't remember the film if that is what it was, ending like that like: The End, Finale, fin or Ende with music and a vast list of credits, production values .

But Beryl hasn't come back. And there are no signs of the others. The end isn't on the horizon. What kind of space time is the Michaelleahcim in? In every expanding space? Or ever decreasing, the doughnut model or the horn? All as imagined or deduced from the Earth's position in the cosmos.

Are we seeing, feeling and thinking speaking through different filters? Beryl didn't look as though she was an aficionado of Hollywood mythologies. Although being a student of the soaps it is one short step. And Barbie is another icon of popularised femininity with an open face to the Hollywood starmaking machine, the starlet factories that one were and must still be productive in one form or another if only to satisfy the libinous desires of the controlling factotems, the producers directors et al. I'm beginning to see the connections between Joanna and Beryl. And then there is Ivan who was speaking to me more and more in confidence in the last year I was living at home. He began to pass me sheets of lined paper covered in his forwardly sloping handwriting saying "Read this: Tell me what you think of it. It would be better if you don't show it to the others", handing over a sheaf of xeroxed hand written text. I

didn't keep any of them at the time. When I returned Michael gave me a large box full which Ivan had bequeathed to me Taking one at random I read:

*The 'Palais de Dance 'Ipswich 28 May 1946*

*I am all of a kind, out of a bottle of brylcream and aftershave, all shit, shave, and shampoo, otherwise getting ready for the evening to come at the local Palais de Dance. Face cut in three places , nicked by shaving, decorated with small strips of tissue paper stained and stuck on by drops of blood y ooze to staunch the wound, that lay overlarge in my heated imagination. Later I left the edge of the dance floor, to lurk among the wall flowers by the chairs lining the walls getting as far away from the action without actually leaving. I might have been a million miles away in the dashed hopes of the weekly dream that somehow I would accomplish the impossible, hopefully concluding with a carnal act with a Joan, Jemima or Jocelyn. Others somehow magically and effortlessly found partners to fulfill all our dreams every saturday night. I was not so lucky. Whereas in the centre under the twirling faceted glass orbs and flashing deathly blue and green lighting final wordless arrangements were in hand for what was to come, the touch of hand to hand and to industrially constructed brassieres, hard as the nose cones of torpedoes, and whale bone corseted thighs and buttocks in the mingling of powder, aftershave, perfume and sweat, the promise of blind grapplings to come". Finger rats running over mono hulls, emulations of the hard cases of the beetle, to find a way in other than uptipping the edifice. We knew or thought we knew what was hidden within and where. How could we intrude? We knew it couldn't be done without assistance, collaboration in the undoing.*

I was flattered by his invitation to read a testament of his life. Although it quickly palled, Rose said that Ivan was a good dancer. And he said he was a good gardener. He had large feet. His shoes reminded me of a clown's oversized boots. I was used to them, polished them as one of my chores. We didn't dare admit to ourselves how close to being funny they were.

It ended

*The sound of the band was simply excruciating as they sought to catch those dreams in a miasma of smoochy words smeared in simulated Americanese accompanied by face blacked cacophonies, trumpet and saxophone driven, drum leading to the first of the evening's climactera. And then the finale the penultimate interregnum as the dreamers rushed to the cloakroom", eager to enter the final secret stages of the evening.*

His initial lack of success on the dance floor must have been connected to his over sized feet. And it shows how determined he was to overcome it by having learnt how to dance so expertly. Swinging those boots.

When I came back and he was already two years dead, and still visiting me. I knew it was time to get my act together, get something going. This is a question I hadn't been bothered with until I realised that I would be coming back. It is a different matter here to how it was back there.

Michael didn't want to hear about Brainstorm one, two or three. I knew he wouldn't. His life is so well regulated. Everything in it's place. He told me to clean up my act. Strange words coming from him although the sense is typical of his janitorial mind. He wasn't interested in

Ivan's writings either. I wanted to check what he thought about them. And get his opinion in order to compare and clarify my own views.

Ivan had recorded some of his dreams, and Michael might have been interested to read 'Sea Down' because it has some bearing on how we dealt with their ashes.

*Sea Down. Ivan Styoner 1995.*

*My father and I were walking in a dark green landscape with rolling hills fields and copses. There was something or someone, some people or some semblance of negative forces behind us. I was crossing a vast expanse of sand on a tarmac causeway at low tide. In the middle distance I could see some parts of a village, most of which was obscured by sand dunes looking like, Lindisfarne on the north eastern coast..*

*Rose and I were standing in a large grey room built of re-inforced concrete with a very high ceiling..The walls showed the imprints of wooden shuttering . She was next to me. We were in an enclosed room and yet could see the sea..My arm was round her waist.The sea was in the room. We were at the bottom of a ramp which led up to a doorway in the side of the wall next to us. Rough seas were sweeping across the floor hitting the walls..We were covered in spray and soaked to the skin. I was dry.*

*A huge ball of water burst in from the doorway at the top of the ramp and completely engulfed us The force was overwhelming. .We clung to each other hard up against the wall. We were still there standing in on a flat wet sandy vista, an estuary in sunshine.*

Did Beryl disappear when the film ended, later phoning to say her brother had been murdered.? If she was Viveca Lindfors in Brainstorm one or Natalie Wood in Brainstorm two then her brother wouldn't have existed because Dr Elizabeth Larstedt didn't have a brother in and neither did Dr Gillian Reynolds in the films. Did Viveca and Natalie play the same role as the wife of Dr Brace whose research partner Dr Lilian Reynolds was killed by a computer invading her head space. Is Dr Gillian Reynolds Dr Elizabeth Larstedt in Brainstorm one, just as Beryl is both of them I think according to which film is being mentioned. The computer is conceived to be the fulcrum, a neutral but deadly centre, the central element of the script at a time when computers hadn't yet entered to any significant extent into public consciousness. Almost everyone knew nothing about them. The Film reviewer James McGann says of Brainstorm two –'Computers are potentially hazardous and the military ( where they were first developed ) can fuck up anything". Everybody knows that. This is as he says really important. I asked Michael and he just walked away..... I had tears in my eyes. Shit. This is so frustrating.

Beryl had just gone, disappeared and then phoned to give me that dreadful message. Her mother says she is prone to doing this, that she never had a brother and that she will be back. And then she asked me to wait for her, because she knew that Beryl would be relying on me. If Beryl is playing the role of Dr Lilian Reynolds as herself, then she could be dead already, instead of her imagined brother who was never alive according to her mother. I think Beryl must be Dr Lilian Reynolds who is killed off in Brainstorm two by the effects of the interface between the computer and the mind it hacks into, capable of entering and tapping into what goes on in as in Brainstorms one and two. Hacking is a harsh word, appropriate emotionally apposite. The great fuck up in virtual space. Like the double use of the word virus, biological

and electronic, at least before the age of nanotechnology. To grow a machine so small it can't be seen by the human eye. . Lets get it right. This is happening to us as if Brainstorm 3 is the real life stuff where the idea of hacking between computers is commonplace and very lucrative I guess. But nanotechnology is something else already being mooted as dangerous as deadly as nuclear tchnology. What would happen if it all got into the hands of the other?. There don't have to be any parts for us to play, because we have walked into Brainstorm two and blown the central premise apart., thereby instigating Brainstorm three. The script has become redundant. This diary is in effect a broken record of brainstorm three and a possible script for Brainstorm four. How many Brainstorms could there be? As many grains of sand as there are in the sea, no less.

I told Michael I can survive on what I saved in the States for months or more. Why go into more labour slavery right now? Why? When Brainstorms three and four and who knows what are on the go. On the go.

I went to see Michael in Notting Hill where he and his wife sceptics to the core have been living since Rose and Ivan died. Sceptics are always standing on the same spot. You can rely on them. While everything changes. Like houses built on sand and sea shells.. As a route it is a thin strip of unadulterated madness.

There is an essential difference between Brainstorm two and my time with Beryl.. But nonetheless sequences or events or what Rose called `turns`, passages of time and events aren't clearly seen as either the film Brainstorm Two or day to day life. The two keep flipping.. Beryl should return and sort this out. If she does come back it doesn't matter whether it flips one way or the other.

#### Diary of the heads.

The Michaelleahcim has returned. This time in what appears to be some incomplete boxes. Incomplete because the view is partial. The last time there were the two identical heads coming across each other from opposite directions, slowly. Now the breakup or movement is in the fact that neither the heads nor the boxes are complete. They haven't been broken or dismantled. They haven't been completed. Some dirty foggy stuff, chiarascuro, has obscured a part of what could be seen, like an incomplete vision as in a very intimate three dimensional connection. And it all pulsates a slow pulsing in and out. Something is breaking up. I suppose. I don't feel so good. No eyes, ears, noses mouths, although they are identical heads, and still the amalgam of the Doge Leonardo Loredan and Ivan.

Now my father's voice is speaking out of his writing it isn't easy to live with the Michaelleahcim.. I was disturbed by his appearances and cut the name down to Aellehc, turned it round so it becomes more readable and speakable as Chelae. Chelae, that is how it is. The Chelae is like a metrome marking time. Not in the image in my head but in the way it recurs in time. To begin with it was appearing every night and now it is no more than once a month. It is slowing down becoming more hazy. It is too close to the latin *chelae* for my liking: the scorpion's claws. I could sting myself to death. Its a phrase for mulling over, not an invitation to act. Its an arnchair adventure to be anticipated before bedtime. So the dishevelled boxes are now the scorpions claws. The metronome is marking time until something really big happens to make the metronome stop in a mid swing jaws bite. They have of course already taken hold of the head of Ivan, and chewed up the profile of The Doge Leonardo Loredan, the two entities of which have merged and been identified as the

Michaelleahcim and then the Chelae. Rose was mortally bitten maybe stung but not by the Chelae because it has only recently come into being two years after her death. She was always so rational it is difficult to think of her as being dead, as though dying is an event beyond comprehension. Dead she is. Although I have only the words of Michael to go on.

Did the Michaelleachim and does the Chelae have a larger reality than can be ascertained by their visitations to me. They were/are simple manifestations of the unconscious coming into a dream state being still just about conscious while falling asleep. Am I an outrider on the edge of their world?

There isn't much Ivan has written that I care to recall. I did play with the idea of trying to put it all together, but thought to leave it for a while. Although I have read bits and pieces now and again. enough to wonder how his memory worked. Its like the remains of a dead animal where the offal putrefies first followed by the other parts lean meat and fat until the sinew bone and skin are all that is left. It doesn't exactly match as a metaphor for the vagaries of the memory. Perhaps it's suggestive of how events are not easily absorbed and stick. Ivan told me about how he used to walk in the woods as a child although it was Rose who mentioned the gamekeepers' trees which stuck in my memory. We were driving to London. Not long before I left to go the USA. Rose liked to be driven, and was always excited to go to London. It released her. She was animated and lively. We had passed Colchester on the M13 when we came across the freshly killed carcass of a fox. on the verge of the motorway. She saw it before I did and would liked to stop to get a better look. And then she said:

"Have I ever told you about the hawthorn tree?" She had but I wanted to hear it again. She would inevitably tell it differently.

"No".

"Well I must have". But she went on.

"I think I was about eight at the time. Charlotte my best friend and I were often playing in the woods and fields around the village. On this day we were dawdling along the edge of a wheat field ripe for harvesting. It was one of those hot and dusty August summer days, tiring in the heat. I remember wearing my favourite clarks sandals with white ankle socks and a pale yellow dress with small flowers printed on it. And I was thirsty. It was time to go home for tea, but Charlotte was insistent that we go on because she had something to show me."

Rose was sitting in the front passenger seat and talked a lot, to keep me entertained in case I got drowsy at the wheel. I had only recently passed my driving test, so a trip to London was an adventure and somewhat of an ordeal.

"We came to the corner of the field one side of which was bounded by the wood. What had been a hedge marking the border had grown into a row of large bushes and trees some overgrown with ivy. A path took us to the entrance where a stile marked the entrance into the wood beside an old hawthorn tree. Charlotte stood there in triumph as I stared overcome with shock and in awful dismay. It was festooned with the bodies of birds and small mammals, all light in weight as dried out paper like effiges hanging in the shade. I was distressed and sick to my stomach by this brutal scene which challenged everything I felt and had understood to be right". Thou shall not kill, and the other commandments".

She was still morally affronted and angry.. It was as shocking an event to her in it's way as the massacre at Lidice was to Ivan. And she knew it was common practice among the gamekeepers on the estates, and from time to time she would recall details of what she had seen all that time ago and how it had affected her..

“What sticks in my craw.....”

I remember her words as though she had spoken them yesterday. She was asserting something that was akin to a belief in a mammalian commonwealth including us as a species.. She very much identified with animals.

“ What sticks in my craw is this blatant and blessed cruelty to defenceless creatures living as nature intended. And for what purpose I should like to know”. These ignoramaces doing their masters` ugly business. They know not what they do.”

And she went on to argue that there was a clear association to such casual uses of legal force by governments.in pursuit of their goals.

I sympathised although I wasn` t so sure about that.

“What kinds of animals”?

“Oh all the kinds you find in that area which would have been seen as verminous. . Stoats and weasles, rats, grey squirrels, jays, magpies crows, rooks kestrels sparrow hawks, you name it, and snakes. Oh and a cat, don` t ask me why?”

She was in a state of righteous anger, a side of her I knew about, but it was the first time she had been so forthright with me. I didn` t say any more as I was trying to concentrate on the driving. I was rather flattered as I felt she was talking to me on an equal footing not as a moyher to a child.

I asked my father about the snakes.

“They were probably adders which are poisonous.as you know And there were good reasons to leave grass snakes because they would eat vermin. They were very unlikely to have been smooth snakes because they are so rare. And they were far to big to be slow worms which are harmless legless lizards anyway. The gamekeepers would have known which to leave and which to get rid of. But I am against all of it”

I was thinking about rattle snakes, all those snakes in America and said:

“Yes adders are poisonous, but not lethal like coral snakes, rattlers and cottonmouths”.

“There were four or five snakes hanging there, straight as dyes obeying the laws of gravity.. There is nothing so dead looking, so inert as a dead snake. I don` t know why”.

“Is it because there are no arms and legs just ahead attached to the spinal column. Everything is concentrated in this extraordinarily efficient body?”

No reply.

We were passing Chelmsford. The traffic was building up and I was driving in the slow lane.

### Rose

He`s a strange person that Johnathan, not my biological child, it makes no difference. He does live with his father and knows who his mother was and what happened to her. It is all the same to me. I make no difference between the two I have given birth to and the other two I acquired through marriage. Being biologically connected is no guarantee of good relations. Johnathan seems to like going to galleries. I was going to tell him about the snakes, well not exactly about the snakes, more to do with the gamekeeper`s tree.He was asking me, and it set my mind to think back not to when I was a child but more recently to an event a few years ago. I remember I was with Ivan. Of course I am almost always with Ivan. We climbed a steep country road bounded by high hedges . There couldn` t have been much traffic passing through for years.. (I am going to try to remember everything.) The hedges and the grass verges were unkempt. The over all colour was light green. Small yellow and brown striped snails were eating the nettles. There was cuckoo spit on the tall grasses. May time. It was a

bright day fresh and damp because it had rained in the night.. We were standing at a junction. Crossroads. There was what seemed to be a kind of rustic roundabout with long grass. The ground sloped sharply away on one side as though we had walked up the hill and come to the top. On the other side the land was flat with green hedges marking out the fields near the sea. It wasn't in view but I could tell it was nearby. I came across a black plastic bin bag tied with binder wire with a small split near the top. I made it much larger to see what was inside. The bag was full of dead crows with their feet facing outwards claws curled up. They could have been models or sculptures stinking sickly sweet, ushering out in an invisible cloud. They were dead alright.. Ivan signalled for me to come round to the other side of the roundabout. But I told him to come and see what was in the bag. He came over for a few moments and then went back to where he had come from. I followed. He pointed to a snake curled up and covered in what seemed to be white ash, which seemed to have preserved it although there was hardly any colouring. It was quite full bodied not long and thin like a whip snake but not as fat and heavy as a Gabon viper either, and smaller than a grass snake, larger than an adder, and somewhat thicker. It looked as though it had been there for a long time. A hundred years? A thousand? Two? Whose eyes had lit upon it before ours? This place showed no sign of use. These roads looked as though they hadn't been used for at least a century, and then it would have been horses and carts cattle and sheep.

In the middle of the roundabout was a natural looking chimney like structure grassed all over, like the remnants of a monument now lacking determinacy. I can't remember what its outer shape was. It was filled with large lumps of stone all resting haphazardly on each other. Ivan was still quite robust and active. What was left of his hair had already gone quite white. He always wore those faded mostly blue colours, a pale rendition of his father's predilection for dark blue, oxford, navy, royal, and trainers come plimsols or marine loafers. This is how I see him, his fragility and those light coloured spectacle frames, a day or two unshaven with two razor cuts on his chin. He is always cutting himself.

What appeared to be the lumps of stone had been thrown in haphazardly. I stretched out to grasp hold of a large piece and pulled at it when suddenly the whole lot shot down the hole as in a chute. The stones weighed less than expected. I managed to hold on to the large lump of stone which was carved in the form of a horse's head at a one to one scale in ashen greyish/white stone like pumice.

We both peered into the hole surprised that the stones had rolled out at the bottom and pinned somebody to the ground who was struggling to free himself. He did manage to extricate himself, and dusting himself down saw us looking at him down through the hole. I expected him to be injured but he seemed to be ok. We went round the to other side down to where he was. The stones were all over the place. Ivan asked him if he was ok. He didn't reply and left. No side of this structure was like the others. The views were all somehow different, as though completely unconnected. Ivan agreed.. Had our faculties for memorising become disjointed in some way. Neither of us could work out how we got there and how we left. how we left.

But I surely know where I am at the moment in the car driven by Johnathan who is intent, on his driving. So far so good and going now through Redbridge.

And then I remembered Ivan recalling another curious experience, probably triggered by looking down through the hole to the man lying on the ground.

“ I was riding my bike along the canal and followed the path as it went down down and round to the next level of the lock. As it goes down there are high stone walls on each side and then the path turns a sharp left where it meets the canal again”.

I was thinking about this when we were forced to make a difficult turn right being diverted by road works in Whipps Cross. It echoed Ivan's account.

“ As I turned left and came out on to the path, *time stands still*. I surprised a large brightly coloured bird with outstretched wings. I seemed to be bearing down on it from above. It took off flying away down the canal and out of view slowly rising like a large plane taking off as seen from behind etched in slow time, burning brightly red green and yellow rising ”

I may have overelaborated Ivan's words, chinese whispers all over again. But he did describe the slowing of time like that. I don't remember how we got out of there.

#### Another One October 10 2002.

I had been keeping myself to myself, reading, taking daily walks in the park, watching tv, surfing the net. Why go out? It had been at least six weeks or so since I had a visitation of The scorpion's claws. And then something else appeared, not at all like it was before. I had more or less forgotten, thinking sloppily about the space in my head visuallising it being more or less compatible with its physical volume, smaller than a football something like a small melon. This is a dull view. There obviously aren't limitations as in the point line plane object time and motion elements which is one way of delineating sensory experience .

But who knows.

This head was larger than life size, but not bigger than landscape made up in a series of flat planes cardboard sections connected like the parts of a flattened out piece of armour, tied together loosely with string, where could be seen but were not visually critical to the image. The parts moving up and down in relation with each other in a slow jerky fashion. All together they made the flattish shape of a head. The sluggish jerky movement resembled a slowed down sequence of super 8mm film in colour, washed out greyish pinky white, like the snake Rose described. At the sametime this animation was smiling. It seemed to be involved with itself. I was a passive presence observing what is seen in public, people smiling to themselves, or at nothing in particular. They can look as though they are tipped in the balance between sanity, sanctity and madness. The connection I make is with a queen (Elizabeth 2 of the UK) raising a rigid hand to be wafted to and fro about visibly detached from the rest of her, a site of affection of the masses for the rulers. She doesn't wave in an engaged fashion but through a de-individuated foggy miasma. She might just as well hold a hand on a stick to be waved back and forth like so, back and forth, like so and so. This smiling flattened out head does something similar, but what is the representation? The slow jerkiness of the movement is particularly unsettling as though the whole thing could easily come apart. And there is something malevolent which is transmitted even though the thing appears to be solely engaged with itself.

I found a hand and arm made of wood in a skip, an arm for waving. It seems to be moving, wanting to do it. Waving in time counting the seconds, passing the time. Metronomically speaking it must be like the Queen's waving arm developed by exercising the wave even in her sleep waving and waving even before absent crowds not there in her head, stuffed full with protocols, like Eichmann. Her trains also run on time. She grows older withering wavering, still waving, Each day a new hat of the old kind, pastel shaded coat and gloves set ready by the lady of the Queen's Chamber. A champion waving mistress in union with

mothers' bosoms, the mother of the nations of these the islands in her heart. The waver speaks and doesn't waver, talks---- of weather and other niceties to the inner edge of waving throngs who would also die for the comeuppance of a royal death 'Off with her head' They might cry. The red queen all to a man.

#### New Chapter

Michael brought the black box which Ivan had bequeathed to me It's a bible box probably elizabethan I picked out a text Ivan wrote in 1968 because it seems to have been a significant year in his life although it doesn't appear so in the text.. Who can tell what was on his mind:

It starts with a quote which has no obvious connection to what he wrote

"Doris was ere and wrote her name to turn you on"

"I was woken up in the early hours before dawn by the sound of a tawney owl. No trees or wood, voided in the absence of light. Empty at the heart. It was slow getting back to sleep and as I began to dream a barn owl floating low through the wood at the back of my head at the rear of the house. They could be omens, pseudo types leaving trails like a taste in the mouth, mothlike, queens among moths and night birds, all face, wings, tail and talons sheathed in their feathers, soft like eiders' down. Faces in the void coming up to the screen of my inner sight, what I can see when my eyes are closed for the night. ". The birds calling all together like the chattering of a myriad starlings setting up the roost."

No longer. They have all gone now to the suburbs, no swallows swifts sparrows starlings left in the rising tide.. They know better I haven't seen a one since my return.

I went to feed the chickens four were dead, killed by a fox.it looks like. Feathers everywhere, and one missing. I cleaned up the mess buried the remains. Rose was very angry. She has been telling me to give the birds more protection."

I was about nine at the time.We couldn't have eggs for breakfast after that for a while.. Ivan had already gone by the time I got up. Rose was angry. All her energies directed to the cause of this disaster, bigger in her mind than the war in mind when thinking of war obviously the one currently taking place.or wars in general. In this case the Vietnam War. She was frightening in this state which came on to her too often for comfort. Silly old cow I thought. And dreamt I came from a privileged background where none of this would ever happen. Silly me.

## **Viveca Lindfors**

**Birthday: 29 December 1920**

### **Biography**

Ms. Linfors was a Swedish born actress whose stage and screen career in the U.S. and Sweden spanned more than a half century. She was brought to Hollywood in 1946 by Warner Brothers in the hope that she would be a new 'Greta Garbo' (qv) or 'Ingrid Bergman' (qv). She appeared with 'Ronald Reagan' (qv) in her first Hollywood film, 'Don Siegel' (qv)'s *Night Unto Night* (1949) (qv). Perhaps best known as a stage actress, she returned to Sweden in August 1995 to tour with the play 'In Search of Strindberg.'

## Notes Arms ,Legs and Bumps a Daisy

- \*\*\* Father Ivan Jeremy Styoner born July 3rd 1922 - 1999
- \*\* Beatrice Styoner biological mother of Michael and Johnathan Styoner and wife of  
Ivan Styoner born September 16 1932- November 23 1999
- \*\*\* Rose Marigold Grainger Stepmother of Johnathan born born 8th February 1936-  
\*\*\*November 26 1999
- \* Sarah Johnson unmarried sister of Rose`s mother Cecily born 7th of Septmber 1900 - 84
- \*\* Michael Styoner elder brother of Johnathan born march 9th 1949
- \*\*\*Johnathan Styoner born 10 Dec 1959 Goes to the States in 1991 returns 2001
- \* Delia the `mad` toddler cared for by Sarah Johnson born 1962?
- \* Harry Styoner younger stepbrother of Johnathan born 1966
- \* Sarah Jane youngest step sister of Johnathan Styoner born 1968
- \* Joanna Jackson partner of Johnathan Styoner in the States born 1968
- \* Beryl daughter of Harriet living in Hartlepool and brief partner of Johnathan Styoner
- \* James, Beryl`s brother who she said was shot dead when she last contacted Johnathan saying she was at his funeral
- \* Ernst Styoner retired fisherman father of Ivan . My grandfather.

. I was wearing the donegal overcoat, black tie, brogues and the Canadian stetson. It wasn't love at first sight, or anything particularly profound that brought us together, but the sense that we both had managed to resist the attractions of the predominant style of the time. Streetwise we didn't rate. but Bulgarkov would have approved and that would have meant something. I met Beryl pretty much by accident. I had been smiling at women passing in the street, a real sign of desperation but one that some women respond to. One did respond and I had been so surprised that I didn't know follow it up. The memory lingered and I began to frequent that part of the city in the vain hope that I might see her again. I think, I developed a fantasy of how she looked which transformed my recollection of that first glimpse. I didn't see her for a week or and forgot about it. And then when I least expected I saw her with presumably a male friend in a pub near South Kensington tube. I was encouraged to go back on the following evenings which I did two or three times before she appeared again, this time on her own. But before I had the chance to muster up an approach she left. I was sitting at the bar feeling disconsolate and had had a few drinks when I felt a tap on my arm and the person I now know as Beryl said "cheer up it can't be that bad". So it did

I didn't know my natural mother, she dying a few days after I was born. Ivan took Michael and I to her grave as soon as I could read. I followed the inscriptions on the grave stone: with my first finger: *Beatrice Styoner born September 16 1926 passed away peacefully November 23 1952*. Ivan laid some roses on the grave wandered around and said it was time to go. we left

I had played at being orphaned, planned the mortal downfall They would suffer, suddenly. death would spread from room to room until congealing in blood just short of my feet. remained untouched innocent..

Michael phoned to say that Ivan wasn't around anymore Three days later Rose was dead. Michael my brother wasn't so sure that dying so close to each other was a good thing. Ivan might have gone at any time, he had a number of conditions Too late now.. Rose had been alright apparently, but obviously not. According to the autopsy, she had shrivelled arteries.

Rose wasn't my natural mother. My mother it was who showed me the image of the Bellini's Doge of Venice Leonardo Loredan in the National Gallery. Now I am confused. I didn't expect it.