

Table

Brogan Bunt
2014



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Rules

May 14, 2014

I started with the following rules:

- Must be written at my kitchen table.
- Must begin with the specific things that lie before me.
- Must regard nothing as unworthy of consideration.
- Must take shape as a single prose paragraph.
- Must write 100 pieces altogether (although I have now written 101 because of the full moon which appeared on day 50).

This quickly led to more rules:

- Must begin with no sense of what will be written.
- Must be 150 to 175 words long (11 lines on my blog).
- Must be completed in a single sitting. No false starts are permitted.
- Must not stray from the table unless the table prompts me to.
- Must write an average of at least two per day.

[There were a few, additional, privately determined rules. I will make no effort to describe them here. Very briefly, they indicated the ultimate failure of all my perverse efforts at communication and silence.]

153 words

001

Keys

March 26, 2014

A bunch of keys lying correctly – split apart but composed – on the table. All the keys are visible. And the key ring at the centre with the other key rings coming off it, like the rings of planets, like Olympic rings, like nothing at all. Black plastic in the void above and below, but well formed – broad arcs, each returning the symmetry of a single shape. There are five keys altogether. The three smallest keys splayed at the origin, while the large keys that plunge out from the black plastic lozenges point down and to the right. At the end of an articulated link connected to the central ring is the silhouette of a miniature house. This is so the keys never become lost. The whole collection is on several sheets of loosely associated paper. There is a phone number scrawled on one of the visible sheets – 4239 2550. I am listening to music from Gaziantep. It is raining again. The rest of the house is in darkness.

168 words

Maw

March 27, 2014

A group of miners emerge from a deep cave, lamps twinkling within the inky glass. My sunglasses look upwards from the table to the chandelier, where the miner's lights actually shine. I should have noticed the lack of swaying, the stillness of the smoothly contoured and unblemished glass. What is perhaps more apparent – more engrossing – is the static struggle between the sunglasses and a small and emaciated tube of toothpaste. The head of the tube clamped in the folded arms of the glasses, like the gasping maw of some fishy prey jutting from the jaws of a quick and wary crocodile. Sad to still detect beauty in the curve of the empty tube. These two objects locked in irrelevant association. I find myself thinking of the rich morass of life on earth, the inevitable destruction of all living things and the endless decay of the inanimate. There is no music tonight. I drift away from bright lights, sound and all direction.

162 words

Opposite Chair

March 28, 2014

Tonight I am scouring for details but cannot see them. Rain has fallen all week. There are low clouds above the table – plastic bags, white and grey. The opposite chair is empty, but pushed slightly back from the table. Just enough room for a thin, ghostly companion. Yellow light. Empty wooden fruit bowl. What could the ghost possibly have to say to me? I am listening to gypsy music. What was it that you said? Forgive me for interrupting you. I am talking to myself. Speaking softly. The tumult of the clouds – open organs, but containing nothing, floating lightly on the detritus of many weeks. Better let all of this stuff coalesce than to imagine a purely determined expanse – a table subsisting simply as surface. Were this desert to actually exist then the ghost and I would have little to say to one another. Another night with nothing said. I am sleeping in her arms. I am sleeping in the arms of forgotten lovers.

166 words

004

Null

March 28, 2014

I had almost lost a pair of black motorcycle gloves. I didn't notice one evening when they fell out of my top box on to the front lawn. But they were there the next day when I left for work. Nobody had taken them. I brought them back inside. Now one of the gloves is visible on the table – palm up with the thumb vacant and neatly folded over. Supplicant glove with nothing desired. Beside it, at the same visual height, the containing upper portion of a glass of red wine. The wine is only red at the circular upper rim. The rest is dark in the same manner as the glove. They share something else ill-determined – less proximity than the contours of a null event. I have not yet reached out to the glass of wine. I have not disturbed the scene. The music has just ended. I am no longer here. There are avalanches in the distance.

159 words

Black Jacket

March 29, 2014

Chucked across the table – across the plastic bag clouds – like the sudden coming of night. The black jacket is the aether that mediates beneath the earth and the heavens. Twisted and labyrinthine, with soft curves and folds. I sit quietly near it – no music tonight – remembering the dusk light outside, the grey water, the glittering cargo ships, the retreating light of the coast. I was following the headlands as they dropped toward the horizon. But now it is the jacket that looms above everything, above my memories, above a day spent doing very little (lying limply on my bed). It seems to suggest that the universe is here regardless. It descends down to the level of my table. It is just above my fingers typing on these keys, as I search for words to escape the terrors of thought. While I have no wish to contemplate the future, there is no time like the present to discover the unravelling of dreams.

161 words

White Villa

March 29, 2014

I have already decided that I cannot decide, that I am unable to reach a decision. The end of an envelope ripped in half lies on other envelopes as yet unopened. The dead fish tail of the toothpaste casts a shadow over a portion of the ripped envelope, but also resembles some low curved roof of a home set in the midst of debris. The home itself, which scarcely exists, is a species of debris. Smooth, white and unnatural, it nonetheless summons the thinking of cliffs, of rocky ground, of a villa fallen into ruin. This place had once provided sunlight and shade, but now has escaped the scale of human habitation. It has become small and stripped free of all context. No sound of donkeys or of the ocean. No birds. No breeze on a solitary afternoon. I see it only intermittently. Mainly I see the tear in the envelope and the combed pattern at the end of the tube. I can also recognise, through a small, triangular gap, the anonymity of the table.

175 words

Hydrangeas

March 30, 2014

Swaying in the breeze. Yes, there is a breeze. What stupid conceit led me to decorate this place? Fairy lights through the cosmos (as though the moon would be better painted another colour). Blue and white flowers grouped and swooning, except for one sprig that turns away from me to gaze upwards – defiant and mortal. Above them a lettuce of leaves, green and effulgent, shiny and textured, like the skin of a lizard held up to light. What led me to place this pretty thing here? Especially after I had removed every other living branch and piled them high as waste? It seems afternoon is a time when I can briefly imagine that I am someone whole, someone who places decorative things on the table. Now they tower over everything else that is otherwise there, that properly belongs there as clutter, as bits and pieces of stuff that fill my current life, or that lie at its margins, or that push towards a desolate interior, or that express that desolate interior entirely.

172 words

It Rains

March 30, 2014

Across the depths of the gathering night – in ebbs and flows, but ascending – it rains. I had walked in it, pelted with huge wet drops. And now I have escaped it. The table remains dry, although clearly it has a future that I cannot countenance, cannot adequately know. Gathering lightning in the now dark sky. A tiny rubber band beside an empty glass of wine. A white plate with knife and fork lying side by side, intimately – like some married couple before anything happens. But I am still listening to the rain, only the rain and the far away sound of thunder. I had not expected the rain to come back. Why has it returned? Will the new week repeat the last? How is one week to be distinguished from another? I am posing impossible questions. Expect no more from me. All the objects in my world remain fixed. There is nothing that I can say that will explain. There is nothing that I can do to understand.

168 words

Morning

March 30, 2014

All the white things seem to have risen up, resisting the darkness of the sky, resisting the bright and shiny constellations. They are neither ground, nor atmosphere, nor starry heavens. They are some other realm of mediation – a floating realm. Books too, like solitary ice bergs, drift from their frozen glacial harbours into the open sea. I have lost all sense of whatever the evening demands. My heart – what does my heart matter? Melinda Vernon has written to me. She is Delegate of the Electoral Commissioner for the Division of Cunningham. She informs me that I am now enrolled to vote. This letter came to me on the 18th of December 2013, some three and half months ago. Now, folded in two places, slightly bent at one corner, it asserts itself differently. I no longer read it. It is simply visible as surface, as rising surface. Foam upon the ocean waves. Foam upon a dead still ocean. I can hear the buzz of work-bound cars. I hesitate, as always.

169 words

Pate and Anus

March 31, 2014

Struggle through the late afternoon. A single apple and lime in a large wooden bowl at the far end of the table. They lie beyond the range of my immediate attention. The apple has been there too long. I will never eat it. The lime has been there even longer, but appears less affected. The bowl supports them through my neglect – as they mutely persist. I can scarcely see the lime. It is sunk in the depths of the bowl with only the top of its green pate visible. The apple protrudes more, pointing a small anus upwards. If it must confront decline then let it do so with no false modesty. The bowl itself is shaped from a large, convoluted wooded knot – thickly carved, pockmarked and dark, but with a broad stream of blond wood running up to the rim. This stream runs right up to where the exposed apple sits, like a mat of licentious hair, like a parting in the trees to reveal the muted contours of dusk.

171 words

Amongst Rocks

March 31, 2014

The time is past when I can say anything reasonable or furnish the outer rooms of my abandoned home. I have done my best. I have looked in various directions. I have raised my head above the table, the ceiling and the roof. I am on my way, with the night in pursuit. It hastens towards me, whispering words of encouragement. Yet the table remains obstinately still and silent, despite the lamentations and obscenities rising from the burning villages, despite the unsettling voyage to new lands. So I allow the table to accompany me. And the table endures me. It joins me as a fellow traveller. I take my rest beside it. I imagine that I am resting. I look fondly at all my stuff. I have eaten more than enough. I would call for more alcohol if there were anyone around, but the darkness at the edges of the table hides no one. We are alone and shall find no solace in the shadow of these gloomy rocks.

169 words

Some Things

April 1, 2014

A Chinese fan composed of diverse items. Actually just three: the keys to my motorbike; a letterbox advert for Samsung mobile phones; and a packet of Ramset Wallmate picture anchors and hangers. The body of some exemplary mobile phone user appears headless, handless and legless at the lower edge of the sun faded advert. The cable of my Mac runs in a broad arc from the side of my laptop across the wrists of this illusory person to the edge of the table and then downwards to the floor. This last bit is out of sight, although I can see the cable continuing well beyond that point to a jumbled power outlet beneath a small side table that holds my stereo system and few knickknacks, notably a brass buddha and a toy rhinoceros made of wood and wire. The person in the advert is wearing a striped beige and white, semi-button down tee shirt with broad white lapels. How can this possibly suggest the present or the future? What is being sold to me?

174 words

Henninger

April 1, 2014

I drink this cheap German lager beer, Henninger. Must be dumped from the European market. It is cheaper than any Australian beer. it comes in a green bottle, with 'Henninger' in red on the label. It seems to have been first produced in 1869 in Frankfurt An Main. A small silver logo just above the red text displays an "H" and a "B", with a tall castle in-between. Some other text proclaims, "TRADITIONAL GERMAN BREWING" and "FULLY IMPORTED FROM GERMANY". There is more information on the rear label, but reading this would mean lifting my hands from the keyboard to manually turn the bottle around. It would also demand switching on the light because the day is dying. A soft grey settles over the white clouds beyond my hedge. The bottle of beer is empty. It will soon be in the bin. I really can't leave empty beer bottles on the table. Despite all my shortcomings, I have some lingering standards.

161 words

Molluscs

April 1, 2014

I am tempted to turn all the lights off and to listen to the clock. Some screwdrivers obscured by paper. My wallet behind the laptop screen. It seems someone called Geraldine Harrison lived here before me. She never bothered to redirect her mail. I am keeping her letters for the time being, but will eventually throw them away. The beer bottle is already gone. The clock is ticking exceptionally loudly. Why have I never noticed it before? Crickets in the garden. The shrill sound of needless oxygen in my ears. This table is exhausting me. I can only intermittently discover other places within it. I have lost all hope of doing this easily. Nothing will come of these efforts, like the intestines of molluscs washed up on foreign beaches, twitching in the sand, roughly pecked at by birds, turning black and blue, shiny, swollen and stinky beneath the sun. These in turn resemble nothing more than the veiny edges of my eyes once the pupils have been forcibly removed.

169 words

Change

April 2, 2014

The table changes in small increments, with the arrangement of items slightly different each day. Something new appears. Something else is gone. Something else is moved slightly. The clutter may seem a consistent, gathering phenomenon, but it has its ebbs and flows. Tonight, the brown bag dominates the scene – a tilted boulder perched on a thin strip of rolling black sand. The plastic bags have long gone. The hydrangeas are wilted and disconsolate. There are no distant prospects and no imagination of escape. No satisfaction can be taken in any of this. There is no consolation in detecting the hidden machinations of the mundane. My life is fading away – not yet, but soon enough. I cannot help smiling again in the midst of this obscure scene – caught up in this obscurity, finding in it a truth that truth cannot comprehend. I find myself whispering over and over, “she does not love me, she will never love me”.

157 words

Voluble

April 2, 2014

To find the means to assemble one word in front of another. I cannot hear the jets. I am on my own. The small red light on the near speaker suggests that I have left the speaker on for a whole night and another whole day. What array of words would be sufficient in these circumstances – either to advance or to retreat, either to press against me or to resist touching altogether? What word should be written? What word should be written just here? The darkened screen of my mobile phone offers no answer – not even glare. In the midst of this, I am walking through a narrow gate. The gate is rotten and swinging. It had once seemed much higher. I would guess that everything had seemed much higher back then. The long arms of oblivion beckoned toward us. I looked about confused. Where was my golden chariot and white steed? Where were the discarded garments of the daughters of the night?

163 words

Incessant

April 3, 2014

Above the black jacket, which has returned again, is another bowl of fruit – only recently here. It contains a small bunch of bananas, two pomegranates, two small mangoes and two green avocados. One of the mangoes has a prominent white label. It is raining heavily outside. I stopped and brought in some old tools placed just outside on the kitchen step – a petrol powered drill, an electric grinder and a heavy blue vice. I also brought inside a plastic container of old photographs with a ripped lid, just in case the rain should blow under the roof and damage the images. I have not used the tools or looked at the photographs in a very long time. I have not yet eaten any of the fruit. The rain is continuing, occasionally becoming heavier, occasionally easing off. I look at the fruit, the tools and the box, waiting for something to happen, waiting for something to appear to me. I could describe the rain as incessant.

165 words

Sack of Light

April 3, 2014

It is night. What are the particular qualities of night? That darkness surrounds on all sides? That all light is contained within a hessian sack immersed in a cold, deep creek, amongst smooth, rounded stones. The fish swim above the stones – glittering and yet also invisible. The tall pine trees on the steep banks hold back the stars. Somebody drives off in an old truck, crunching up the hill to the main road. And then it is quiet. I stand for a while thinking about nothing much and then wade into the river in search of the sack, but cannot find it. I am wet through. The darkness penetrates my hands. My hands are gone. I try to whistle but make no sound. It is still raining. A roach roams about on the floor, quite close to my feet. It rushes and then stutters. Its antenna constantly twitching. It is just after 10pm. There are ways and means of making a place for ourselves in this world. I am resting on a single elbow.

174 words

Morning

April 4, 2014

The table is only dimly apparent. Just 7am. A cool breeze blows in at the kitchen sliding door. The sound of morning birds, distant cars and the clock – as well, of course, as my hands typing on these keys. I am told to write about what actually happens, to not leave things out, especially embarrassing things. The grass in the backyard is growing lighter. The bananas in the fruit bowl are becoming yellow. But there are pauses and breaks. The day refuses to appear in its continuity. I have spent half an hour away from the table doing other things. I am back again determined to finish. It is 7:47am. The blue of the opposite wall is not actually an ocean. My wallet. The computer power cord – again, with its green light. The complexity of an envelope, with its folds, buldges and gradations. White passing to valleys of grey. I scan every detail in the hope that something will lead me astray. But the morning is inexorable. It is 7:59am. Now it is 8am.

174 words

Crows

April 4, 2014

I walked up into the suburbs and down to the sea. I followed an old route – one that I used to walk at night. It was late afternoon, pressing towards dusk. The sky was grey and overcast – it had been raining most of the day. The creeks were flowing brown and the leaves of the creek side plants were pulled in long ribbons downstream. The sea itself was calm. Surfers paddled hard, but failed to catch the small waves. Eventually I arrived home. Walks necessarily come to an end, although they suggest an infinitely open action. I am trying now to make sense of the grain pattern of the table. The pattern suggests water, the skin of a shaved dog, or even a sky full of crows, each flying separately away from the desolation of the day. But the crows are also the harbingers of that desolation. I am surprised how many there are. It fills my heart with wonder – endless permutations of sadness.

164 words

Shears

April 4, 2014

Last weekend I bought an expensive pair of pruning shears. They have aluminium handles that feel good to hold. I used them to prune the hydrangeas. Innumerable stalks, each needing to be cut back to the lowest green bud. My neighbour suggested that I cut lower, but it seemed sensible to adhere to the horticultural rule. The pruning shears are on the table like all manner of other things. The long black beak is clamped shut by a small black safety catch. The blades open and shut on an orange axle. An accordion style strip of wound metal acts as a spring to provide an appealing sense of resistance when the handles are squeezed. I cannot resist picking up the shears and releasing the catch. I squeeze the handles a number of times and observe how the blades overlap. Then I lock the shears and place them on a red book covered in white names. The handles extend out over some envelopes. The metal is smooth, but brushed in places.

170 words

Crumbs

April 5, 2014

My old motorcycle helmet has shifted toward me this morning. Moved, as I recall, to create space for a plate. I wonder why I leave the helmet here. It should properly be discarded. I also wonder about the tiny yellow specks at the far end of the table. They are like inexplicable geological phenomena. I imagine that they have descended from the heavens – a granular dust. The cause is less mysterious. They are the residue of a meal. Crumbs of bread and flattened bits of salad leaves. Precisely because they are so small, they too cannot properly remain here. I will wipe them away. The table is a surface, a thin layer of wood suspended some few feet above the floor. It must retain its integrity as surface – as a smooth, flat context for other things to collect. Only objects of adequate scale may subsist here, not miniscule stuff that confuses the relationship between surface and discrete, identifiable conditions of being.

161 words

Queen

April 5, 2014

A five dollar note curved in the shape of a boomerang stands on its side, supported at the rear by a portable hard drive and at the front by a folded piece of A4 paper. The note is purple. It displays the Queen's head, which looks in my direction, but past me, as though there are more important things to perceive and consider. Her face appears very serious and composed. Visible beside her is the suspended branch of a gum tree. The branch is not altogether coherent because the lower left corner of the note is folded and confused, leaving a mixture of jumbled leaves and subtle engraving lines. What can the Queen be looking at so resolutely, especially with one or more branches around her and the sky a tissue of dark incisions? A breeze blows in at the kitchen door. The note flutters, vibrates and falls down. The Queen succumbs unperturbed to her fate – supplanted by the dull complexity of a geometrical pattern.

165 words

Glass

April 5, 2014

I am listening to Johnny Cash – “In the sky, Lord, in the sky”. Brief distant view of mountains and glaciers. Seals sleeping on the pebble beach. Shards of ice on the softly lapping shore. Penguins porpoise through the shallows. There are grey and guano-red icebergs at the entrance to the harbour. I wonder what am I doing here? I wonder if I was ever here? I look up at an orb of sculpted glass, triangularly tessellated with only the smallest glimmer of reflected light. It hangs low in the chandelier – just above the clock and against the rear blue wall. It can scarcely be equated to a piece of ice and is not at all like the sun. It reflects and casts only minimal light. It takes me neither to the Antarctic nor to the perils of suburban existence. it is simply a piece of glass. But there is nothing simple about this. I can hear Johnny still singing, this time of a cowpoke chasing the “Devil’s herd” – “Ghost Riders in the Sky”.

173 words

Weeds

April 5, 2014

Everything is drawn to the left side of the table. Boxes, bowls, cords and bits of paper hang over the edge. The music is also at the left. The wind blows in from the right, although not this evening. I slid the sliding glass door shut tonight. It was cold as I moved the tools up to the shed at dusk, particularly as I walked past the lime tree, with its strange prostrate branches. It resembles some bird crouched on the ground taking a dirt bath. The surrounding weeds have no idea of what to make of it, especially since I poisoned them and they have grim time to reflect. They can see the lime tree's branches covered in fruit. They can feel the chill wind of late autumn. Their vision is blurred. Their mouths are parched. They will never take up a space at the left side of my table. They will hear no more of my music. The ground loosens its hold on their roots. I am determined to remain neutral.

173 words

Salome

April 6, 2014

White plate balanced at a slight angle on two small boxes – one cardboard and the other plastic. Salome is waiting for the head of St John the Baptist. In the meantime she has eaten some burnt toast. I used to walk through the Florentine gardens. I was camped at the very edge of town. I carried bottles of wine back to my tent each night. It was Easter. The contents of the fruit bowl have dwindled to a single avocado. I threw out the flowers several days ago and then, just yesterday, the bottle of wine that had held them. I can recall the Florentine girls – their long, dark hair, their jeans and blue tops. They were rarely alone. They wandered around in groups laughing. No use following them. My fate lay here. The softness of a white plate – the rim brighter than the flat bottom. A deep milky soup scattered in the blackest galaxy. Salome slips into lassitude. John the Baptist is nowhere to be seen.

167 words

Daytrip

April 6, 2014

Swirling rain – the train seats facing the wrong way. Wet walking from Circular Quay to Central. Down the escalator to the Illawarra line. Reading an abandoned paper and missing the Sutherland stop. Off toward Cronulla and then back again – running from the station to the car. The windows clouded with mist. Stopping to get petrol. The cashier says nothing, not even when I thank him. Raining heavily along the freeway – dropping on the Bulli Pass. Falling quickly into the usual view of the ocean. Only minutes from here. Darker and colder than this morning, when everything had seemed easier, when the extremities of time had seemed welcome. I have nothing to say in the face of all this. I still see the rain. I still hurry across the streets. I still look up at the tallest buildings, with their hanging gardens. There is only silence here. I can only hear the silence. I must avoid travelling away at the weekend – even for a single day.

165 words

Graeme

April 7, 2014

For some reason Graeme Phillips was using Michael Seaman's business cards. Perhaps he was only part time at The Good Guys. Perhaps he was only working weekends. He wrote his name in capital letters in the white space at the top of the card, with its "Pay Less, Pay Cash" slogan and drawing of an ecstatic, vibrating cash register. Graeme also included his mobile number, although this overlapped with the Warrawong street address. Looking at it now, it seems to contain an unnecessary digit, but this is the number he wrote – 0413 2220 789. The card is butted up against my car keys and wallet and rests on top of two recent train tickets. Graeme managed to sell me a 55 inch television set. I offered only the slightest resistance. I gave into his rude but honest sales patter. I stood where he told me and appreciated the television's impressive colour and resolution. I even accepted his improvised business card, just in case I happened to have any other audio-visual needs.

171 words

Echoes

April 7, 2014

It rained on the way home. My helmet was wet. Could hardly put it in the top box. I brought it inside to dry. Now it rests as a strong echo of my old helmet. Both helmets face in the same direction. My old helmet is closer to me. My new helmet sits in the empty space where I sometimes eat. There are other echoes. Two sets of keys just at my left – my motorbike keys slightly closer. One key points down the dark hallway - all the rest point roughly to the back of the house. Two specifically point right towards me. Both helmets and the handles of the keys are black. I am wearing black, although my jeans are possibly grey. I am cold. Instead of sensibly showering and changing when I got home, I walked down to the ocean. The waves were crashing heavily on the rocks. I walked to the artificially lit point above the Woonona baths and then in the opposite direction toward the sewage works.

171 words

Sleep

April 8, 2014

Little sleep last night. I pretend to question the value of sleep. I do my best to be cheerful, although it is raining once again and I can no longer see any details. I scan the lawn, the sky and the table, but then notice that “Ticket queues are due to depart” on the back of a train ticket, implying not only that there will no longer be any queues, but that a set of queues are heading off on their own designated rail journey. I imagine numerous long lines of patient travellers all preparing to board the train. Instead of a single queue there is a vertical array of queues, perhaps a bit uneven, since no two queues are identical. I wonder if all of this is sufficiently distant from whatever intimately concerns me, whatever cannot properly be spoken? Our uncomfortable conversations, which bring phone calls to a close and demand long gaps between texts. I have no dreams to recall. I close my eyes for no reason.

169 words

Black

April 8, 2014

So many things are black. I could list them: the licorice that I am eating; the jeans that I am wearing; my motorcycle helmets; the untouched face of my mobile phone; the mouse and audio leads running into my computer; the keys on my computer; the magnetic back of a promotional card; the top of a pen; the handles on my keys; and the speakers through which I am playing music late this Tuesday evening. Listening to Hole – *Live Through This*. Holes are black as well. The night is black. My features, reflected dimly in the kitchen glass, are black. The hands on the clock are black. All manner of text on all manner of accumulated receipts, envelopes and printed pieces of paper is black. The bottom of one particular sheet close to me shows the code “1A-Ack-0813?”. Everywhere I look is black. To see black is to recognise the point at which visibility and invisibility coincide. It is to crawl beneath the floorboards and drift across the rooftops.

169 words

Surgery

April 9, 2014

Nothing can be felt on the skin, unless I attend very closely. I should be able to begin with the simplest things, if not with various objects on the table then with some words that have descended from the air. I am not sure that I can manage this – that I can permit the affliction of voices, birds, cars, doors and the rest. My garden is growing well, although it is mid autumn. Everywhere I look, the pretty flowers of a false spring. Seems like I have a great deal to do, that I am neglecting many little tasks. In the midst of all this, I recognise that the face of a famous woman has changed. The lumpy awkwardness of it, which was almost certainly her particular beauty, has been replaced by an anonymous symmetry. Why this attraction to surgery when it does nothing but accentuate the traces of age? I have passed away again. I am distracted. She introduced herself and then briefly feigned a smile.

167 words

Drifting

April 9, 2014

The confused experience of drifting breeds fantasies and, more than this, modes of being. I lie in bed most of the day. I go on long walks. I don't wash up. I can't focus at work. I try to imaginatively repair the damage. I imagine the damage as much worse than it is. The drifting is as much a swirl or words and embodied attitudes as it is a spreading, inchoate thing. It constantly obtains form and then decomposes. There is no actual wound to heal and so nothing heals. There is no sense of an end. An end is undoubtedly coming, but seems worse than the state of drifting itself, in that it involves giving up and forgetting. The drifting remains as much because I will it to remain as because it will not go. The drifting is an amputated limb. I am accustomed to its absence. I struggle against the limb's absence and cannot do without it. Through a window, playing on new leaves, I recognise the heedless light of the sun.

174 words

Spoon

April 9, 2014

I found a spoon on an unused Yellow Pages near the centre of the table. Rather than simply observing it, I picked it up and placed it at my left. The spoon is not directly in contact with the table. It rests across two black leads running into my laptop. It needs to be washed. Traces of avocado are evident. The head is streaked with a light sense of oral contact. Milky streaks extend from the curved crown down to the neck. Soft reflections of the overhead light run down its narrow frame. No sense of how long the spoon has been there and I can only wonder that I have not noticed it before. I had hoped to see something more than uncleanness in its greyish silver depths, but cannot. I am determined to only speak of what I see - to not invent scenes that bear no relation to the experience of the spoon itself - but now I am tempted to speak of devils, salamanders and deep caves.

171 words

Rubber Band

April 10, 2014

Quick clean of the table. Most of the paper gone. Just a small stack of apparently necessary stuff. Two largely empty notepads. Listening to the White Stripes. A narrow archipelago of coins. My two sets of keys randomly splayed. A Stanley screwdriver pointing roughly my way – some small, clear plastic box adjacent to its tip, like a miniature prison in which the soul of an evil person is kept. Pens, a portable hard drive. Francis Ponge's *The Nature of Things*. I wonder whether Ponge would descend to simply listing things? Would he stoop to absently naming them without considering how they are properly described? A very small, circular rubber band, somewhat isolated. A pair of reading glasses in a dark cloth case. There were eight cargo ships on the horizon tonight. I walked along the beach in the rain. The bright lights of a football field made it hard to find my way back up to the path. I could see the rain on my shirt, which was becoming only slightly wet.

172 words

Pig

April 10, 2014

A scrap of small paper resembles a pig with a stunted, stumpy tail, abbreviated legs and two tiny, little eyes looking straight upwards. A snout as well. This scarcely evident pig subsists in a flat state beneath the looming immensity of my tilted laptop screen. The pig cannot run off. It is stranded and utterly naked. Cables bend and twine on either side. How it manages to take convincing pig-like shape is an accident of the clouds and my extreme youth. I am breeding pigs. Just the one. Let it try to run away. Let it try to escape beyond the horizon of ordered things. I have only to tilt the screen forward to see it again. I would butcher it if I had the heart and means, but instead simply admire it. It is good to keep animals. It lends me some partial humanity. It makes me happy and whole.

151 words

Cereal

April 11, 2014

In the morning I will often sit on the couch in the front room to eat a bowl of cereal. Occasionally I will go into the small sunroom, with its two cane chairs and large striped cushions, to look out toward the sea. I use the bathroom and laundry fairly regularly. I go into the bedroom mainly to sleep. I use the corridor to move between rooms and also when I am entering and exiting the house, although sometimes I will take the rear glass door and the side gate. I spend most of the time in the dining space adjoining the kitchen. That is where the table is located. The chairs are just basic pine chairs. The table is very plain as well. I bought the four chairs and the table for \$30 altogether. The hippies across the street had put them out on the verge to be sold. It seems the wife had received a payout when she become redundant. They have since bought new dining furniture, which they describe as beach-gothic.

174 words

Assistance

April 11, 2014

I bought 17 native plants at the Botanic Gardens. An elderly employee helped me load my car. He stood beside my trolley and handed me the plants one by one. Each time he said something about the size of the plant – “this is a big one”, “this is a little one” – as though I couldn’t see this just by looking myself. When I accidentally knocked one of the pots over, producing a little pile of dirt and mulch in my car, he said, “you clean that up”. Helpful advice, I guess. I spent the rest of the day digging up garden beds and planting the plants. I didn’t finish until it was dark. Despite the light rain, I made sure to water all of the new plants, dragging the hose around to the opposite side of the house to reach the most distant beds. I was covered in mud by the time I finished. I am looking forward to seeing the garden in the morning light. The overall impression escapes me just now.

173 words

Sapling

April 12, 2014

The leather fronds blow against the grey sky. The far window has twelve panes. The curtains are always pulled. The roof is immaculately green. The intensity of grass. The hedge around my BBQ is already growing back – curling tendrils and expectant, mounted leaves. Only one tree left to be planted – a small, upright rainforest sapling. I rescued it this morning from where I had left it last night, amongst the back weeds. The pot had fallen over and the tree was already drifting into the oblivion of the surrounding skeletal weeds – pitiful, but scarcely seeming to care, finding its way beyond the moral necessity to grow. I picked it up and moved it to just outside my back door. Later I will decide where to plant it properly. It is standing up now, but I know that I only have to look away for a moment – to wander off, for instance, to make coffee – and the tree will blow over. I will never see this happen, but it will occur.

170 words

Creatures

April 12, 2014

I have closed the glass door against the windy day. Four green tomatoes that had been growing next to the front sewer line – product of an earlier disaster – sit hopefully on my rear step. Doubtful they will ripen. I'm following links to obscure bands, typically with dead members who in turn need to be pursued more closely still. Saturday morning. What should I be constructively doing? I have already washed up. Since I cleaned the table, it no longer serves as central focus. Instead it establishes a vantage – a flat platform set amongst the woods, with odd creatures dashing from tree to tree in the mid-distance, gnashing their teeth, refusing to appear as anything but dark shapes. I feel at liberty to disregard them, to sink into my uncomfortable chair. I am waiting for the day to obtain shape, to discover its proper identity, to rise up on its haunches and then, in a fitful moment, fall on its back writhing and foaming at the mouth.

166 words

Dope

April 12, 2014

People were here. They have gone. An unopened bottle of wine, or better, a bottle of wine not drunk, stands close by and in the near distance a morbid relic – a collapsed headstone, actually a breadboard. Bread, olives and cheese – these are things people expect to eat, but not on separate plates. A breadboard is much more convivial. Now that my guests have descended uncertainly down the front steps, nobody can stop me listening to George’s McRae’s *Rock Your Baby* – “Woman take me in your arms, rock me baby”. I listened to that song a lifetime ago, driving through the back blocks of Miami looking for dope. I can recall thinking that I was growing up. I envisaged a future that never happened. Nothing is ever as envisaged. No matter how closely I attend to the immediacy of my current circumstances, I am always distracted. The nights spread across the far hills. They wander away for good.

157 words

Circular

April 13, 2014

Circular echoes. All in close proximity. That small rubber band. The opening of a pouch and its looping draw string. The bronze guitar slide in the pouch. The top rim of a coffee cup. The rubber band and slide are drawn into particularly close relation, like the certainty of temperature extremes. The dark pouch would consume the bronze tube, but cannot quite succeed, which only accentuates its slack and gaping mouth. The pouch is stitched at the sides. It resembles some exotic seed. With the slide visible, it also resembles some dark, disconsolate eye – fated to be evil, but lacking the appropriate resources. Instead it is the rubber band that reveals grim determination – a steady, elastic poise. It will not blink. No trace of shining. It is imbued with gummy light. It knows the legitimate power of its circular shape. Sun. What does the sun matter? What additional circularity does the sun offer?

153 words

Sparklers

April 13, 2014

Beyond the limits of my naive hopes. Inky, ice-filled northern air. Branches of greater darkness split through the night. Shards of imaginary light play at the borders of invisibility, like sparklers in the hands of the dead. I wipe the table with a wet cloth. I could do a better job. I could wait until the water is hot. I could shift everything off the table and wipe it thoroughly. Instead I wipe in broad, unsystematic strokes, leaving some areas damp and the others dusty and dry. This is the scene that I contemplate, that leads me into the forest, into the very depths of the night – though it is only mid-afternoon. I can barely stand. I have lost my bearings completely. The branches of darkness twist my head about. There is no need to reach into my pocket for matches. Bright specks of painful light erupt from a thin bit of wire at the end of my incalculably distant hand.

161 words

Walk

April 13, 2014

I walked up Gray St and across the Princes Highway to the new housing development on Woodland Avenue. Completed about a decade ago but still unconvincing. Small blocks, big houses, lots of brick and half-grown gardens. Turned right at Red Ash Drive and then left at Gahan's Lane, heading up steeply in the direction of the escarpment – older houses the higher I climbed. Then an overgrown fire trail, with lantana closing in on both sides, to another fire trail leading up to Rixon's Pass. Followed the track from the top along in the direction of Broker's Nose, but the afternoon was growing late so I stopped at a power line clearing with a view over the coast. Large swell rolling into Bellambi beach. That's all I noticed before I turned around, worried that I wouldn't make it down before dark. Not an issue. Got home and was watering the new plants before night asserted itself conclusively.

156 words

Mandarins

April 13, 2014

I know implicitly that I should write about the mandarins. They are so strikingly orange. They nestle into my wooden fruit bowl like clouds above a low valley, or better still, like bloody offal in a saucer – the offal, perhaps, of a slaughtered white horse that is scooped up to feed cats. They can also be likened to a group of football players packed in tightly to gee themselves up for a big effort – their shaved heads so closely pressed together that they resemble clouds or offal. But these are definitely mandarins. One even has a blue label, which I will peel off before I peel the piece of fruit itself. The good thing about mandarins is that you can eat as many as you like. Gorging on mandarins is an innocent pleasure. The peel of many mandarins accumulates in my kitchen compost bin – their seeds scattered in the sink.

150 words

Birdbath

April 14, 2014

No end to this rain. The sky is a dim and striated grey. I bought a ceramic birdbath on the way home from work. I was the last customer for the day. I put the birdbath beneath the Christmas bush in the garden. It is glazed blue. I hope it will attract birds. I found two items in my mailbox – a Dominos pizza advertisement and a letter for the former owner. The latter comes in a reusable envelope made from recycled paper. A green arrow and some green text explain that the recipient must open the letter at the green end to reuse the envelope. The return address is STATE DEBT RECOVERY OFFICE, LOCKED BAG 2128, NORTH SYDNEY NSW 2059. I consider opening the letter. I consider forwarding it to the former owner. But then I remember that I don't have her current address. There is also an undeliverable option – a PO Box address. To be honest, I'll probably just drop the letter in the recycling bin.

167 words

Four Things

April 14, 2014

A sharp knife beside the laptop, shining with a thin slick of lemon juice. Beside it a half empty bottle of beer. In the air above, one of three lights on the chandelier – a pool of glowing glass, with the bulb a solitary bather. Then back down at table level, my upturned and askew reading glasses. These four things, perceived in quick succession, prompt me to sit down – to put on my glasses, to drink the remaining beer, to notice that the lemon juice is now only faintly visible on the vibrating knife. I cannot help looking up again towards the chandelier, but suddenly the single globe no longer makes the same impression. It is just one of three other lights. It no longer enters into relation with the things on the table, which in the same instant suddenly drift away from one another and grow opaque. There is nothing here. There is no longer anything to see. The evening darkness has descended. The rain has stopped.

167 words

Cloth

April 15, 2014

Darkness again (the only light). I lost my way today. Muffled sound of rain. I am searching in the shadows for the certainty of ghosts. Somebody had to die here, but why bother hanging around? No idea, especially as the world itself is becoming ghostly – a tentative, vacant, vanishing thing. Coils of white power cord on the ground. Red wine. One chair angled back from the table. My brown bag has pulled back its hair, revealing a blue scalp. It nestles into the black bag of gym gear, with its ridiculous white rope handles and cursive promotional text. The intimacy of these two bags permits no intrusion. I should leave them be, but am shocked by the visible towel – that two things should indulge in such close exchange in the midst of this terrible silence, that they should ignore the messy stacks of printed materials, that they should risk the sweet embrace of cloth. I wish them well in the midst of their uncertain future.

165 words

Mortality

April 16, 2014

A smiling young man in a Godzilla suit towers above a small artificial city. Fetch TV – some kind of on-line movie delivery system. \$9.95 a month, and for only \$20 more, the full entertainment pack, with additional television channels. I try to imagine watching lots of television. Beneath this promotional literature is a large white envelope from the Australian Government. I am quite confident that it contains a bowel cancer testing kit, having already received one some five years ago. I pick it up, test its weight, squeeze and shake it – as though it were a Christmas present. Just a moment before I was contemplating watching a great deal more television than I currently do. The next I am painfully aware of my own mortality. I can hear the quiet bleeps of innumerable small insects in the garden. The bugs seem to be everywhere, yet I cannot see a single one of them. They lull me into sleep – despite the full yellow moon.

163 words

Strikings

April 17, 2014

Sunlight ascending a tiered garden wall. Getting cooler. I am wearing a black jumper. Listening to John Fahey's *The Legend of Blind Joe Death*. The volume fades in the middle of a track, lifts to become loud again and then fades out completely. Very little seems to have changed on my table. The table itself, of course, rarely changes. Only the material on top of it. Only the orientation of the chairs. Only the quality of the surrounding day or night. Only the person who types these words. I can hear the garbage truck out on the road. Six small black plastic pots arranged in a row in a clear spot in my rear garden. My neighbour has gone away for three weeks, leaving me to care for the strikings. I wonder what chance they have of growing. All I can do is water them regularly. The rest will depend upon the efficacy of the miracle formula he has applied to their buried stems. My favourite track is *Sligo River Blues*.

171 words

Gushing Hose

April 18, 2014

A small pile of paper is arranged at the right side of the table. I had deliberately placed it there so that I could pick it up, exit at the sliding glass door, turn left beneath a modest verandah, head left again through a garden gate, walk down a short section of concrete driveway and deposit it in a large, yellow recycling bin. But I have yet to do this. Instead, in the gathering darkness, I dragged a hose down past the bins to water the new plants in the front garden. In the midst of this, the watering attachment popped off, leaving a gushing naked end. The concrete became wet as I pulled the writhing hose back to its proper place at the rear left hand corner of the house. The pile of paper remained utterly unaffected by any of these events. Even now as a cold breeze blows in at the glass door, it retains its composure. I can only regard it with awe. I can only wish I had similar tenacity.

174 words

Strap

April 19, 2014

A bit of metal on my brown bag juts out like a shoulder. A loop of thicker metal hangs from it. The latter is linked to a strap that shapes bold curves alongside the outside of the more passive bag. It is as though a quick eel makes its way between the legs of a partly submerged rhinoceros, avoiding being squashed, but still locked to the life of the rhinoceros – still unable to precisely escape. Even when the waterhole is empty of terrestrial things, the eel has only one thought – less a thought than an instinctive inclination – to wait for the heavy legs that will provide its cue to swim and dance. The eel's bright eyes flash in the muddy, sombre, middling depths. It can sense the pull of the metal at its head and tail. It can sense the risk that this entails, not only of being crushed, but of being held forever by this scene, unable to overcome it, unable to imagine any other way of subsisting – ecstatic in this terminal state.

174 words

Clouds

April 19, 2014

Bright, sunny day – the plastic clouds return to my table, crumpled, shiny and soft. A yellow one at the rear billows open for a moment and then returns to its supplicant attitude. Translucent catacombs, with curved, straining arches. Just next to it, at the left, a white one resembles the bulwark of a ship - an ice-breaker heading through a black sea and still far from the prospect of ice. Or equally it may be likened to the looming presence of an albino shark, jaw open as it lunges up to bite some blithe seal. And finally a black one - squashed, black, uneven. It appears in the guise of the sea itself, pressing its amorphous mass down upon an empty fruit bowl. I have been shopping. I have walked amongst crowds of people. I have spoken to shop assistants. I have nodded at a former student as he walked down the hill towards a retro record sale. His girlfriend wore DayGlo stockings. I deliberately chose the slow way home.

170 words

Ghosts

April 19, 2014

She observed that the house probably had ghosts and asked me if I was afraid of them. I responded that I was not afraid of any ghosts that may haunt my home. I explained that I was happy here and that most likely the ghosts regard me with affection. Since then I have thought more carefully about this issue. I believe that the ghosts make no attempt to frighten me because they sense my genuine kinship with them. Like them, I am also on my own. I also move from room to room silently. I also occasionally wander around at night. There is nothing especially different about my situation. No more than an accident of time separates us. Indeed, it occurs to me that haunting is actually something that living people do. In imagining that I am alive I reproduce the imaginary conditions of death. I am my own ghost. Early this evening, I planted five more plants in the garden.

161 words

Fuck Off

April 20, 2014

Dusk was blue, red and pearly white above the sea. I headed away from the coast, north along the railway line. The creeks had been recently dredged – inky black with mud, stacks of reeds on the shore. A dark figure avoided me as we crossed in opposite directions on an unlit bridge – his hoodie pulled low over his head, his backpack strapped close. I walked across the grass to the end of Sandon Point. A piece of driftwood draped in seaweed blocked the path down to the beach. I noticed solar garden lights glowing in the sand beneath – purple, red and blue – and a dim shape beside them. A woman’s voice yelled at me, “Fuck off and leave me alone” and “I can see you up there, you bastard”. I briefly considered responding, but thought better of it, turned around and made my way back to the main bike path. Crossing another little bridge near the Bulli Caravan park, two little girls were skipping ahead of their parents. They bravely said hello to me as I strode past them.

173 words

Housework

April 21, 2014

Morning brings other thoughts. All thoughts disappear. I am no longer sitting in the sun. My mobile phone, angled slightly sideways, straddles the line separating the table proper from its extension. A book on the Oulipo faces me much more directly, its title neatly underlined by the top edge of my monitor. I really should read it. Jack runs a service called Top Chop Tree Services. His card is green. His number is 0455 294 499. Beneath Jack's card is a letter from my lawyers. I have yet to sign my will and pay the account. I know this already. I wonder if there is any point in opening letters anymore. I can imagine what they contain. I leave them unopened as reminders. All the fanciful places that no amount of lingering will lead me to. I have walked deserted Parisian streets. I have been ignored by touts. If only I could find some means of making sense of any of this. If only images could actually appear. Perhaps once the housework is done.

174 words

Prey

April 21, 2014

A fold in the top sheet of a spiral bound pad of lined paper, like a bed sheet pulled back to enable easy entry on a cold winter night. The branches of the trees are laden with snow. The street lights reveals footsteps on the path below. Everybody has left. They went today or yesterday. Their faces are obscure to me. The mountains are hidden beneath a pall of darkness. I walk up each of their steep, pine-bound paths simultaneously. My breath spreads though the night. Demons rise up from their hutches. They drag their long, filthy nails through the snow and across the rocks and the trunks of the trees. Limited creatures – they imagine they are predators when they are in fact prey. They are prey to the disappearance of the forest, of the mountains, of the cold night itself. I withdraw everything I have given them. I can no longer even recognise the bed – only the folded blank page.

161 words

Identity

April 22, 2014

The brim of my upturned hat describes an arc that is similar to the arc described by the most distant upper lip of the wooden fruit bowl. The porcelain bowl at the centre of the table appears as a proximate relation. It too is circular, but appears much less gloomy and withdrawn. Brightly yellow with blue lines, it has no patience for fruit. It contains loose items that would otherwise become lost. Apart from a few coins and my coffee cup, the remaining geometry is rectangular – books, pads, letters and so on. But none of this suggests conformity. Piles of books and paper are arranged as splayed sets of playing cards or as curious pieces of modern architecture with large, heavy concrete projections. A jutting roof curves up at a corner to rest on the slightly higher edge of the porcelain bowl. It suggests a level of tentative communication between unlike shapes – a point of passage between one form of abstract identity and another.

165 words

Thermos

April 22, 2014

A cockatoo screeches above the house. I'm wearing a black jumper with the sleeves rolled up. Actually this is untrue – most of the day my sleeves were up, but now they have slipped down. Luckily I have an adjustable spanner to fix the leaking gas bottle. Ended up buying a whole new connection when all I needed was a small rubber O-ring. Standing in the Bunnings queue with a lean mother and her painted daughters ahead of me. They place three wet citrus trees and a thermos on the counter. The daughter asks, “why the thermos?” The mother doesn't answer. She is typing in her credit card pin. Just now, the sky above my untrimmed hedge is pink and blue. The pink is rising higher, while the blue slips behind it like a dutiful friend. But already the blue, while never stepping forward, prevails. Dusk is a work of false obeisance. I was listening to a long piece of music but it finished a while ago.

166 words

Beasts

April 22, 2014

Scanning the table for the horizon and discovering only soft, puffy things or smooth, giggling things, or silent things. An axe, a concrete porch, an immense beast that pulls a plough. The Earth itself is upturned, tripping forward under its own weight. A snorting, bellowing, unevenly proportioned, ultimately gaseous and indeterminate thing. And with that, the wind lifts in the garden. The dark streets, the gentle surf, the twinkling lights. I had planned to write of hardship, but hardship leads nowhere. No amount of suffering can be safely assembled here. Instead I see a long, yellow extension lead poised at the top of a vacuum cleaner box. It has not collapsed into the box. It has not abandoned its sense of coiled resilience. Instead, with its multiple curved horizontal lines, it suggests an intemperate patience. If nothing will take coherent shape then let all lines be drawn. Let the spine of reality itself be sketched. Let the viscera that flows from its absent stomach become food for the poor.

169 words

Morning

April 23, 2014

If I am being honest, only the most minor things have changed since yesterday. My phone is almost certainly in a different position, although it still straddles the divide between the table proper and its extension, and it is still rotated some twenty degrees away from the perpendicular table edge. My wallet has also almost certainly moved. I seem to recall that it was on my left, now it is on my right. It lies resolutely closed to me. I can only just see the edge of some plastic cards. I do discern one new thing – a letter that arrived yesterday from the Australian Electoral Commission. Once again, I have not opened it. I must however have placed it in my back pocket last night. It has been folded a number of times. I placed it in my pocket to avoid throwing it out with the rest of my mail – all unwanted stuff. I will say nothing of changes in the garden or sky. I will do my best to remain simply attentive.

173 words

Smile

April 23, 2014

I follow a steep track up between two high cliffs. The ground is blue with the anticipation of cold. Patches of snow in the gneiss scree - to stop here even for a moment, to imagine this possible, to remember now that I passed this way. The turmoil of two bags fractured upwards, nothing like clouds. They thrust above the layer of paper and books beneath, which lies above the flat, brown tabletop. I must somehow continue. An endless series of switchbacks leading up to the pass. The mountains resemble the diminishing day - buckles attached to the grim rock, zippers running along their soaring aretes. I must pick my way between the peaks. I must find my way to the place where the difference between one place and another disappears. I must keep walking – the weight of countless homes on my back, but with their contents spilling out behind me. She smiled at me for several weeks. That's enough.

158 words

Latitude

April 23, 2014

Currents in the grain of wood indicate that the table is not simply a piece of furniture. It incorporates motion within its attitude of quiet reserve. In his late middle age – actually near the end of his life – the guitarist and writer, John Fahey, came to regard his early work as pretentious. He ate popcorn, drank too much beer and let his heart go to ruin. But this was also to permit his spiritual and corporeal self some latitude – some scope for change. It scarcely matters in the long term whether the change was ruinous or beneficial. I have been listening to his album, *The Dance of Death and Other Plantation Favorites*. His music has the capacity to return static objects to a state of flux. Now that the album is finished, I can hear the crickets whirring in the yard and the roar of the ocean in suburban streets. There are always too many surfaces and too many depths. Once again it is time to find my way elsewhere.

170 words

Intestate

April 24, 2014

A list of things to accomplish today would be useful. There are documents to prepare, include in agendas and distribute. I need a new front motorbike tyre and repairs to my car transmission. I should visit the doctor to attend to my hand. Good to drop in on a few people. Do some housework. And especially don't forget to phone the lawyers. After all, I have paid the account. Crazy not to have my name on the will. All I need to do is make an appointment and go in and sign the thing, but I have put off this simple task for months. Once I have neglected something for a sufficiently long time then it becomes tempting to see if I can neglect it altogether. After all, does it really matter if nothing is accomplished? Who will notice? How long will it take them to notice? By the time they notice it is quite likely that everything will have moved on, that none of this will be perceived as important anymore. Neglect is the impulse towards life.

178 words

Cloak

April 24, 2014

Necessity need not beckon. Beckoning assumes scope for choice. I am beckoned at – I can ignore the beckoning or allow myself to be drawn to the one who beckons. However, if the beckoner does not actually stand at a distance, but instead approaches me directly – allowing me no escape – then things are different. Better in this instance to conceive of the ruses – the subtle etiquette - of necessity. Scrupulously polite and reticent, but also utterly unconcerned by our interests, necessity makes a show of beckoning when it actually imposes itself. Arriving in a split second – in a darkness that cannot be countenanced – it is the stench of an ancient cloak. I can only follow. I would certainly follow if necessity were to appear in these terms, but instead I have this. The table spreads out before me tonight like a graveyard, like the stormy sea, like the temptation to sleep.

150 words

Leeches

April 25, 2014

I noticed a leech when I bent down to tie one of my shoelaces. I wagered that there was sufficient time to tie the knot before it reached me. I was just right and headed off quickly down the track. Walking, leeches have plenty time to get hold. Running, they have much less chance. There is a lack of coherent heat to summon their inexorable attention. Approaching my car, grappling for my keys, I recognised another leech cowering on my sock just above the shoe. I was surprised that it had not made the short climb to my leg. It seemed confused by the lack of sustenance. I pulled it off and it stuck to the end of my thumb like a small and frenetically waving additional finger. A final flick dislodged it. I removed my shoes and socks and threw them on the floor on the opposite side of the car. I washed my shoes with the hose when I got home. Drying on the rear doorstep, they look clean and unflustered now.

174 words

Dark Again

April 25, 2014

It is becoming dark again. This seems to be the time that I write – as the daylight slips away. I have no music. I have no lights. I can scarcely see the keys. Luckily I can just about touch type – one of my few skills. Looking up at the mandarins and apples roughly heaped in the porcelain bowl, it is as though I am looking through a dark camera viewfinder. The mandarins still have their bright highlights, but unnaturally subdued, even grey. The apples have altogether disappeared – nothing more than a subterranean geology. The two pineapples in the wooden fruit bowl are like fat things nestled in bed. The sound of kookaburras, small birds and cars. Always more cars as the day ends, as people rush about with their varied expectations of evening. And no doubt I should also be looking ahead, considering what comes next. I cannot simply sit in the gathering dark – and yet I can.

158 words

Shrine

April 26, 2014

Finally summoned the energy to drive out to Warrawong in search of a small table and a bookshelf. Ended up buying a toaster and some wooden coat hangers. On the way back, drove a bit further and stopped at Sandon Point. Thought I'd wander down to where I'd been yelled at the other night. Saw a fluoro hat and black jacket on one of the headland's stone memorials. Some weed killer had spelled "FUZZ" on the grass. The piece of driftwood was propped up beside the fence, leaving the public path open down to the beach. In the daylight, I instantly recognised the shrine – small fenced area, prominent surfboard, knick-knacks, the solar-garden lights, a newspaper with the headline, "Save the Little Angels". When I got home I did a Google search on "Sandon Point Fuzz". Turns out Fuzz had been a sixteen year old surfer who'd died there fifteen years ago. I have no idea who the woman who yelled at me was – a girlfriend, his mother, somebody else entirely?

170 words

Huddled

April 26, 2014

With the lights on, everything appears dead. The fruit looks inedible. All the books look unlegible. My hat seems to have sunk, lost confidence and become smaller. All the paper appears superfluous. Nothing at all seems necessary – except, of course, my wallet, keys and phone. This is a time that must be countenanced and endured. Dusk is past. Evening has imperceptibly begun. Darkness has lost its legs and become a heavy and incoherent thing. It is getting cold. I should put a jacket on. I looked at heaters today, but had no idea which to buy. I imagined not buying a heater at all. None of my friends would come around. I'd be wrapped up in warm jumpers all winter long – a huddled, stupid, lonely thing. But I am still disturbed by the light. I am concerned that nothing will happen at all, that there will be no coming of winter. Everything has come to a halt this insignificant night.

160 words

Apples

April 27, 2014

Just a single pineapple left. Some things shiver in the breeze – loose bits of paper, the covers of books. The apples are now visible. Utterly unconscious, they wait to be eaten. They abandon themselves to whatever happens. I cannot allow myself to slip into inactivity today. I thought I could deal with any eventuality. I thought that I would somehow discover the resources to manage, and particularly to manage on my own, but I am less certain now. It would be best to stop thinking. I need to make a small table. I need to buy a few things. Sometimes that's all it takes, but I'm wondering whether any of this can genuinely work any longer. Even to look outside seems to amount to little more than an effort to roll over and go to sleep. The sun plays tentatively on the grass and then withdraws. There are light puffy clouds in the sky. The breeze lifts. I had been thinking of going for a bike ride.

167 words

No Plug

April 27, 2014

I wait for something distinct this evening – some new object, some other light, some other set of sounds. But it is no good looking or listening for anything intently. Things have to approach me on their own terms and within the experience of repetition. It is now almost 6pm. I drove into town around the middle of the day and bought an ironing board. I went on a long bike ride late in the afternoon. The wind was blowing strongly from the south, which meant that the ride back was hard. Always the soft sound of crickets in the garden and the ticking of the clock. Everything seems utterly precarious tonight, although nothing of this takes adequate shape. I was hoping to have a bath a bit earlier, but couldn't find the rubber plug. I searched through all the drawers and cabinets. I even tried the metal kitchen plug, but no luck. I guess there may never have been a plug. I ended up having my usual shower.

168 words

Sentinel

April 27, 2014

The evil sentinel squats on a pillar above the castle gate. Blood, viscera and phlegm drape down his dark reptile skin. His towering wings lightly open and close as he lifts to survey the scene. No amount of darkness can protect the approaching army from his awful gaze. With nobody summoning him, with nobody commanding him, the sentinel swoops down upon the invading throng, slaughtering them swiftly one by one. Silence, the cracking of spines and the wet sound of organs against rock. The night proceeds infinitely. The desolate army continue to approach. The sentinel maintains his bloody watch. The townspeople lay down upon the streets sobbing and reaching for the soft and quivering certainty of one another. They dare not look up. They dare not see the shadow in the sky or acknowledge the awful fluids that rain down upon them. They dare not call the sentinel their own.

150 words

Layers

April 28, 2014

One layer upon another. Impossible to determine how many. Lifting one of them, I can see the high tide rushing in, flattening the soft sand – the waves miraculous phantoms, the horizon a fading flame. The dark sheets hang suspended and continue to fall. In the gaps between them, other scenes – inaudible and uncertain. Threadbare bits of material – the dull and elusive sky. The prevailing sense that nothing can be done. At some stage, there has to be some effort to escape this gentle suffocation. But for every layer that I lift another descends. They tempt like the velvet cloth of a happy marriage. They are as light as the baffled air. They calm all of my efforts to resist. Each step forward is heavier than the last. The weight of the layers gathers and collects. It separates and dissipates. I tell myself to imagine things differently, to not succumb to any of this, but I am soon enough laden and confused.

161 words

Freeway

April 28, 2014

I am listening to loud music. But the sound scarcely touches me. The blur of still objects. The darkness of incandescent lights. A gap between songs – something can be heard – but then the music starts again like a hairy animal. The evening is heavy of flesh and weary. If only it could carry itself off to decompose. The sliding glass door is slightly open, but with no promise of an unexpected guest. All manner of uncommunicative things. The blue wall. The white wall. The framed painting. I can't even look at the table. It is the forest at the edge of a massive freeway running through a place I have never visited. The only option is to keep driving, to press harder on the pedal. Been listening to the radio for so long, my ears are numb. No use switching stations. No use even imagining getting home. Fuck the forest and the misty night. Fuck this whole fucking road trip.

160 words

Fly

April 29, 2014

A fly at the far end of my table. It makes a rushed ground-level survey of where I have just been eating and then ascends to land on the bananas, searching for some slight weakness in their thick skins - then to the apples and mandarins, then to the chair. Seems late in the season for flies. What can it be looking for? It pauses for a moment on my Oulipo book. It sets off again. I regularly lose sight of it, only for it to suddenly reappear – on my anthology of conceptual art, back on the bananas, on the brown expanse of a bare section of table. How much longer can it make these circuits? Death seems such an immediate prospect – at once evident and denied in the urgency of the fly's motion. The fly is my companion this evening. It consecrates the tender surface of my fruit. It ascends high into the air near my clock. It lends tiny wings to the passage of an evening. I will be sad when it goes.

175 words

Bills

April 30, 2014

Today I had a bill for \$1,511 dollars. Needed a new center differential in my car. I withdrew \$1500 dollars in cash from my personal bank account, but was unable to pick up the car because the garage closed at 5pm. I had to get a lift home. I collected my mail on the way in. It included two bills. The first was one was from Sydney Water for \$223.85. A bar chart showed that I had consumed 237 kilolitres for the quarter. The previous owner had consumed 345 kilolitres during the same period last year. I switched my payment mode to direct debit so that I no longer have to worry about water bills. Instead they are automatically paid monthly. The second bill was from the NRMA. I must pay \$187.50 by the 24th of May to maintain roadside assistance for my motorcycle. But now I also need the same thing for my car, so I will have to upgrade my policy to include two vehicles – thankfully this comes with a 25% saving.

174 words

Siren

April 30, 2014

Cars are still rushing by, though it is 8:30pm. The chair to my right is laden with jackets. I hear a train siren, a car and another car. Four apples left to eat, three mandarins and two bananas. A louder siren. A pause between cars. The hum of the fridge. The crickets. Blood coursing through my ears – or that is what I imagine I am hearing, but how can this be? How can the motion of blood make a sound? A far more distant siren. I am becoming cold in a blue, long-sleeved shirt. The lightest breeze plays in at the door. A empty bowl of yoghurt and honey shines like the face of a person who has long since left me behind. She is sitting on a wooden deck on some late afternoon with the clouds bunched above the roofs of the near houses. We are looking at the same sky. We share the same sky. Another distant siren. A dog barking. The crickets. The wall clock. No cars at all.

172 words

Wave

May 1, 2014

A wave passes across the table. More accurately, the various things on my table – the latest to have been deposited there – together adopt the pose of a crashing wave. The piles of books are partly obscured – swept over by a red hydration pack, which pushes bits of paper up into a surfy froth, but in this case inexplicably jagged. Very appropriate that the most conspicuous of these crystalline shards is a water bill. It looms over an orange, art theoretical text, *The Situation*. Another shard suggests that I “Read our Annual Report”. It is in soft, environmentally sound green. I am also aware that things are slipping into chaos. The floor needs to be swept. The dishes need to be done. I have a pile of dirty washing in the washing machine. I have absolutely no plans whatsoever. Any moment is as good and as indifferent as any other. Perhaps I should go for a walk down to the ocean. It is cold enough tonight.

165 words

Pineapple

May 1, 2014

I wandered through the markets searching for the very sweetest fruit. I had sampled the most extraordinary peaches and plums, cherries as red and as delightful as coffins, pears and apples as gorgeous as praise, but it was the pineapples that genuinely concerned me. They were stacked in pyramids, with their green heads upright and curious. It was their squat, corpulent bodies that attracted me – orange and blue, yellow and red, speckled with the blackest black. I insisted that they were cut open. I demanded that they were split in half with a sharp knife and that the fibrous interior was removed to leave on either side, prior to the limit of their harsh, reptile skin, a liquid flesh of golden sweetness. Yet I scarcely ever tasted it. I left it untouched. I left it to the craven fruit mongers to consume. That is until I found the perfect pineapple, the most utterly delectable piece of fruit. Delightful oblivion.

159 words

Lament

May 1, 2014

I almost forgot my bike when I picked up my car this morning. The mechanic had to remind me that I had left it leaning against the wall. “People leave all manner of things here,” he told me. I drove through morning traffic and remained captive to currents of indecision. I drove all the way home, hours passed and then I was home again. My home is a dusty trail in which all manner of fates are lamented. I remind myself over and over that it is all my doing. Should the worst happen – should long resolutions spin slowly and abjectly through the night, only to become tangled in the fiery tendrils of dawn, it will not have gone unanticipated. The darkness of this awful night is now safely ensconced. It has no need to gather itself up, because it is already lucid and coherent. It speaks to me of her eyes. I cannot see her eyes. I cannot see the shadows in which she abides and disappears. I cannot see her endless implications.

174 words

Fox

May 2, 2014

I walked down to the beach to make some time disappear. Dark from the start and cold. The long, flat, scarcely visible footpath. The twinkling lights of distant freighters. On the way back I was held up at a level crossing. A passenger train heading south, a coal train north. Friday night is always full of the endlessly collapsing sky. The whole weekend moist and curled up for sleep. An empty glass at the far end of the table. An empty cup much closer. A startled fox at the edge of a deep forest, preparing to venture out, but suddenly seen. It contemplates retreating into the depths, but is unable to move – eyes shining like wet glass. The night collects every last negative thought – the more the better. I scarcely say a word. I am unable to recognise my voice when I am finally called upon to say something. I bow my head and allow myself to be corrected, all the time muttering dumb words of love.

167 words

Earthbound

May 3, 2014

Suddenly, despite all the evidence to the contrary, I find myself unable to fly. The morning is cold and grey. Rain looms. I should take some consolation in the poor weather, but only feel all the more incapacitated. Even turning my head and sitting very quietly, even examining the various books that I have not yet read, even attending to the curious posture of my brown bag or the tendency of envelopes to sink while their contents swim – absolutely none of this does any good. My only option is to conceive a world without flight, to accept this as a given. This must be possible. I am defined as much by my inadequacies as by my accomplishments. I went outside and brought in the yellow recycling bin. It was supposed to be emptied two days ago, but the truck only came this morning. The whole street had left their bins out, confident that they would have to be emptied eventually.

160 words

Zombies

May 3, 2014

“I know better than to let her go.” A lyric from Thurston Moore’s song *Benediction* on his 2011 album, *Demolished Thoughts*. A long, cold day when I should have shut-up. The dusk surf lifts smoothly and serenely in the face of an onshore wind. The clouds are pillows of weird, soft grey. A lone swimmer swims laps in the pool. I make my way up Campbell Street to the shops. Apart from a few naughty, young women, all the RSL diners stand and face west for one minute. Remembering the dead, they look like zombies themselves. I must not write to her. I must do nothing that provides any scope for further rejection. The sound of wind in the backyard. I have gained the capacity to see the future, to perceive the certainty of loss. But this loss is not general. It does not affect everything. Two people on bikes talk to one another and roll quickly down the hill. I have only a short distance to walk before turning right up my steps.

174 words

Patience

May 4, 2014

This morning the corridor is light. The mottled glass panels – white, yellow and red – cast blurry beams along the floor and draw glints of colour from the hall chandeliers. Further light pours in from the doorways of the front rooms. Yet it remains cold and windy outside. The wall clock continues to tick but is stuck on one o'clock. The second hand flickers on 49, never quite making it to fifty. I removed some of the clutter from the table, but this has simply exposed further layers of neglect – wayward things that cannot be arranged convincingly in stacks and a dense patina of dust. Something has to give. This situation cannot continue. Either the elements in this room – in this house, in the air – will discover their proper entropy or some new, unexpected element will intervene. Easy to experience the stalling of things and events, but patience will reveal other conditions – or at least lead me to the cusp of that revelation.

162 words

Alone

May 4, 2014

The roar of the wind in the trees. The interior of my home remains quiet and listens. After months of nothingness, I went on a long trip, running through Singapore airport to catch a connecting flight, hanging about in Paris before boarding a plane home. The chandeliers seem dim tonight. One of my coats hangs over a chair. That trip was months ago. It was the end of last winter, before I moved in here. Many things have happened since then. I repaired some walls and planted a garden. I bought a car. I had some people over for my birthday. The garden is entirely dark. Superimposed upon it, however, is the reflection of this room, which is bright in contrast. I listen once again for the wind. It comes in strong gusts. It tests my front door – as though somebody were standing there, expecting me to hear them knocking and let them in. But I know well enough that I am alone tonight. I have no guests or strangers calling.

171 words

Oranges

May 5, 2014

Three oranges intimately conferring – or so it would seem. Newly here and keeping their distance from everything else. But they have clearly lost contact with one another. Nothing genuinely links them together. Even as they seem to touch, they drift apart. One hangs back and gazes up towards the ceiling, its blue label a subtle barrier to communication. The other two appear more clearly aligned, their navels leaning into a common centre – an imaginary point of contact – but they are simply posing. Despite their orientation and healthy rotundity, their skin does not actually touch. The slight gap between them contradicts their attitude of mutual care. They are as isolated as the rest of the fruit – the pears that passively give in, the lone apple that gradually grows brown. The fruit are simply placed here to disappear. One by one they are eaten – or possibly discarded. Even in summoning the figure of the holy trinity, their communal relation is false.

159 words

Doubtless

May 5, 2014

I imagine counting the blue lines on a blank page. That's about all I can manage now as the night grows weary and taciturn. It spreads out in deceptively bright terms, like the vague onset of illness. I search all around for darkness. It is everywhere, but prefers not to properly manifest itself. Instead there is the shrewdness of visible things – born of the night, but not letting on. Only their passivity and immobility provides any sign of the space above and below. It is no use trying to describe a disordered arrangement of paper. Two non-corresponding edges – like saw teeth. Stepped pile of books. Black wires with a number of strong bends. I am very tired. But I can stare this scene down as long as anyone. I can remain here as long as necessary. No doubt if I look long enough – if I examine not only the scene before me but my heart – I will find a means of actually seeing the darkness, of not mistaking the night for something else.

173 words

Shed

May 6, 2014

I imagine sliding open the glass door, walking up the grass and past the citrus trees to the rear shed. I imagine entering the open door and standing on the tiled floor. Around me are garden tools and ripped up blue tarpaulins. Some timber is stored above my head. It is dark and I can see none of this. There is no real reason to be standing in the shed, so I walk back out and look over the fence and between the near houses to the sea. I stand there looking for a while, then go back inside and sit down here. But this never happened. I never moved from here. Nothing ever moves from here. The gathering hum of many silent moments. I turned off the music sometime ago. I had promised myself that I would clear away everything on the table, but everything remains pretty much the same. I wonder what kept me standing outside the shed for so long. Was I actually looking at the sea? Or was I thinking?

175 words

Squid

May 7, 2014

Rushing flow of white envelopes – unopened letters from the NAB and NRMA. My keys spread across them – a doomed and glittering squid. The black plastic tops are closely aligned and the silver keys trail down as tentacles. The metal loop that holds the keys together is pressed back by the sense of inadequate propulsion forward. Despite its maximum effort, expelling water, sand and milky internal fluids, the squid cannot dash off. It is transfixed – eyes rolling in its silky, black sockets. Suspended in the foamy torrent, it grows limp and unconscious. The instant that it expires, the foam recedes and the supporting envelopes become hard. The squid gains a frightening clarity. It is borne aloft on white planks. It becomes a solid thing with no relation any longer to water – no capacity to escape into the depths. It must be conceived entirely differently, but nothing can be said of its new identity.

152 words

Kinds

May 8, 2014

There are sets of things – four oranges, two candlesticks, a tree full of partially ripe lemons. There are also isolates – the single pear, the ageing apple, the plastic cover of a small container of picture hanging fixtures. Then there are the things that are distinct without joining a larger collection or withdrawing into singularity. The various bits of paper seem to manage this best. Although roughly associated, they refuse to form a neat pile or a properly common kind. There are envelopes and the letters within. There are notices, sheets of guitar tablature and even an essay on the ‘cybernetic view of cognition.’ But without more effort on my part – more sorting, discarding and arranging – none of these bits of paper discovers a social reality. Finally, there are those things that are neither collective, singular nor loosely arrayed, but that instead act as a media for other things to appear – the table, the blue wall, the glass door.

158 words

Path

May 8, 2014

In the woods behind the schoolhouse was a narrow track that wound off towards the near hills. I had followed it many times before until it became obscure. Unable to determine a viable route forward, I'd turn around, only to discover the retreat route itself branching and confused. At that point, I had no sense of which path led into the woods and which path led out of them. But despite this, each day I would find myself back again at the schoolhouse and walking full of hope into the woods. I felt certain that I would find my way through to the near hills. Even when the path broke down, even when I was hesitant and unsure, I expected to rediscover the proper way at any instant. The experience of repetition made no difference. It scarcely touched me. I was convinced that nothing could prevent me from walking where I intended. Now that I appear to be actually somewhere else, I realise that I was completely mistaken.

168 words

Mardin

May 9, 2014

I look down upon the table. A blue gym towel gives birth to a yellow and black screwdriver. My keys point in all directions. A black shopping bag resembles an incinerated clam. More books. I am piling up more books, just as I am piling up more unopened envelopes. What do the two piles have in common? They both contain items that I am unlikely to read. Listening to Turkish folk music again. I can remember the surprise of looking off towards distant snow-capped mountains on the bus trip to Mardin. The town stood on steep hills above the Syrian plain. To tower over one's neighbour. To render the other country visible to the horizon. In the same manner, the table grows more determinate as I stand at one end. Yet it is not another country. It is my only home. The glass door is ajar. I can hear chicken sizzling on the barbeque.

154 words

Stroll

May 9, 2014

Tonight I decided that I had seen enough of the sea, so I took a stroll through the suburbs. I wandered along tree-lined Chenhalls St, with its old wooden houses and distant view to the steelworks. I turned left towards the lights of Woonona Bowling Club and then veered right along the flat towards Holymount Park. In the darkness, I could scarcely see the knee height wire cable that needed to be crossed to continue on to the cricket oval. A long white cloud was visible just above the horizon to the south – impaled on an unlit playing light. The moon was surrounded by an oily haze. Crossing several playing fields, I found my way back to the Princes Highway. I followed Hale, Albert and Alfred St to Chenhalls and Gray St. Then I was home. I'd left the front light on, so the house was bright and hospitable. I walked up the blue steps to the small landing and entered a place curiously mine.

166 words

Landing

May 10, 2014

The high-pitched whine of my washer's spin cycle. Descending to land and then taxiing quietly along the tarmac towards the terminal. In this gentle, rumbling lull, Mr Airplane Man's album *Moanin* starts up. The occasional slosh from my washer in the gaps between songs. I pause to answer an email from a friend. The sun shapes angular patterns on my grass. I realise that the white wall is not consistently white – that all sorts of shadows and fields of intensity play across its surface. The blue wall is harder to differentiate. There is a dark upper section – a stratosphere and a more yellow troposphere, but none of this associates the blue wall definitely with the sky. If anything, I associate it with the depths of the ocean. Recently a large passenger jet – MH370 – disappeared from the sky and crashed into the Indian Ocean. Or at least this is the assumption. No traces of the plane have been found.

158 words

Pear

May 10, 2014

A remaining pear – perfect, with pink and red blushes on yellow, unblemished skin. Wide hips and buttocks, narrow curved shoulders, thin, elegant neck. Leaning like an odelisque against an unassuming mandarin. The pear is heedless of its various admirers – encircled by books – Hegel, Baudelaire and Perec. All manner of marginal things are drawn towards its bright and compelling presence. They jockey for position. They struggle to be close and, in being close, to gain a muted capacity to appear. While the pear itself is relaxed and indolent. It is completely unconcerned. It has no sense that it risks becoming over-ripe, that its luxurious existence must end. Instead it meditatively gazes across a wide-open bay of towels and coats towards an obscure hinterland. At the same time, it looks inward towards its own perfection. It experiences this perfection, without reflecting upon it or seeking adequate ways to articulate it. The pear is increasingly swollen. It pulses with beauty, darkness and putrefaction.

160 words

Tidying Up

May 11, 2014

I have gone through all my books and stacked them in two orderly piles towards the far end of the table. The most distant pile is roughly double the size of the other. I have also gone through all my letters, removing all the bills and placing them together in one place. In the process of tidying up, I discovered three pens – red, black and blue – beneath the various bits of paper, also a few coins, which together add up to 85 cents. Neither of the two bowls have moved. There is a pineapple and a large Banksia seedpod in the wooden bowl. The ceramic bowl contains small, easily lost things, as well as two bereft pieces of fruit – an apple and an orange. I expect that I will eventually eat the orange, but the apple, despite its proud sticker, will almost certainly go to waste. I had expected to clear my table completely, but realized that would be pointless. The contents of my table resist the abstract possibility of surface.

171 words

Evening

May 11, 2014

In the confused depths of the evening, beyond any of my childhood thoughts, beyond any of my adult aspirations, beyond anything determinate, I once again find my way here. Only here. The night exhales until all air is gone, until the moon itself is extinguished. Two chairs face toward the window, toward the garden, toward the the sense that nothing whatsoever will ever happen – that fashioning an event is unlikely and impertinent. And all the gates are closed. And only one window is ajar – my bedroom window, which opens on to the clouds and the memory of the sea. And cars still travel past – even at this hour. If only I could find my way within any of this. If only things were less scattered. If only less time had passed. I hear rushed voices in the midst of silence. I see figures meandering about in the darkness outside. The time descends. It plummets down an endless mineshaft, past flickering lights, past the limits of excavated systems.

167 words

Scribbling

May 12, 2014

I have looked forward to leaving this place for so long. In consequence, it has no loyalty to me. I may as well have left already. Still, some urgent red scribbling on a piece of paper catches my eye. I also notice the perfect alignment of a wine glass and an empty bowl of ice cream. But these observations instantly withdraw. They grow obscure and impregnable. I am forced to look away, if only to demonstrate some measure of decency. My easy relationship to this place is gone. I would like to object. I would like to insist that nothing essential has changed, but I know this is untrue. While everything remains scrupulously still, every aspect of this stillness is different. It is unhinged and shakes with rage. It is unimpressed by my words – most of all by my insincere expressions of love. Clear enough, after all, that nothing can make me stay - I am leaving on my own accord, I am already looking elsewhere.

166 words

Stems

May 13, 2014

The sky is blue - a strong morning blue. Huge orbs of soft, white water in the tree tops. The flight of a lone bird. I am trying to find my way through a forest, but it constantly disappears. This is not a forest of shade. This is not a forest of trails. This is not a forest to emerge from. I seem to be ascending a smallish, sun-drenched hill. The trees are scarcely trees. They have no branches or leaves, just towering, spear-like stems. I speak of spears, but cannot see the sharp tips. There is just the confusion of variously angled stems, the high glare from the hanging sacks of water and the relentless sound of birds. I cannot get to the top of the hill. I look up at the pendulous spheres. I try to make sense of them. I try to continue walking through the forest. I try to make each step count. Yet I am stuck within the motion of each step. If only the day were less bright.

174 words

Relieved

May 13, 2014

The nights are not innumerable. It is just that I cannot count them. Streams of molten tar pour down the road. I am stripped of all illusions. I would like to describe the table again. I would like to find adequate words to register this experience – which is also the negation of experience – but I can only make false starts. I have a heavy heart. My heart is laden with things. Each thing is itself laden with memories of neglect. I have received another letter addressed to the former owner of this house, Geraldine Harrison. It is a superannuation statement. Wonder when I will receive one next. A friend sends me a photograph of another place. I am relieved not to have to go there. Apart from anything else, my car needs a service. I am hoping to get some sleep. I welcome the darkness that approaches on all sides. I welcome the new moon that I cannot see. I lean forward in my chair.

165 words

Full Moon

May 14, 2014

Tonight is the fiftieth night. I have no need to write. The night lies beyond the limit of what is required. I have not hung out my washing. It is there on the chair, wet inside a laundry basket. Earlier this evening, I looked across the IGA car park towards a wooden fence and some trees. The moon was already above them. I wondered where it was heading. Last night, before the moon was quite full, I imagined an endless series of Christians being thrown to lions. No matter their terror, no matter their sad composure, their little heads exploded inside ravenous jaws. They were gone like grapes. And those left were mercilessly slaughtered with barbaric weapons thrown from the crowd. Only when all the Christians were dead – every doomed group of adults and children, every lone individual – did the audience come to recognize the terrible wrong that had occurred. At that point the scattered remains of the dead were gathered up for burial and the moon rose above the stadium – brightly alien and unmoved.

175 words