

PERSONAL LOGISTICS

CHRIS PALAZZOLO



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CONTENTS

Author Note	9
Tribute	15
Empire of the Inanimate	16
Law and Physics	18
On Seeing Beagle Gulf	19
Travel Ellipses	21
Outside Newman	22
Remote Highway	24
A 10-Year Study of a Single Shade of Blue	26
Halls Creek	28
Reading <i>Being and Nothingness</i> at Pardoo Roadhouse.....	29
Outer Space	31
Kununurra Footpaths	32
One Vote One Value	33
Collective	34
Demons.....	35
Kimberley Thumbnail Sketches.....	36
Nations in Negative.....	39
A Native Title Claim on a Community Notice Board, Wyndham....	41
Songlines and Sandy Floors	42
Gardening and Semiotics	43
My Garden.....	44
The Cricket	45
Walking the Dog.....	46

Hypokeimenon the Bull.....	47
Snake!.....	49
Reading <i>The Gitagovinda</i> in Kununurra.....	50
Shortcut Through Mirima Cemetery.....	52
Air Minus Time	53
The Remote Accountant's Husband	54
The Slut's Dream	55
Reading <i>To the Lighthouse</i> on Casuarina Foreshore, Darwin.....	56
The International Year of Glass.....	58
Tribute.....	60
Half a Planet Away	61
Kununurra Skies	63
Old Hands	64
The Queen Rain	65
Water Planet	66
Kimberley Curriculum	67
The Biggest World Under a Fan.....	74
The Last Streetlight and the Inexpressible.....	77
Acknowledgements	78

TRIBUTE

Light and air surround my pen
which will now ink some phrases
about water.

Water. Water it is
that makes the diodes emit light.
Water it is that makes the fan blades
feather the air.

Water; skeleton-crushing tonnes of it
falling every second on turbines.

It takes a hop, skip and switch-flick –
the intercession of a thrall'd eye –
to convert a river into a poem,
a quantum of the arrogance
that seized its flowing
in Paleocenic gorges.

Hear the roar of it
Feel the spray of it
in every word herein!

LAW AND PHYSICS

To get the car I have to sign.
So easy; five quick squiggles on forms
to bind me and the machine
in a kind of circuitry of power limits;
traffic codes and capped explosions
granting me free passage on the roads.
The terse friendliness of the salesman,
his steady hand lifting the forms
for my shaky hand to sign, declares
that the birthright of all men
will be conferred on me
when those forms receive my unique
ink-marks; the constrained freedom
of internal-combustion propulsion,
the precision bleed and concentrated
firepower that opens the cosmos
like a fruit. To each man in this yard
it's as thoughtless as a tendon flex –
a wrist flick that pushes a pen
and turns an ignition key
starts another industrial revolution.

ON SEEING BEAGLE GULF

My first glimpse of a sea
 since our migration didn't comfort me
 with cold oblivion; it was blue
 as it shouldn't be, too smooth, too gassy –
 and projecting my swimming
 child phantasm of a life that may never
 have been was impossible.

That has always, *always* been
 my flashing other being,
 the anti-me that's me on the anti-shore.
 He drowned. I woke.
 Each one cancelled the other
 and yet each one happened,
 and the drowning water, black and sheer,
 I'm always in it now
 even as I mark the fortieth year
 of the life I was hauled onto a beach to live.

Silly isn't it. That northern sea
 with its wavelets obscured by steam,
 looked like an abstraction, a schema
 of a sea, paradoxically hard,
 as if the water had frozen at 24° Celsius
 to form an oblique pane
 at the vanishing point of my middle age.
 Maybe it was just my aging eyes

HALLS CREEK

This is the one-hand-clap town,
 the one you wonder is it really here;
 a hush so deep on these wild wide streets
 that bloke in the mulga
 could be the last resident leaving.

You find others; eat fish and chips
 and drink coke in a beer garden
 with a desert beside the fence;
 you make the AGM with minutes spare,
 deliver the reports before 'God's Work'.

But you never completely unwind;
 the to and from is too long for that;
 the here too small to really exist
 and work stress absurdly
 disproportionate to its size,
 while always on your eardrum
 the engine thrum from the shock
 of kilometres that never get shorter,
 for a town that never gets closer
 until you're in it.

READING *BEING AND NOTHINGNESS*
AT PARDOO ROADHOUSE

Nothing is going to save you
from no longer being,
for there is being
only non-being,
and that is being – that's it –
always and forever (until death) –
 being is fleeing
and its residue,
watching from non-being,
an echo designated consciousness.

Consciousness. Yes! Mourning
the missing now. It all makes sense.
That fluorescent bar makes sense,
that tv bracket makes sense,
in a donga the very essence of which
is a fraught relationship
 to Here. After all, what's
my Here, my Now,
after 1900ks of driving?
 Not landscapes,
 Not scenery – a car cabin
ponging of sweat
and spilled thermos coffee.

I saw Port Hedland today
 for the first time in my life.
I didn't really see it

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