

“Horatio Dawn” and “Invisibly Somewhere Between the Two Clauses”

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Volume One: Novel

“Horatio Dawn”

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PART ONE

1. Abstract

“Horatio Dawn” is a novel set in the late seventeenth century and draws on the figure of the pirate, scientist and explorer William Dampier and his “discovery” of Australia. This imaginary work examines the meeting of British people in the Enlightenment period with Aboriginal people and, in doing so, dramatises the complexities of first contact and its after-effects in modern Australia. The direct influence of Dampier on Australian colonisation was real. Adrian Mitchell notes that Dampier’s view of Australia as a land of lack (as a place that needed to be invested with labour, farmed, built upon and changed) “influenced the attitudes of Joseph Banks, Matthew Flinders and the early European settlers a century later; and over the years [Dampier’s] reservations found their way into school texts and informed the attitudes of generations [in Australia]” (ix). This view of the Australian land as needing to be developed resulted in both violence towards Aboriginal people and, as Henry Reynolds argues, denial of that violence around the end of the nineteenth century, as Australia moved towards federation (60). By 1962 this had, according to Stanner, become a “cult of forgetfulness practiced on a national scale” (189).

“Horatio Dawn” starts with a pirate named Cutstone washing up on the shore of the protagonist Horatio Dawn’s farm. Cutstone, while recovering, shares stories about exotic places and mentions the great Captain William Dampier. After Cutstone departs, Dawn becomes sick with plague and subsequently experiences visions. He starts to lose his mind as he drifts from his family’s farm in the north of England towards London. He undergoes various picaresque adventures on the road. In London he meets a strange man named Joram who wears a plague doctor’s mask. Eventually Dawn finds work as a clerk at the archives of the East India Trading Company. The Company organises for Dampier’s release from jail in order to lead a voyage to New Holland. Once they depart for the new land, the narrative fragments. They capture a second ship that Joram decides to captain. Dampier slowly goes insane as he comes to

identify with Jeronimus, the psychopathic murderer who led the brutal *Batavia* mutiny. During a wild storm, lightning strikes Dampier and he becomes incoherent. The crew is planning a mutiny when land appears and Dampier, Dawn and Samantha are put ashore. When his ship arrives, Joram starts to hunt all three. Dampier dies while starting a large bush fire. Eventually they make it back to London for a fateful return to the Royal Society's headquarters and the archive. Dawn is captured, given a mock trial and executed. A final fragmented section presents the monster of William Dampier as he emerges from the grave and travels across the continent to arrive at Sydney and witness the foundation of the settlement.

The accompanying exegesis starts with a general introduction to William Dampier, featuring major events in his life. I examine traditional Dampier scholarship and biographies to see how he is consistently presented in the heroic mode as an enlightened man of reason. I consider his effect on history and critique his first book, *A New Voyage Round the World* (1697). In this work, Natural Law philosophy can be seen as forcing Dampier to distance himself from Indigenous people in order to appear "untainted" by other races. An examination of earlier drafts shows how these references have consciously been edited out. In his next book, *A Voyage to New Holland*, Dampier again removed references to violence; this was to assist him in beating a court-martial for excessive cruelty. It should be noted that during this voyage he killed Indigenous Australians. Following this, I look at Dampier's effect on English literature, including the works of John Locke, Jonathan Swift and Daniel Defoe. Locke's writings about private property certainly influenced Dampier's views of Australia and, I argue, Locke's idea of a *tabula rasa* was transferred onto the landscape of Australia: meaning that the *tabula rasa* of Australia remains empty until a man such as William Dampier can arrive and begin filling it with his writing. Making Dampier's task to write Australia into existence. After this, I examine the absorption of these ideas by Joseph Banks and Matthew Flinders and their influence on successive generations of Australians.

To locate this knowledge in the field of historical fiction, I undertake a critical reading of three historical novels that feature William Dampier as the main character: *Recognition* by Dijon Deverell; *Brother Captain* and *The Cygnet Adventure*, both by Alan Chester. To aid with this critique, I utilise Borges's figure of Pierre Menard and acts of literature that aim for "total identification" with past historical periods (Borges

65). All three of these historical novels present Dampier in the heroic mode and, therefore, are compromised by their uncritical representation of Dampier as an enlightened man of reason. The modality of historical fiction has always been a contentious issue in Australia. By examining historical novels that feature Dampier, we can understand just how complex the question of legitimate historiography is. After this examination I undertake a Sebaldian reading of these novels by incorporating a reading of Horkheimer and Adorno (along with Coetzee). Building on this I then fuse these ideas with Michel Foucault's idea of a counterhistory in order to chart how a new historiography has emerged that seeks to reveal what has been formerly ignored or wilfully misrepresented by traditional historiography. I examine how Don DeLillo reformulates Foucault's idea of a counterhistory in his novels *Libra* and *Underworld* and puts back into his American historical novels what has been purposefully hidden. I also incorporate Christina Brooke-Rose's idea of a historical novel as palimpsest history that aims less to accurately capture the past than to use the past as a platform with which to expand that novel's reader's perceptions. Finally, to situate these ideas in an Australian context, I examine Rohan Wilson's *The Roving Party* as a case study. In this Australian historical novel, Wilson presents his work as a supplement to the historical record that undertakes a crucial task (outside of the scope of traditional historiography) of presenting the human experience of the past.

Mitchell, Adrian. *Dampier's Monkey: The South Sea Voyages of William Dampier including William Dampier's Unpublished Journal*. Wakefield Press, 2011.

Reynolds, Henry. *Forgotten War*, NewSouth Publishing, 2013.

Stanner, W. E. H. *The Dreaming and Other Essays*. Black Inc., 2009.

2. Acknowledgements

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The Octavio Paz extract is taken from “San Ildefonso nocturne” translated by Eliot Weinberger in *Selected Poems* published by New Directions, 1984.

The quote “but the actual shooting has taken place invisibly somewhere in between the two clauses” on page fifty six is taken from Adrian Mitchell’s *Dampier’s Monkey* published by Wakefield Press in 2010.

Dampier quotes are taken from William Dampier’s *A New Voyage Round the World* originally published 1697 and republished by Argonaut Press in 1927.

3. Declaration of Originality

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree. I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968. I also give permission for the digital version of my thesis to be made available on the web, via the University's digital research repository, the Library Search and also through web search engines, unless permission has been granted by the University to restrict access for a period of time.



“William Dampier” by Thomas Murray.

PART ONE

I

In 1676 a floating body drifts to the pebbly black shore of Cutter's Bay. A small boy watches its approach with two warm brown eyes, wearing a coat that looks like monkey's fur and a battered wide-brimmed hat made from felt, his hair spilling through a large hole. He climbs on top of a yellow moss-covered rock to see. The body sways back and forth like a babe in its mother's arms.

The retreating waves make the polished rocks rustle and tap against each other. A large wave forces the body higher up onto the shore. The boy descends, creeping closer. Now the body rests beyond the reach of the surf. Stillness. Loose driftwood is entangled with the limbs and seaweed is wrapped around the neck and the face. The chest slowly rises and falls with faint breaths. The boy picks up a pebble and launches it to soar; it gently lands on target, bounces three times onto the hard beach, disappears among rushing waves: no response. The boy steps away from the rock and approaches to see that it's a man's body in a heavy dark blue coat, black canvas shirt, brown pantaloons and leather boots. Warm sunlight.

'You're still alive?' Horatio asks and gently pushes the body with his foot.

The stranger contorts and coughs, spluttering out phlegm. Two blue eyes open and he looks around the beach with confusion. Moving like a drunk, he uses his right hand to scrape his face clean. The boy steps away, removing his shadow, making the man wince as his right lapel falls open, revealing a large knife; its handle glinting with sunlight – sparkling in syncopation with the distant horizon. Engraved into the pommel, a grinning eyeless skull. The man raises a quivering hand. 'Help me,' he says.

‘What’s your name?’

‘Cutstone.... Help me up.’ Swamped with pain, he can barely speak.

The boy does not move.

‘Don’t be afraid. What’s your name?’

‘Horatio Dawn.’

Cutstone swallows. ‘Help me Horatio Dawn.’

The boy runs from the beach. As he moves the soft grass depresses beneath his feet, making him bounce as he pushes forwards, continuing until he can see the smoke from his Uncle’s smith shop. He cuts through a field of communicating sheep – their bleats streaming out as music. Getting closer until the smell of burning wood and metal envelopes him: arriving with a hot, red face.

He opens the door and sees his Uncle Tom wearing a brown leather apron and pouring molten brass into a mould; it runs out like thick burning blood, illuminating the man’s creased face.

‘Uncle Tom, a body has washed up on the beach,’ Horatio says, walking through a fierce wall of working heat.

The man looks at his nephew with two bright green eyes glinting like burning orbs. ‘And who watches our sheep?’

‘They’re just eating grass.’

Uncle Tom sighs. The mould of molten brass is dimming, removing the sheen from his gaze. ‘And you’re telling me about some dead body on the beach?’

‘Cutstone’s body.’

‘Who?’

‘Cutstone that’s his name.’

‘A man?’

‘I think Cutstone is a pirate,’ the nephew surmises while staring at the chalk brick chimney.

‘He is not a pirate.’

‘He is a pirate!’

‘Nonsense! Just a drunken sailor who fell overboard and washed up here.’

Uncle Tom picks up the mould that is becoming dull and sets it near the window. The heat rises like faint spirits and condenses across the glass pane.

‘Uncle Tom, if we don’t help him then he will die.’

Taking off his apron he replies, with resignation, ‘Well, let’s go and meet Cutstone.’

They walk in silence to the beach. Uncle Tom walks with large, swift steps, swinging his arms as he goes. Horatio is smiling. When they arrive at the flock, Uncle Tom whistles and claps loudly. The scared sheep open a path then trail behind, baying out for feed.

The beach pebbles click beneath their feet. A shadow of a flying bird dips and rises, then stretches over the stone. Pushing forwards, there is Cutstone.

Steam is still rising from his body. Cutstone has dragged himself away from the sea, leaving a long trail. Uncle Tom stands close to Cutstone, shading him as, with weak breaths, he repeats his plea, ‘Help me.’

‘Where’s your ship?’ Uncle Tom asks.

Cutstone rolls over with his face twisted in pain; his body arching to the right and the left, like an exposed earthworm. He digs his elbow into the pebbles and raises his shoulders until he is sitting with his right hand buried in the beach and the arm

rigid with support.

‘I think my back is broke. I crawled up like a seal.’

Uncle Tom looks on with concern.

‘Uncle Tom this is a parable,’ Horatio exclaims.

‘Quiet,’ his uncle replies.

‘You’re to play the Good Samaritan.’

Cutstone grimaces at Horatio.

‘My nephew tells me that you are armed.’

‘No.’

‘A large knife?’

‘All sailors carry knives.’

‘Surrender it and you can be my guest.’

Cutstone uses his left hand to open his coat, revealing the glinting hilt.

‘Why is there a grinning skull?’

‘I don’t know. Won it in a card game in Jamaica. Didn’t even notice it at first.’

A sharp steady breeze is pushing small grains of sand into Cutstone’s hair.

‘We have a warm pen next to our farmhouse. You can rest there.’

‘I am obliged to you.’

‘But first surrender that knife.’

Cutstone nods. Uncle Tom reaches down to grip the handle; the leather groans as the knife is extracted. It has no rust marks and is finely honed with a cracked bone handle; and a grinning skull. He passes it to his nephew who holds it with the blade pointing down. It’s heavy and feels solid in his grip. Uncle Tom picks up Cutstone. ‘Bring in the sheep while I carry him home.’

As Uncle Tom departs, Horatio starts to move the sheep back to the pen. Each

sheep has a unique call. The one singing now is white and fluffy with a distinctive black spot circling its left eye, but hates being touched; most are stubbornly annoying. Horatio pushes through them, waving the knife to herd them along the single rock wall that will lead back to their farm. They follow it up the hill, past the smith shop and into a pen that is by the side of their shabby farmhouse. With all the sheep inside the enclosure Horatio lifts and closes the gate, fixes it in position with a metal peg. He then carries the knife into the kitchen where Uncle Tom is hanging the man's wet coat next to the stove.

‘This coat feels heavier than it looks,’ Uncle Tom says.

Horatio places the knife on a wooden shelf next to the bone mugs. Uncle Tom looks at the knife, but does not touch it.

‘Where is he?’

‘Our guest is safe in the animal pen. He can't sleep here. I don't trust him. I won't...’

‘How can he heal, out in the cold?’

Uncle Tom thinks while staring at the stove, and finally replies, ‘Take him out the field brazier.’

Horatio collects the brazier and carries it to the pigpen. Cutstone is gently snoring from within a tightly wrapped blanket. He uses a flint to direct sparks into the straw, and blows as it starts to smoulder. A pop of flame breaks out. He holds this torch inside the brazier until the kindling crackles into fire.

‘Where's my coat?’ Cutstone barks out.

Horatio looks around: Cutstone is awake and his blue eyes are burning with anger.

‘Drying near the stove.’

‘So dry me next to it.’

‘I can bring you soup.’

‘I want my coat.’

‘Are you cold? That’s the thickest blanket we have.’

‘My coat!’

‘I will’ he says and quickly returns to the kitchen. A thick mutton and turnip soup is on the stove. The boy crumbles in yesterday’s bread, fills two bowls and carries them to the table.

‘Is one of these for Cutstone?’ his uncle asks.

‘Why do you like him so much?’

‘I think for a story?’

‘Don’t get attached. What story?’

‘For his story. For stories. I want to hear stories about where he’s been.’

‘Well these bowls are ours, he can eat his later.’

Horatio sits in front of the smaller bowl. Uncle Tom passes him a spoon.

‘It’s his ankle that’s gone,’ Uncle Tom tells him as they eat, ‘twisted right around. And there may be something broken in his back. He walks around like a decrepit man, despite his age.’

‘Did his ship sink?’

‘I doubt it. I think he was so drunk that he just fell overboard, or he was so useless that his companions pushed him off.’ Uncle Tom lowers his chin and picks up the bowl to drink the rest of the soup.

‘He wants his coat back,’ Horatio says.

‘Finish your meal and then take it to him. But don’t bring him his knife. That

stays here.’

Horatio looks at the remaining stew and quickly scoops up the meat and vegetables, slurps up the juice then drops the bowl, so it spins in a circle.

Removing Cutstone’s coat he can feel that it’s slightly damp but warm. Placing it over his shoulder – the aroma of smoked wool – he picks up the third bowl of soup and carries it outside.

The moon above the pigpen has a grey warty face with a sliver of silver missing from its side – almost fully ripe. Inside, Cutstone is awake, sitting up with the blanket wrapped around him. The brazier has burned down into red coals.

Horatio puts down the soup. ‘Your ankle is twisted right around. Sheep sometimes have the same problem, but we just go ahead and kill them.’

Cutstone frantically grabs the coat from Horatio’s shoulder and runs his fingers along the inner lining. ‘Do you have any crutches?’

‘Don’t think so.’

‘So how about this? Tomorrow you go to that copse of trees at the top of distant hill and you cut down two stout sticks of equal length and lash them together to make me a third leg.’

‘Why?’

‘I need it to carry me to London.’ Cutstone holds the lining in his two hands and, through a small opening, massages out something solid. He holds up a small coin between thumb and forefinger and Horatio can see, by the dim light of the fire, strange foreign markings.

‘Here’s payment for you.’ Cutstone places it in Horatio’s hand. It feels heavy. Warmth radiates into his palm.

‘Tomorrow go into town and get me something to drink, some tobacco, bacon

and eggs.’ Cutstone retrieves a pipe from his coat pocket. He puts his nose over the pipe and breathes in deeply.

‘But this is my coin. I need one more to buy all that stuff.’

‘Are you greedy boy, or just stupid?’

The boy waits.

Cutstone stares at him in silence. ‘Here’s another for the goods. Better buy a lot. I will know otherwise.’

‘What kind of coin is this?’ Horatio asks, trying to inspect it in the gentle light.

‘Spanish gold! Bite down and see.’

He does and tastes the coin; no corresponding marks remain. After hiding it in the sole of his shoe he gathers more wood for the brazier and returns inside. Uncle Tom is sleeping close to the stove.

‘Lock the door from the inside,’ Uncle Tom mumbles out.

Horatio slides the bolt across then takes off his shoes and places them next to the door. He hangs his coat, shirt, pants and hat and settles into the smaller bed.

II

The next day Horatio returns with the goods and hands them over. Cutstone quickly rummages through to retrieve a twisted stick of tobacco and, breaking off a chunk, chuckles as he crumbles it into his pipe. Removing a glowing stick from the brazier, he holds it to the leaf and keeps pulling on the bit as clouds of fragrant smoke bloom. With one large draw he holds out his expanded chest then breathes out slowly, making the smoke emerge from his nostrils as two white lances.

Horatio removes a bottle of rum from his coat pocket.

‘Where’s the bacon and eggs?’ asks Cutstone.

‘In the kitchen.’

‘So begin to cook. What am I paying you for? Raw eggs?’

Horatio cooks enough for three. In the middle of the plate, glittering in a bed of fat, are four long rashers of bacon with four eggs, domes of yolk, yellow and round like small suns. Uncle Tom sits down and motions for Horatio to join him. They eat noisily, without speaking. After finishing Uncle Tom sprinkles biscuit crumbs over the remaining wet yolk and hands his nephew a spoon to scoop up the delicious wet mass. After clearing away the plates, he cooks two more eggs and two slices of bacon in the left over fat. Once the bacon is crispy he carries it to Cutstone, along with a cup of foaming milk. By now the bottle of rum lies on its side. Cutstone is drunk.

‘Did you and your uncle have ya fill of me food?’

‘Yes, thank you.’

Cutstone eats the first egg, followed by bacon then drinks a mouthful of milk. After smacking his lips, ‘Haven’t had bacon and eggs for months.’

‘Were you long at sea?’

‘Being at sea is always long. Even when it’s not, it still is. Out in the blank odourless ocean time distorts.’

‘Did your ship sink?’

‘No. I jumped overboard.’

‘Why?’

‘There was an outbreak of plague on board. So, late at night when I had duty, I stole all these gold coins from the armoury and slipped them into the lapels of my coat. As soon as land was sighted overboard I went. And then the long swim to get to shore.’

‘Did you catch it?’

‘No, they didn’t get me.’

‘No, I speak of the plague. Did you become sick?’

‘Can’t get it. See I was sick with plague years ago but survived. And once you had it, and you pull through, you can’t get it again.’

Cutstone picks up the other rasher of bacon with his fingers and nimbly puts it into his mouth, followed by the final egg. He swallows the food and finishes the rest of the milk.

‘How about them crutches?’

‘I’ll start today.’

‘I need to get on a ship.’

‘There’s none around here.’

Cutstone smiles. ‘No, boy. I need to get to London and sign up for a new ship.’

‘Take me. I always wanted to join a ship.’

He takes another swig. ‘Have some,’ Cutstone tells him, offering him the bottle.

Horatio takes it and brings it to his mouth. He can smell burnt sugar. He takes a large swig, scrunches up his face and spits it out.

Cutstone takes the bottle back again. ‘Too early I see. Best not to waste any more.’

The foul taste remains. He picks up the glass of milk and pours a faint dribble into his mouth, to try and neutralise the lingering bitterness.

‘If you can’t get sick why jump?’

‘Because once it became known that we were a plague ship we would be fired

upon by the King's Navy. When the plague hits London it's like Hell has opened up to bleed out into the streets.

'You've seen a plague outbreak?'

'Why do you think I decided to go to sea all those years ago?' Cutstone takes the cup off him. 'Now, as agreed, get working on them crutches.'

Horatio walks to the copse with a hatchet. He scans the tops of trees. Walking around beneath the trees' shade he sees a stout straight branch that would work as a staff. He chops it free. Above him is another branch, so he climbs and cuts it loose.

Not knowing the length from Cutstone's armpit to his feet, Horatio returns to the pigpen and, finding the guest sleeping, starts to measure his height.

Cutstone moves, 'Captain Dampier?' he asks while still sleeping.

Horatio stops what he is doing and looks over. Cutstone does not move – then the snoring returns.

Horatio measures the correct length and cuts the two staffs. Using a hammer and chisel he cuts tiny joints in the wood then fits a crossbar across the top. He lashes the feet together to make a crutch and rolls up an old torn shirt to cushion the point of contact. While Cutstone continues to sleep he takes a pot of oil and lathers it, then leaves it leaning on the wall to dry in the mid-morning sun.

By the time Horatio returns from moving the sheep to new pasture Cutstone is standing up with the crutch installed under his right shoulder. The boy claps with pleasure.

'It's well made. Very sturdy,' Cutstone says as he leans forward and takes his first steps. His broken foot still dangles helplessly in the air. He slowly makes his way

to the farmhouse, touches its wall with his hand and then walks back to the pigpen.

‘I will take your leave.’

‘You’re going already?’

‘Be a good lad and fetch me knife.’

‘That stays in the kitchen.’

‘But how can I defend myself if robbers set upon me on the long road to London? You have rendered me helpless.’

‘Uncle Tom says...’

‘It’s my knife. Did the Samaritan steal from the beaten man?’

Horatio retrieves it. As Cutstone slides it back into the sheath, Dawn asks, ‘Who is Captain Dampier?’

Cutstone looks up at him suddenly.

‘What do you know of him?’

‘Nothing. It’s you who mentioned his name while sleeping.’

‘Did I?’

Horatio nods.

He thinks with a knotted brow. ‘Captain William Dampier is the greatest navigator that this land has ever seen.’

‘Where is he now?’

‘Far, far away. He may have even sailed right off the map and into paradise.’

‘Paradise?’

‘No one knows.’

‘Captain William Dampier,’ Horatio repeats.

‘Now keep that coin hidden, Horatio Dawn! You can get drunk, buy a whore or even get yourself out of this shithole of a farm.’

‘We can go to London together.’

Cutstone laughs, ‘No, not this time. I must travel alone.’

‘My uncle is working. Should I fetch him?’

‘Best not.’

‘I will tell him that you said goodbye.’

‘Yes, you can do that.’

Cutstone walks towards the dirt road. Reaching it he turns south and continues while the boy watches him slowly retreat into the distance.

III

Horatio keeps the Spanish coin hidden in his shoe then returns to the pigpen and, as the sun strengthens, lies down to sleep.

In his dream a large faceless man appears whose shadow seems to engulf the land that he is walking upon. He is holding a pen and writing with such manic intensity that his ink is on fire. It drips down to the ground, spreading the flames so that this foreign land is now burning and now he is walking among the flames and furiously looking around at the world as he continues to write from within this furnace. Now the paper that he is writing on is burning and this faceless man starts to dance within the flames and he appears enraged and possessed as he dances and dances....

He wakes and feels a line of uncomfortable irritation running across his neck. Running his right index finger along his skin, he feels a series of tiny bumps growing like green buds on a new stalk. He walks across the pen, stepping around the pigs, frantically searching for additional signs. At the trough he scoops up water with

cupped hands and throws it over his face. As he washes his skin clean of the sweat and the pig's filth the tips of his fingers register the presence of more lumps on his neck. He stops and looks at the animal; it mimics his glare with two sharp black eyes. Horatio uses more water to wash his neck clean. The dirt goes but the markings stay. He touches them – hard painful shells that register pain beneath the pressure of his searching fingers.

Moving quickly to the sheltered section of the pen, pushing away the school of brown and pink piglets, he sits on a raised platform. A pig snorts from below, breaks the silence. He removes his shirt and notices that extensive buboes are spread out like arabesques down his neck, over his chest and stomach. They are particularly painful in his armpits and groin. A large one grows where his neck meets the chin and it quivers in beat with his own sounding heart. His throat spasms, the resulting cough making his innards feel that they will crawl up his throat and drop into his mouth.

‘Where is Cutstone?’ Uncle Tom calls as he walks towards him.

‘Don’t come near me!’

‘Why?’ Uncle Tom asks in return.

By now Horatio can see his crinkled face. ‘Stay back. I have the plague!’

IV

From the depths of his sickness he has a feverish vision of *a fleet of ships entering a harbour surrounded by a pristine wilderness. Lowering the sails they slow to stillness. The sky is deep, open and blue. A long boat, filled with red coat soldiers cuts silently through the green water, the sunlight glistening off their muskets and swords. The boat hits the sand and the red coats jump out to form a large circle. The bend their*

knees and aim their muskets into the bush. Scanning for any trace of movement – but the landscape seems dead: except for the pulsating buzz of insects and screeching bird songs emerging from the trees. The sounds seem to be made in warning, in horror. Horatio can see, growing around the soldiers' dirty white collars, large and pulsating buboes.

The vision fades and leaves him feeling weak. Horatio looks at the mud, the animals and returns to sleep.

Waking the next day he remains in a pitiful state. Buboes are everywhere. The bugs that live in the mud hop across puddles to eat the scraps that fall from the pig's mouth: small hairs cover the pink pig's body and by stretching out his left hand he can feel its warm skin, soft amidst the hair. The pig does not react to his touch but continues eating, allowing the caresses to continue.

V

The brazier is dark and cold. As the dim sun retreats Horatio expects not to survive the coming night. The moon is large and cold like a polished white river stone.

VI

O

O

O

MOON

Red like burning fire

Incendiary cotton clouds

Sun rising, scattering darkness

Disc shining,

bringing

dawn.

VII

On the next day he is able to stand and stretches his fingers towards a faded sun, reaching for it. Collecting water from the tank he holds the wooden bucket over his head, drenches his body. It flows down and around the various ruptures. He rubs away the congealed pus and discovers a series of fine indentations across his chest and his neck, as if someone has heated a blade and run it across the skin, making patterns. He enters the farmhouse to announce his recovery but hears no response from Uncle Tom. Then he sees him, sleeping in the bed. Uncle Tom does not respond to his words and the buboes across his skin are extensive: the mouth open and dark and dead. Horatio pulls up the blanket and leaves the cold kitchen.

He wants movement – the simplicity of putting one foot before the other warms his body with momentum. He begins to climb the quiet yellow hills. On top, with the cool wind cutting across his face, he continues across the apex and descends into the barley fields. The sun's rays illuminate the crop's heads, to create an atmosphere dripping with light. With his right index finger he brushes the head of a tall buzzing stalk and steps back to watch the released seeds soar into the distance.

Back in the farmhouse Horatio rolls up his blanket and his spare shirt. He

picks up some rope, a knife and a brass cup. The Spanish coin remains safely hidden in his shoe. He climbs up the quiet side of the dale and follows the road south, avoiding other people, especially the growing presence of soldiers. This road will take him all the way to London.

VIII

Horatio Dawn walks for days with little to eat but grass and scavenged scraps from the fields. The sun arrives in spots scattered across the forest's floor. Small bugs move beneath the ground covered with leaves and twigs, making the surface palpitate like hundreds of working hearts. Then the trees thin, revealing a green plateau with clouds unfurling their grey cotton bodies along the sky.

One by one a flock of noisy birds disappear beneath a large boulder. He climbs around it and, finding the hole, drops down to land in a dark pool. After chasing the birds out he walks to the cave's mouth. Stopping where the sun enters, he sits to allow it to fall on his face – pure bliss – and decides that he will stay here: until all the marks of plague have left his body. ‘What is man but a stinking mouth, mainlined to its own arsehole: shit from one end, words from the other?’ he thinks. He knows that if he moves along the roads, covered with all these plague scars then people will run in fear. And if they have weapons then they will cut, beat or shoot him.

Inside the cave are the cold remnants of an old fire and, at the back, a small pool of water. He extracts a piece of charcoal and uses it to trace out a single “O” on the cave's wall. Inside this circle, the empty space within is what he is: an absence

that longs to be filled, like a starving belly.

IX

With the appearance of sunlight his numb body can cease its incessant shivering. He begins his first morning by placing his left shirtsleeve on top of the pool and sucks up all that his belly can hold, then he cups the water, splashes it over his face and vigorously scrubs his body. After feeling that he has become clean he fills the rest of the morning by scratching for worms and catching flying bugs; their wings leave a metallic taste on his tongue. Finally he scrapes moss off the damp cave walls, grinds it into a paste with his teeth and swallows.

After three days he cannot bear it any more and descends from his cave to stagger along the road, muttering and almost mad.

After stumbling along, for how long he cannot possibly know, he begins to hear music: strumming guitars and flutes as a traveller's caravan appears around a bend in the road. As they get closer he can smell vanilla. Two hungry dogs, one trailing along on each side, are panting with large, soaking eyes. Once the driver – a burly man with a large moustache – sees Horatio, he signals for the music to desist. The cart approaches with only the rattle of pots and an occasional hack from a dog that has breathed in too much of the lingering dust.

The wagon stops. Horatio can see their clean, puffy, warm faces. Two pretty dark-eyed girls and two large tanned men with long moustaches curled at the ends make eight inquisitive eyes, looking at Horatio and all of his wretchedness. They talk among themselves in a foreign language and then produce a short loaf of bread and

pass it down to him. He lifts up his right hand and receives their offering, says nothing, continues to stare. They look at him with sympathy, motioning with their hands for him to tear it open and eat. The large man who still holds the horse's reins smacks his lips and rubs his belly while smiling. Dawn holds the loaf close to his chest. It feels crisp, fresh and soft within. He walks backwards, continuing to look at them, until he turns and runs away from the road over the field. Behind him the cart is moving again, without music, just the clanking of pots. A single flute sounds from the departing wagon.

Horatio finds a ditch and jumps into its cool darkness. He presses himself against the wall. Tiny ants move in orderly lines, some carrying the bodies of dead and dismantled insects. The lonely flute becomes faint as he tears open the loaf and removes its fluffy brown centre. The smell of salt and yeast is moving around his face as he puts the edge of this tasty cloud to his tongue and it starts to dissolve at the point of contact. He feels its taste move out from his tongue and go through his muscles and beat against the skin, his heart racing with its flavour: putting it further in he starts to chew and then swallows. The sun enters at a sharp angle but it's cool in the ditch as he watches the sun's beam move up the wall to where it meets the line of ants. They start to move further down the wall, avoiding the light. He reaches up and, grabbing a large tuft of grass, climbs out of the hole.

He walks parallel to the road, worried that soldiers may be using it to transport themselves north, and if he hears any kind of approach, runs and hides. Moving this way, remaining incognito, he keeps walking, stopping only to rest in the late afternoon, near a decrepit cottage, seemingly abandoned and with the sounds of a flowing stream. No smoke is emerging from the chimney and the cottage is bereft of either movement or sound. He quietly moves forward, keeping his head low and,

getting close, sees that the front door is fixed at a strange angle: it has already been kicked in. He enters inside to take what remains: some chewable grain husks or some salt, a blanket, old shoes, a knitted cap to keep his head warm.

Inside, stale air and the room is bare. He scans the corners and the walls and kicks away a pile of straw that is scattered loose in the corner to find nothing but bare dirt floor beneath. He must move fast. The sun is leaving the sky. He runs his hand across the back wall to search its cool surface for bumps. After a sharp prick he pulls back his hand and sees a rusty saw blade wedged into a slim crack. As he pulls it out, clumps of dirt fall to the floor. Spitting onto the blade he cleans it until he can see the cool grey colour. Finding a flint stone on the floor he picks it up. After smelling it he puts it down again.

The dust is settling but a growing, swarming mass of buzzing flies fills the air. They butt against each other in their mania to eat, to mate and to be alive. The one grimy window in front of him is glowing with golden light as the sun dips below the horizon. A single tin plate rests on the windowpane and within the circle of its base his dull reflection is captured in the metallic hue. He picks it up and puts the plate next to the door then lays the saw blade across its rim, and, retrieving the flint, drops it in the plate's centre. Rodents are rustling through the straw roof above – glistening green eyes glaring down. Dawn sits still and breathes.

The sunset makes the air rich with amber. A gentle wind is whistling through the roof's cracks. He reaches out his right hand and points an index finger towards the dirty window, hoping to touch the retreating light.

Exiting and walking to the back of the cottage, he comes upon a stake driven into the

ground with a rope tied to it that disappears into a thick bush. He pulls on the rope to drag out a dog's carcass, covered in dust and pieces of grass. Its dark purple tongue hangs from its mouth. He removes the rope from the animal's neck and, retrieving his knife, cuts away the mangy fur. He opens the stomach and hurls the innards into some distant bushes. He removes the legs, twisting them out of the sockets, and cuts away strips of stringy flesh from the spine. There is not much meat to be found, mostly bones, but he is going to eat it all.

He tears a bunch of straw away from the cottage roof. He goes to the copse and collects fallen branches. With the flint stone he starts a fire. Adding more straw and broken sticks until it grows – the warmth on his face. He skewers strips of back meat on sticks and levers them over the flames, using stones as fulcrums. As the meat starts to sizzle globules of fat drip down and squeal as they disappear in the flames. He circles this light like an entranced moth and starts to dance. Soon he is laughing uncontrollably. He feels so close to death that its coldness is becoming familiar and so he dances next to the fire, hoping that his jig will keep this coldness at bay. He dances and he dances. He throws up his arms, jumps and spins until he feels his flesh react without recourse to the brain. By now the meat is spitting out fat. He lifts it and licks it, then returns it to continue the cooking. He dances some more; picks up a stick with meat and blows until he can touch it with his tongue. Eating, the consistency is strange, like baked sand. He puts handfuls of dirt over the hot coals, making the evening dark but silvery with light from the moon as he stuffs the meat into his mouth and forces it down so that it sits meanly in his stomach.

Horatio picks up the brass plate and takes it to the stream, fills it with water to drink and starts to wash the dog grease away from his hands. Finally he walks back inside. He gathers up the surrounding straw and lies down in the corner and throws

the straw over himself. His stomach is still sore and the pain descends to exit as a loud fart. He closes his eyes, feeling comfortable again, and sleeps.

When he wakes it is still dark and he shivers with cold. Outside the small window the world is still enmeshed with silver. He wants to feel fire and warmth and fill this complacent landscape with light. Filling the brass plate with straw he carries it to the fire and, using two sticks, removes a glowing piece of coal. Placing it into the centre of the straw, he blows gently until a flame appears. He carries the burning plate to the straw roof and slowly draws the licking flames along the loose ends of straw. The roof rapidly glows and pops with heat – faint wisps of flame emerge. Rats are running down the walls and flee as the yellow flame deepens to a burning red line, swaying like waves; the roof has become engulfed. Horatio steps back as the heat is pushing against his face and runs as the cabin becomes immersed.

In the distance he watches the entire cabin burn. When the flames desist he surveys the land and sees a new illumination reveal itself, appearing as a lighted tent. He makes for this, still hungry, stumbling over roots with eyes so heavy with fatigue that he wonders if they will, eventually, drop out from the sockets. The air is fresh and cool. The moon, at the apex of the sky, lights a path for him.

As he comes close to the tent he can smell a rich soup. People's shadows are projected upon the cloth walls. Charging ahead, he opens the front flap, and walks in to see a silent group, all dressed in black; they smile at his entrance. Closest to him is an older lady with a round face, red and warm from the fire, and ash-coloured hair that she has bundled up with a red sash. She wears a heavy woollen smock with a thick canvas skirt. Putting her finger to her lips, she signals for Horatio's silence.

'I'm starving,' he yells.

She nods and her warm pink skin gently grips his broken hands that are still caked with mud, white dust and thin strands of grass. Saying nothing, but gently massaging his hand as it rests inside hers, she leads him outside the tent to the back of a wagon where they come upon a black stew pot suspended over a fire. She opens the lid, steam drifts up with a rush of bubbles: thick, delicious barley soup. Passing him a bowl she fills it with his dinner. He can feel the heat move from his palms through his entire body. He lifts the bowl to his mouth and slurps. Heat touches his throat and his stomach while the smell of salt ascends into his nose. He is now licking the bowl clean. The lady smiles and cuts away a slice of bread from a larger loaf.

‘Suffering is a part of the journey that we take,’ she tells him. ‘But for now you must rest, eat and drink and be warm and close to the fire that is God.’

She fills the bowl again and places the bread slice in the centre and sprinkles extra salt on top. Holding it to his mouth he sucks up the wet bread, swallows, then drinks the rest.

They walk to the tent door and she opens the flap. Inside the circle all attention is focused on the purifying flame. She sits in the circle and taps on the ground beside her until Horatio occupies the empty space. He counts ten people all silently staring at the fire. The radiating warmth beats down on him, squeezing out the cold. Soon his foot has turned numb and he has to shift his weight. The fire dances and licks the air with joyful glee. He sleeps as waves of heat beat over him.

Joyce Butterwick

We had been sitting as a group and meditating upon the fire for hours when that strange young man appeared in our tent with mania pouring out of his eyes. Some of the men were reaching for their weapons – we are in fact pacifists – but one can't stand by as violence is visited upon one's people. I stood up and I knew that I could indeed calm him. I once had a boy of my own, about his age when he died. Just wanted to help him, feed him, extinguish the fire within his mind and, possibly, even bring him closer to God. But before all that he needed soup.

He was reticent about who he was. He told me that his name was Horatio Dawn and I told him that I was Joyce Butterwick.

'What do you want with me?' he asked

'We want you to be fed and warm.'

'What's happening inside?'

'Nothing. We sit in silence. People may find it particularly strange but that is what we do to communicate with God. Because when a body is silent for long enough then the real thinking can occur. Where have you been sleeping?'

'I'm on my way to London.'

'Don't go there. For every body that enters through Bishop's Gate, five get buried out past the city's limits.'

‘I need to get out. Out of this land. Away from all people.’

‘We can give that to you. Your body will remain in the tent but as you meditate upon the fire you will feel something slip out of you and that’s the greatest escape that a person can make.’

‘No. I know that there are foreign lands.’

‘Do not speak of foreign lands. Words have such a putrid scent to them. To be holy is to be silent.’

‘I must sail.’

‘Are you looking to find a fortune?’

‘Yes.’

‘But what of tonight?’

‘I was thinking I could sleep close to that fire.’

We went inside and sat down. The way that he glared at the fire it was as if he were soaking up its glow so that he will never feel the cold again. I knew that God had grand plans for him and, what’s more, we will feed him. I meant it when I told him to stay with us to gather his strength as the Lord had great plans for him. He didn’t seem to believe it but I could see the young man working the issue around in his mind and knew that there was something going on in there and that one day he might become a man infested with God.

The next day he emerges out of the tent and sees that woman again. She stops washing dishes in a tub of water and, after drying her hands on her tunic, fetches for him a new shirt and pants, a bucket of water and a cake of soap. He walks into a clump of trees, takes off his clothes and scrubs his body and his hair. Dry enough to put on the new clothes and, flicking the water off his skin, he leaves his old rancid rags hanging over a tree stump, like broken skin.

In the day he undertakes menial tasks, digging holes, dismantling tents and packing carts. In the evening he eats well and sits by the fire.

When they move along the roads, travelling south, Horatio leads a mule that is drawing a wagon and it charts the road noisily with grunts and groaning wheels. As he scans the distant hills, he feels that he can see right through them, deep down into their ore-bearing caverns, the mountain's womb where redemptive metals are made.

At the end of the week they cross the River Hull and find a new place to camp. Clouds start to spread over the sky and the wind knits them together into a thick puffy blanket that looks pregnant with rain. They work fast, removing the wooden poles and lashing them together to create a frame. They pull the canvas over and secure it with large metal pegs and guy lines. The women light fires to boil water for barley soup. They are mixing flour into short lumps, the size of a man's palm, and fry the small pieces in lard to make shortcakes.

Horatio is digging a mess trench away from the tent. He uses the spade to cut a long vertical line. They are expecting a large crowd to attend their service today. After finishing the latrine pit he waters and feeds the animals. The local villagers start to wander in. The soup vats are boiling with stock and barley, salt and pepper. The people are given brass plates of soup and fried shortcakes. They make their way into the tent to eat. Horatio collects his meal but eats while waiting outside.

Thunder starts to sound and a cool wind descends as the sky swells with rain.

Clergy Cooley approaches, tall and dressed in an all-black woollen suit with a long Roman nose jutting out from a thick black beard,. He looks upon Horatio with calm green eyes. ‘Won’t you come inside to hear the Word?’

Clergy Cooley

I invited him in as I believe that this boy, who is almost now a man marked with all those plague scars poking out from beneath his collar and cuffs, is one who requires the Word more than any. I urged him to join but he refused. So I took it upon myself to carry the Word to him and as I approached he took to raising his collar to hide his plague scars.

Yes, I could see it in his eyes.

‘How old are you?’ I ask.

‘Old enough to be suspicious of men like you.’

I laughed.

‘Did you arrive in the world, young man, in the Year of the Beast, in the year 1666?’

But Horatio Dawn does not answer me and his gaze seems to loosen from all the immediate details and comes to rest upon distant hills. I am losing him.

‘To be born in the Year of the Beast is to be aware of a tear growing in God’s creation. The one who knows this is the one who will truly see. Is the one who will look into the past to view naught but violence and who can see into the future that the violence never departs but always remains.’

‘I see nothing.’

‘But you do, while most of the people do not. A tiny slip is all it took for the Beast to get through, for it’s not the world that stopped in that faithful year, but time. The physical world continues and those that have not had the screen removed from their eyes will see a world and think that there is progress, when there is in fact none. The Ancient Hebrews recognised their prophets. They gathered and revered the Nabi, who saw it as their sacred task to chastise the people for straying from the correct path. One’s vision should reach an intensity where it is above the morally good or evil. Evil is the thief Barabbas who can be freed with no danger to society. Thieves will always replace thieves but Pilate and Caiaphas will continue to rule. A thief means nothing. But a prophet, Christ or John the Baptist, they are a threat and so must be degraded and killed. And it is their vision that will tell the crowds that there is, indeed, another path available to them.

Horatio is listening to me but I cannot tell if he thinks I am right or if I am mad.

‘The Devil’s temptation to Christ was a real test. The Devil can offer this world to those who mimic him. But you, Horatio, you are one who can see the wiping of man away from the earth. Man wiping himself away from the world.’

Thin tendrils of smoke form a screen between us.

‘See the fire agrees with me and here it is anointing you. The spirit is in the room. Now join us in the tent as it says if five or more gather in my name then God will be there.’

‘I can’t go in there. And you talk as if you know me. But you don’t.’

‘I know that you have the fire inside of you. What did Pontius Pilate say to Jesus? He asked him why he was here and Jesus responded that he was here to bear witness to the truth. He lived to witness and to provide testimony. Pilate killed the prophet and washed his hands of the truth. For all power is obliged to kill the prophets.’

‘All I do is dig latrine pits.’

‘You will witness things to come and you are charged to provide an accurate testimony.’

A drop of rain falls with a soft thump and spreads across the paper. Horatio walks to the tent’s walls and listens to the sermon occurring behind the screen, but he can’t make out the words. Returning to the latrine he can see that the rain has weakened the surrounding soil, making it collapse into a large puddle.

Stepping in he tries to scoop out the mud but the incessant rain continues to fall. Throwing the spade down he returns to the awnings of the tent and shelters from the rain. The sermon continues as muffled words.

The atmosphere is becoming dark as heavy clouds descend to dump their loads. He unlashes the wagon's covering flap and searches for things to steal: a bowl, spoon and mug, a hammer, small knife and a length of rope. He places them all into a wooden bucket. Then he takes a flask of wine and adds it to his kit. He puts a loaf of bread into a waterproof canvas sack that he slings over his shoulder and picks up the bucket – his poor man's portmanteau – and leaves for the distant highway.

X

Horatio wanders for hours until he sees a travelling group of flagellants who are whipping themselves with crudely fashioned leather straps. They move as a sick horde and lingering behind them is a trail of buzzing insects and raised dust. Horatio quickly joins the throng. They all howl and wail with the pain of abandonment by God and continue onwards, towards the great city of London.

Horatio sits and allows this mass to move beyond him. He sits for one hour. Eventually he stands and walks along the road until he comes to a market place. Carts of produce are preparing to depart for the city. London is pulling them in. Can a city have a particular scent? If so, this would be of a large open wound waiting for him to deposit his mind so that – like larvae – it may grow as the site festers and rots to black.

‘Hurry up for I must be at London Docks by noon,’ a driver yells to the men loading his cart.

The bales of wool are being placed in the cart. Fully loaded, the driver whips the horse forwards. Horatio jogs behind it. Keeping pace, he hitches his foot on a lower rung and clambers up, over the back, and quickly buries himself in the itchy bundles.

The day lengthens and the cart charts its way south. Beneath the rancid smell he hides with only his nose exposed to the air.

He wakes to yelling and the clanging of bells. Horses’ hoofs clap upon the flagstones. Removing the wool from his face, the cart has entered London and the first thing he sees – and then smells – is the hanging body of a criminal with skin peeling off like overly ripe fruit. With the cart bouncing forwards, he sits up to see the river Thames. He brushes the wool off his shoulders as if it were dandruff. A large boat stretches out on the water, its sail unfurling with the breeze.

Horatio stands up and removes the wisps of wool that linger in his hair. With a salute to the cursing driver he jumps down onto the road and runs to the muddy banks and gathers a handful of water to throw over his face.

This pulsating beast is London, is Moloch, a consuming fire, a smelter turning all stone into fine jewels. Tall, densely packed houses – still blackened from the Great Fire. Dogs wander the streets without purpose. Soldiers patrol. He can smell the air and a strong trace of smoke – the breath of the fire – still lingering, becoming stronger until he can see *the Great Fire still burning, its flames dancing along the roofs*. His feet are sunk in the mud as the vision sets in. *The flames are dancing high above the streets, licking the ceiling of London, the people circulate below, oblivious to the*

fire's interest in them. Their flesh has already become resistant to the flame. These people are naught but ash. Only he can see that the city still burns, 1666 will never end. History has ceased to progress, the age of the prophets has begun. Most men fear time, but his prison is timelessness. He imagines that he must be breathing in the fine ash of the fire, the lingering spirit of this inferno. There are people everywhere, walking around in a daze. But the people are morose and wail out lamentations. 'Do they not realise the magic that comes from a city that burns?' he wonders. The sun hovers like a gaping and fierce wound. Some small spot fires still burn. The wind is faint like a dying man's breath. Horatio cannot move as the mud of the Thames grips him tight. Then he hears the screeching of rats. They move out of the houses and into the streets; now they are flowing over the road and onto the shore, running straight for the coolness of the river, with eyes wild and manic and yellow. They run past him, some through his legs, others over his feet.

He pulls his feet from the mud and turns around. *The heat of the Great Fire is upon his back.* But the rats' bodies are gone and his attention is now on the sparkling surface of the Thames. He still cannot reach the water. He must free his legs and leap five times forwards to be there and then continue on until he can attain full immersion, and so be baptised while London burns behind him. The soft grainy sand is completely flat, small bubbles emerge from insects buried in the sand. Intricate lines of gathered grass, fish bones and small fragments of processed metal mark the descending shoreline. He looks up the river and the boats that are transporting lumber and spices have become *a fleet of imperial triremes transporting Roman soldiers who are charting this distant island. A sense of horror is pictured across their faces, framed by thick beards and dull helmets. Their boats cruise the shallow water. The Captain knows that this is the location to establish camp. The shore is close enough to*

bridge and solid enough to support both ends. The surrounding fields are flat so that they can see the approaching Barbarian tribes, cannibals who are ignorant of Roman law and fearsome with blood lust. The ships continue up river against the currents.

These Roman Legions are dressed in heavy metal breastplates. The redness of their cloaks has all but faded, a pale imitation of the imperial splendour that they wore when they departed Hispania. Their swords are dull when they once were sharp. They do not speak. The sky is dull, like smoke and the sun feels lethargic. They miss the warmth of the Mediterranean and the density of its cities: its cheeses, olives and wine. Its buildings, squares and the corresponding civility. Nothing compares to the turquoise glow of the Mediterranean. Nothing. Most know that they will never see it again and must carry its image within their minds if they are to supplant the world that is laid out before their eyes with the luscious warmth of home, until the melancholic mud-soaked world of Barbarian Britain ceases to register.

He looks down at his arm and notices that the hairs are standing tall. The Roman triremes have now been replaced by conventional mercantile craft. His vision has faded. The sunlight is dimming with the sun becoming suffocated by the sky. But he can barely move. He is fixed to the mud and a strange-looking mud raker is watching him. It is as if this man's glare is breaking him down into disparate parts and squeezing out meaning to collect in a jar then throw away the spent flesh.

The mud raker is wearing a blue and grey coat with a large collar that is turned up to cover his face. On top of his head is a tricorne hat. In between the three points sprouts a large plumage of purple and jade peacock feathers. At the end of each feather is a blank circle.

Horatio still feels confused from his hallucinations and the rapid transition to banal London. He can see that the mud raker is wearing a plague doctor's mask that

looks delicate and white, with a long bird-like beak and two black eyes with fully dilated pupils – a vacant and expressionless gaze. Horatio stares at the mud and tries to keep as still as possible. Whenever he looks up he feels that his eyes are touching a flame that burns inside the mud raker. He notices the bubbles from insects that have buried themselves in the sand. He looks again—the man is no longer glaring at him.

The mud raker places a large tube over the popping bubbles. As he pulls out a telescoping rod the tube extracts all the sand, leaving a hole. A buried frog is then expelled out of the tube and into the mud raker's leather sack.

‘What are you looking at?’ the mud raker calls out to him through the mask.

‘You're too late for my body.’

‘Why?’

‘I linger. I survived.’

The mud raker turns and looks at the city behind him. ‘Do you see the city of London?’ he asks.

‘I do.’

‘What of it? Does it look clean?’

‘No.’

‘Ah, but it will. You acted as if waves of rodents were running over you, yet none were.’

‘I saw rats fleeing the city. They were afraid of the flames.’

‘What flames?’

‘The city burns.’

‘The Great Fire was years ago. How long do you think it takes for a city to burn?’

The mud raker moves along to another bubbling hole and repositions the tube

to extract a specimen from below the surface. As soon as the tube is out of the ground the hole fills with water and collapses.

‘You see more. Much more,’ the mud raker says as he shoots the frog into his bag. ‘My name is Joram.’ He offers Horatio his hand. ‘You can trust me. I am a man of science and if visions are your affliction then I aim to assist you. Visions corrupt the mind. They are to the mind what plague is to the body. For a mind to turn rational they must be snuffed out.’

A frog tries to escape from his bag. Joram holds it and puts his two fingers into its mouth, removes the frog’s guts, tosses the offal away, and puts the frog’s body back into his bag.

Horatio keeps looking down at the mud. Joram reaches across and removes a long strand of wool from his shoulder.

‘Tell me more of what you see when you look upon London?’

The wool floats gently down, collapsing once it connects with the mud below.

Horatio feels that Joram’s eyes might burn two small holes in his head if he continues to stare at him.

‘I see the Great Fire of 1666.’

‘That fire has since passed.’

‘It burns still,’ he says.

‘Well, that is very interesting.’

‘What does that do?’ Dawn motions towards the rod.

‘I am creating a vacuum that will suck up the frogs that are hiding beneath the sand.’

‘You eat them?’

‘No, I dissect these specimens. I want to know what it is that constitutes a

frog.'

Horatio looks down at the holes in Joram's path. They have all collapsed in, but Joram's footsteps are strange. Instead of two boot-prints the man's walk has left two deep cloven hoof-prints that are now filling with muddy water, the left print indistinguishable from the right. Joram notices that he is watching his walking trail.

'Enjoy your visions young man,' Joram says, then he runs, cutting down the muddy shore of the Thames.

Horatio has an image in his mind: wheels within wheels. A new age is being built out of the ashes of the Great Fire, an age that will not sustain a people. From now on the people will exist to support the age. Their bodies will feed the insatiable metropolis.

He yells out to Joram, 'Stop,' but he is far away at the end of a long line of twenty two hoof prints. Joram registers no response.

Horatio removes his feet from the mud and pursues the fleeing mud raker, following the train of the cloven hoof-prints. As he gets close he sees Joram remove his mask to reveal his face. His skin is soft and clean with a petite nose and eyes as blue as high summer's sky. He is a man of exquisite beauty.

He launches at him and, landing in the mud, grabs Joram's boots. 'Show me your wicked hoofs,' he yells.

Joram kicks him in the face and with a large step back picks up his sack and re-attaches his plague doctor's mask. Beneath the mask he is laughing.

'Reveal yourself. Show the world your cloven hoofs,' he yells.

'Scarlet on your brain,' shouts Joram in return. 'I am a Fellow of the Royal Society with all corresponding honours. You are the one in the grip of unreason and black bile with no corresponding honours.'

Horatio looks up at the weak sun, dripping heat down over the city that falls like burning alcohol. The slow drip of flames spreads across the sky at steady heat. He feels the heat unfurl like a ripening flower that fills his lungs, constricting him, pushing out his chest as breathing becomes difficult. The Great Fire grows in intensity. *A second wave of rats rushes for the coolness of the Thames. Cats soon follow. He can hear windows popping out from the heat. The city is burning again.*

Joram steps away, his departure marked by the same cloven-hoof prints. Looking at the buildings he can see no flames, but he knows that Horatio can see them. Black wrens move across the sky and a thin cloud is spreading, dimming the weak sun. These fires will come to fuel the dark satanic mills. Joram climbs up onto the road and continues out of sight. Horatio pursues, running with heavy shoes over the wet earth, climbing the wall and running down the road, leaving a trail of mud. He is focusing on the escaping man, searching for a mark left by the man's cloven hoof, but nothing emerges.

He runs around a fully loaded donkey that pushes forwards with a manic expression on its face. Getting in front he notices Joram has stopped and is looking back for his pursuer. Joram's plague doctor's mask disappears into a large hessian plague tent.

In the sick space coughing reverberates from the sickly bodies. Rank air sticks in the throat. He looks along the wet ground but can find no traces of cloven hoof-prints. Light moves in through the open patches of the hessian roof making the puddles sparkle. His foot makes a splash and as the weight pushes down, an imprint is left. But all that he can find are dying bodies. The object of his pursuit has escaped. Did Joram bring me here to kill me with plague? 'The joke's on you Joram,' he calls above the dying moans. 'For I have been granted immunity.'

A young man enters the tent, his skin richly decorated with the markings of plague. Horatio notices his advancing condition as large buboes, the size of oranges, stretch across his face like a determined weed. The largest pulsates on his right cheek, so swollen that it fully covers the corresponding eye. The stranger walks around the bodies, finds an empty bed and lies down. Horatio turns to him, 'Welcome.'

The stranger looks back. 'Welcome?'

'Welcome to the plague tent.'

'Why would you welcome one who has come to a place to die?'

'I have not come here not to die,' Horatio tells him.

'Well, I myself am here for just that.'

'Fate has lead me within these hessian walls. But fear not, I was sick and I am now alive.'

'Is it even possible to survive?'

'What's your name?'

'Harvey Kircher.'

'Yes, Kircher. It's possible to survive.'

Horatio reaches over to feel Kircher's forehead. The heat is emanating out. He is burning like one who has swallowed fire. Horatio charts the confines of the tent until he finds additional hessian sacking. He folds it over and cuts a square piece the size of a man's chest. He wets it in a puddle and places it on Kircher's beaded forehead to try and lower his temperature. With a damp cloth and a bucket filled with cool Thames water he keeps Harvey cool. Gripping him, right hand in right hand, left hand holding the cloth.

Horatio finds a dry place to sleep. When he wakes the man's body is still, but his eyes are alive. The fever has passed. As he presses down on Kircher's forehead

the young man watches him with confusion. ‘You will pass through to a new skin. You will not die, at least not from this,’ Horatio tells him.

Kircher scratches his irritated skin. Horatio stops him. ‘You will be wearing the scars of plague for the rest of your days but the faster and cleaner they heal the less visible they will be.’

‘I can’t believe that I’m still alive.’

‘Did you see anything?’

‘Just this muddy tent.’

‘No, but did you truly see anything?’

Kircher, with great difficulty, turns his head to look at him. ‘See what?’

‘Visions. Before people die they have visions. Wheels within wheels.’

‘But I didn’t die.’

‘No, you didn’t.’

‘Help me home.’

XI

Kircher directs them back to his home in Knightsbridge. It’s a large three-storey house encased in white panels and, as they approach the front door, Kircher finds the strength to raise his weak fists and bang loudly. A maid opens the door with a look of wonder on her face. Kircher’s face is still bruised and his skin is peeling off, making him look translucent like an onion.

‘I’m cured. I have returned. Tell father.’

That evening Horatio bathes in hot water while the maid burns his clothes. Laid out for him in his bedroom: a new white shirt, heavy pantaloons, a coat and a necktie, leather shoes and a brown leather belt. With all of these clothes hanging off his body he can become a young gentlemen. He falls into the welcoming bed, sinking into the mattress as the feathers bunch around him.

The father, an elderly gentleman, announces through the door that a meal is available at his pleasure and a maid carries in fried fish and bread to leave on a table.

Mister Kircher

It's true. I did send my son off to die. Told him where the plague tent was to be found and forced him out. He did go, somewhat willingly, and he knew that if he lingered then he would take the whole house out with him. But today he returned, healed, and with a strange young man who, he claims, brought him back from the edge of death. This Horatio Dawn constantly mutters to himself and seems ill at ease in our home. He has a strange accent, from somewhere far up north. My son Harvey returned with a desire for business; he now talks of finding a woman to start a family with. I said to my wife that night, that catching plague was the best thing for him.

Next is to rid us of Horatio Dawn. But it will take some time. And Mrs Kircher wants him to stay. 'Why?' I asked her.

'Let's at least feed him and organise for a job,' she replies.

The next day I sit next to him as he reads in the sunroom.

‘What can you do with yourself Mr Dawn?’ I ask him.

‘I come from a long line of smiths.’

‘There is a part of town filled with shops. We can go there tomorrow.’

‘But I can also read and write.’

‘How?’

‘I was taught at a Friendship House.’

‘What do you read?’

‘All off it. Any books and I will read them all.’

Then he tells me that he has read Montaigne’s *Essays*. Furthermore he has read Sir John Mandeville, John Prester and Marco Polo. He has read Chinese history and travel books. But history books about Rome are his favourite.

‘You know I have, indeed, been to Italy. I will assure you that Italy is the true seat of reason.’

‘I wish to go there myself.’

‘And from Italy one may catch a boat to Constantinople. For in the centre of this city begins Asia, Mr Dawn, Asia.’

‘Asia?’

‘From there the plague first emerged. Do you read late at nights?’

‘I do.’

‘You must cover the windows lest our neighbours think that this house is signalling to the Dutch. Now, what is it that you read?’

He holds up the book and I can see the title: *Philosophus Autodidactus*, “*The Self-Taught Philosopher*.”

‘Did you find it here in this house?’

‘I did.’

‘Amusing how one can lose a book or two.’

‘Where is Andalusia?’

‘It’s the old Mohammedan part of Spain.’

‘The author is an Andalucían philosopher named Ibn Tufai.’

‘Tell me of his tale.’

‘A young boy is born of the sun and magically appears on a hidden island. As he is alone, the animals of the island take it upon themselves to raise him. But the issue remains that he has no other people to talk to. So, he fills his hours by taking exact and scientific observations of nature; as his knowledge grows his mind becomes soaked by reason. Now reason has saturated his being. Soon, with this power, he is master over all: the animals bow before him. But an intense loneliness remains within. With his mastery over nature begins a distance, a separation. At times, for example when he is killing an animal with the fury of a starving man, he feels like he is hovering over the scene. He dies master of all but the animals choose not to bury him; the hot southern sun dries his bones to chalk and, finally, the wind blows what remains out to sea.’

‘You can keep that book if you like.’

‘I believe I will.’

‘Very good Mr Dawn.’

‘I’m Horatio.’

‘You are a man now. Your name is Dawn and I will call you as such.’

Dawn stays with us for the rest of the week. I am able to establish for him a clerkship at the newly built archives of the East India Trading Company. He will be

part of the creation of an archive that contains a register of the entire world. My son, Harvey, continues to recover.

PART TWO

I

Wrens fly in a ‘V’ formation above the low London sky. Dawn is enjoying the summer from the roof of his building. With the sun descending, London’s ceiling transitions to black and the Pleiades emerge clean and bright. Occasionally a star will drop as if it has become loose from its fitting. Dawn sits with relaxed shoulders and gazes at his city.

The plague scars have sufficiently diminished and eventually they will fade into his flesh with no trace remaining.

The stars etch themselves clearly in the sky with full intensity. Night has supplanted day. Tonight, on his eighteenth birthday, Dawn is glad to say that he has been living in London for two years.

He lowers himself down from the roof, swinging through the window to land on both feet inside his messy chamber. Retiring to his stuffed mattress, he suffers through a sleep where he dreams of nothing.

In the morning, crawling out of bed, feeling exhausted with a tight knot in his left shoulder – he feels as if a heavy, wet cloth is sticking to his face. Slowly, piece-by-piece, he climbs into each article of clothing. Before leaving he puts his right index finger over the cover of his favourite book, *Philosophus Autodidactus*, which he still has from the Kirchers. He has read it so many times that the spine’s knitting has come loose.

Rubbing his still irritated eyes, he leaves the building for the open, sunny streets. Walking, he can feel the solidity of the stones in the road; stones that must have burnt hot during the Great Fire, burning right through the soles of citizens’ shoes

as they ran in terror. In the distance he sees a large rusty cage, containing the festering upright body of an executed pirate. As is the custom a metal plate has been attached to the corpse's face. In the sky a large crow hovers as if weightlessly upon the air. It croaks out a deep call; thudding the air with its large wing span, slowing to land on a crossbeam. The crow stands and releases a series of calls. Its feet tapping as it walks along the top of the cage, bending its head to gain leverage it removes a strip of flesh from the corpse's right hand. More fly down from the thin clouds to fight for access, making the cage creek and swing like a pendulum. But the squawking birds cannot get at the face: five beaks tap out an incomprehensible message against the metal mask. As Dawn continues to walk, the shadow of the moving cage swings across his path. He breathes in the sharp air of the morning, stretching out his stiff back, rotating his arms to loosen the knot. Ships are departing down the river.

Another slow day at the archive, transcribing reports of slaughter. Dawn tries to imagine what it must be like to witness a mass killing and he worries that his work is turning him numb. In the past when he was reading a report of slaughter his vision would penetrate through the very words. He could see *the soldiers moving in to hack apart the bodies until their faces are covered in blood. Soon villages are funeral pyres. The company is forcing people off their land, pushing them along to starve in an alien locale.* Dawn tries, but frequently fails to give these reports a cold reading. He should be like a scientist in a laboratory with a hedgehog, a bottle of disinfectant and a razor blade. But, instead, he is deeply involved so that, at times, he feels like the report is addressing him personally.

The archive of the East India Trading Company looks like a coffin-shaped block with four tall cones standing on each of its corners. On Dawn's first day of employment he stepped out the length of all four walls: six hundred paces, precisely, on all sides. The sharp lines seemed to cool his mind and weaken his visions. Indeed, he suspects that the constant task of copying has kept him sane, kept him out of St Mary's of Bethlehem. Every morning when he approaches the archive he feels an intense level of gladness; for this is a new type of building that proclaims the systematic cohesion of all the senses.

Approaching the entrance now, Dawn notices the two fierce-looking lion statues. He pauses near the stone animals' frozen expressions. These beasts have not been tamed; to his mind, they are merely hesitating before they strike. Using the weight of his entire body, he pushes on the large wooden door to enter.

It's cool inside and the marbled floors reflect a clean light. The corridor leading to his desk is long and thin but the actual archive is contained in a room large enough to host a company of troops. The system of brass shelves is three levels high and each story is six shelves deep. Near Dawn's desk a staircase spirals up to the top. Narrow glinting walkways lead to more piles of reports – it all makes Dawn dizzy as he navigates his way through the maze. They are, after all, trying to observe and catalogue the entire world, but volumes of information continue to pour in and they cannot keep up. Most of the shelves are stuffed full, each report almost bursting.

The order of the shelves is arranged according to the exact dimensions of the world as portrayed on most contemporary maps. The first floor pertains to lands surrounding England, those being Scotland, Ireland and Wales, and then it continues with the rest of Europe. The second floor is the old Byzantine Empire, then Asia all the way to the secretive island of Japan. The third level is Africa, the New World and

even further to lands whose existence is only rumoured. A quick sign of the amount of violence a geographic area has endured is signalled by how packed its shelves are. Dawn's favourite shelf is at the very end of the third level. Here the shelves are empty but waiting expectantly to be filled. There will only be a deposit here as new lands are discovered and subsequently inserted into the system of knowledge. No man can possibly absorb the amount of information contained within this archive for only the mind of God can contain such magnitudes.

Mr Eugene Harm, as chief archivist, will invest in voyages that he is assured, according to his reading of the archive, will return a profit.

By the middle of the morning, perched at his desk, arching his back, squinting at a report under the dim sunlight that enters the window in steep angles, Dawn focuses his attention on a hairy fly that has landed on the page. It nimbly walks from one side to the other. Following a sentence about a massacre in India, it reaches the edge, buzzes away, leaving small black granules of excrement. Dawn lifts up the report, places his lips close to the deposit and blows it off. The fly's hum fills the air, but Dawn notices that it moves with heaviness. Struggling to climb above the desk, it swings around and drops onto the page again. Now it remains in position and tilting its head starts manically to clean its big green-tinted eyes with two long feelers. Dawn picks up a notebook and moves it above. He waits and then lets the heavy book drop down: a corresponding crash sounds out, making him look up as it echoes down the hall. Remaining still, waiting to see if it has gained any attention. He picks up the book, turning it over to inspect the damage: the fly's body has been ripped open with white larvae blindly crawling across the page. Using a handkerchief to pick them up, he methodically crushes them between his right forefinger and thumb: finishes by

wiping the carcass into the bin.

Hearing his name being called from Mr. Harm's room, Dawn cleans up the mess and walks down the cool silent hall. Stopping to peer through the frosted glass he sees Harm staring at a plate of food on his desk. He has a round piggish face, baldhead on top of a rotund body with red, bothered skin. His white shirt is stained with traces of previous meals, wines and ales. A large smile beaming out shows his honeycomb teeth as he looks at the feast before him: a large leg of pickled pork covered with bright crackling, a block of hard cheese and a bottle of ale. Leaning forward he smells the aroma of the meat, and pulls off a long strip to stuff into his mouth. As Dawn knocks to enter Harm is sucking the marrow out from the bone.

‘Enter,’ he says through a mouth bulging with shredded meat.

Harm removes a large carving knife from beneath the scattered manifests, reports and budgeting accounts. ‘May I slice you off a strip of pork?’ he offers Dawn.

Harm puts the knife's edge beneath the meat and easily draws it along the bone to remove a long piece. He dangles it before Dawn, who takes it and he puts one end into his mouth and eats it up like a rabbit with a piece of grass.

‘Mr Dawn, if you find anything about unclaimed lands I want you to deposit it straight on my desk.’

‘Very well,’ Dawn replies while still eating.

‘Find it and find it soon. A race is now on for a new voyage deep into the southern hemisphere. Now would you like a gherkin?’ Harm opens a jar. ‘With fermentation begins civilisation. Just as pickling a cucumber stops its rot so too does the creation of this archive stop the oncoming fermentation of the world.’

‘Yes, Mr Harm.’

‘No pickle?’

‘No, thank you.’

Dawn is dismissed and returns to his desk.

With fresh eyes, Dawn begins the new task. Buried somewhere deep within the archive, he desires to disinter a lost and magical manuscript. Not for commerce and not to establish a colony. This document will pertain to a new type of being; a new man. But all he has in front of him is a report on the suppression of a chattel uprising in Jamaica. He copies it and files it away. Moving on to reports of piracy around the Cape, losing himself in the details and the rhythm of his pen. But the words remain cold and unmoving. He can sense no heat. The nub of the pen excavates canals upon the page. But these are cold and dead words – like corpses strewn on a page, the remains of a pillaging army.

He envelopes the report with stiff paper and titles it *Slave Uprisings – Jamaica*. He opens volume four of the gigantic ledger and enters it into the Jamaica chapter. Picking up the report he climbs the stairs to the third level and places the report just before *Star Charts – Jamaica*, spirals down the staircase, returning to sit at his desk.

He continues to work until late in the afternoon. Three more hours of copying and now his vision is blurry. He has almost finished with a report that was seized from the Dutch East India Trading Company. With sore, blood-streaked eyes, he turns to its back cover and feels a small indentation, as if an artificial pocket has been attached to the end. Following the ends of this pocket he gently places a blade beneath

and with gentle movement makes a small incision. Inside the pocket is a folded piece of paper. Unfolding it reveals a small nautical map containing a largely accurate representation of the known world, but, below this, on the bottom half of the world is an additional continent: forming an exact counterweight as Ptolemy believed. Europe is on the top and Dawn can clearly recognise Asia stretching all the way to the Dutch East Indies. Below that is a large continent labelled *Australis* and it sits nestled at the bottom of the map, taking up a large portion of the remaining space to be found to the south of Batavia.

Dawn's eyes are drawn to something more conspicuous: written on the map, within the centre of this large continent, is the Latin word: *aurum* – gold.

Dawn searches through the ledgers, finding one reference to this land, from a travel book called *A New Voyage around the World* by William Dampier. 'Captain William Dampier,' Dawn says to the room. 'I know that name.'

Dampier refers to *Australis* as New Holland. Dawn reads through the book that seems to be half a travel narrative and half a scientific treatise. Dampier informs him that in New Holland he finds nothing but a dusty continent inhabited by brutal and savage people. Before landing there, Dampier writes, *I was more diligent to have the ship scrubbed, and to send my water casks ashore to get them trimmed, my beer being now out.* And then they fill up with water and cross the southern seas until they approach New Holland. But once they arrive it seems that their vision blurs as they try to apprehend that land – to lock it into their gaze – because *the land is of an indifferent height, so that it may be seen nine or ten leagues off. It appears at a distance very even; but as you come nearer you find there are many gentle risings, though none steep nor high.* It's as if the land wants to confuse them. Or indeed the

scientists, for all their mastery of reason – because of their mastery of reason – are unable to see the land, respect the land, let it be what it truly is: what it has always been. Dampier informs his readers that he has *never seen ugly creatures anywhere but here. The food was rough and unpalatable...yet I think my stomach would scarce have served to venture upon these New Holland birds, both the looks and the smell of them being so offensive.* Indeed Dampier discovers evidence that this land may, indeed, be connected to Africa as they catch a shark and, cutting open its belly *found the head and bones of a hippopotamus; the hairy lips of which were still sound and not putrefied, and the jaw was also firm, out of which we plucked a great many teeth.* After Dampier becomes filled with a desire to find *some sort of rich mineral or ambergris, it being a good latitude for both these,* they start to dig for anything, metals or even just some water. Indeed if there is water then the inhabitants must be hiding it from them and, if so, they should take what they need using force. *We saw smoke on an island three or four leagues off; and here also the bushes had been burned, but we found no other sign of inhabitants: it was probable that on the island where the smoke was there were inhabitants, and fresh water for them.* So there is fresh water. Setting out to claim it Dampier *went ashore with men to search for water, armed with muskets and cutlasses for our defence, expecting to see people there; and carried also shovels and pickaxes to dig wells. When we came near the shore we saw three tall black naked men on the sandy bay ahead of us: but as we rowed in they went away. When we landed I sent the boat with two men in her to lie a little from the shore at an anchor, to prevent being seized; while the rest of us went after the three black men.* Dampier and his raiding party try to pursue the inhabitants but they soon lose them. In the distance they think that they can see *houses, looking just like the Hottentots' houses at the Cape of Good Hope: but we found them to be so many*

rocks. While scrounging around for any water there came nine or ten of the natives to a small hill a little way from us, and stood there menacing and threatening of us, and making a great noise. At last one of them came towards us, and the rest followed at a distance. I went out to meet him, and came within fifty yards of him, making to him all the signs of peace and friendship that I could. What signs could these people possible understand? At last I took two men with me, and went in the afternoon along by the seaside, purposely to catch one of them, if I could, of whom I might learn where they got their fresh water. There were ten or twelve natives a little way off, who seeing us three going from the rest of our men, followed us at a distance. Thought they would follow us but there being for a while a sandbank between us and them, that they could not then see us, we made a halt, and hid ourselves in a bending of the sandbank. They knew we must be thereabouts, and being three or four times our number, thought to seize us. So they dispersed themselves, some going to the seashore and others beating about the sand-hills. We knew by the encounter we had had with them in the morning that we could easily outrun them; so a nimble young man that was with me, seeing some of them near, ran towards them and they for some time ran away before him. But he soon overtaking them, they faced about and fought him. He had a cutlass, and they had wooden lances; with which, being many of them, they were too hard for him. When he first ran towards them I chased two more that were by the shore; but fearing how it might be with my young man, I turned back quickly, and went up to the top of a sand-hill, whence I saw him near me, closely engaged with them. Upon their seeing me, one of them threw a lance at me that narrowly missed. I discharged my gun to scare them but avoided shooting any of them; until finding the young man in great danger from them, and myself in some; and though the gun has frightened them at first, yet they had soon learned to despise it, tossing up their hands, and crying pooh,

pooh, pooh; coming on afresh with a great noise, I thought it high time to charge again, and shoot one of them, which I did. Dawn pauses and places his finger at that exact point in the book. But where is the actual shot? Dampier decides to kill one, then, indeed, that is what occurs: but the actual shooting has taken place invisibly somewhere in between the two clauses.

Dawn thinks of the continual whispering voices that he hears when he remains working in the archive until late in the evening. But this encounter is not over, and it feels like this denial of violence will noxiously linger like ghosts. Returning to Dampier's book *the rest seeing him fall, made a stand again; and my young man took the opportunity to disengage himself and come off to me; my other man was also with me, who had done nothing all this while, having come out unarmed; and I returned back with my men, designing to attempt the natives no farther, being very sorry for what had happened.* But did Dampier make these signs to truly express his remorse over the killing? *They took up their wounded companion; and my young man, who had been struck through the cheek by one of their lances, was afraid it had been poisoned: but I did not think that likely. His wound was very painful to him, being made with a blunt weapon: but he soon recovered from it.* Then again, it is only natural that both parties would fear each other. No doubt, the desire for recourse will linger. And before that to occur then truth must bubble to the surface, where before it remained buried. Dampier recounts the appearance of *a kind of prince or captain among them. He was a brisk young man, not very tall, nor so personable as some of the rest, though more active and courageous: he was painted (which none of the rest were at all) with a circle of white paste or pigment (a sort of lime, as we thought) about his eyes, and a white streak down his nose from his forehead to the tip of it. And his breast and some part of his arms were also made white with the same paint; not*

for beauty or ornament, one would think, but as some wild Indian warriors are said to do, he seemed thereby to design the looking more terrible; this his painting added very much to his natural deformity; for they all of them have the most unpleasant looks and the worst features of any people that ever I saw.

Dampier goes on to express his frustration with New Holland. Not only are the people resisting all signs of friendship, but the land, *is low but seemingly barricaded with a long chain of sand hills to the sea, that lets nothing be seen of what is farther within land.* The intrigue remains as to what is being hidden in land? Where are the women and children hiding?

Dawn puts the map and his summary of Dampier's account on Harm's desk. It is close to midnight.

II

Outside, walking through the rancid streets of London, he comes to an area near Pudding Lane and coughs up black soot as he cuts across the loud banging city, nimbly stepping over large and dead rats that have died with grinning snouts. Sick bodies cower in the shadows.

He hears the crack of sails and sees a ship moving up the Thames and wonders if, below deck, hundreds of slave bodies are neatly stacked below and if these bodies reek of shit and piss, while in the storage above their heads barrels of sweet fragrances and spices – cumin, coriander and hot peppers – waft over the deck, masking what is dying beneath.

Dawn enters the blacksmith area and he sees molten lead being poured into moulds by men with the concentration of determined alchemists; a bead of sweat carves a valley through their dirty foreheads, continuing past the gravestone sellers whose blank faces are ready to carve in the names of the dead. Further west he finds the Fish's Head Tavern and enters to dim candles barely cutting through the hanging tobacco smoke that hovers like profane spirits over the patron's heads. Ordering ale, he carries it to a spare table, sits and drinks.

The surrounding men are talking and drinking, but Dawn chooses to remain incognito in a corner. One group is particularly noisy, drawing his attention, until he hears a familiar voice break out with laughter that corresponds to one of his deepest memories: Dawn recognises the red-faced figure of Cutstone.

'And so we shot the cannon right into the centre of their village,' Cutstone is telling his companions.

'Why, were they about to attack?' someone asks.

'Attack with what? With sharp wooden sticks? By throwing a stone?'

Cutstone announces to his companions that he needs to water. They point to the corner where a public bucket is kept but Cutstone scrunches up his face. 'I'd rather take it out into the streets.' He finishes his drink, loudly rams the cup down and, while dusting his hands, makes for the door. Dawn quietly follows.

Cutstone walks past the facade of the tavern and turns down a dark laneway. Dawn, following, pulls out his knife and, holding it close to his leg, shadows the swaying Cutstone, who walks as if the solid stone road were swaying like a ship's deck. He pauses in the far corner, leans his arm across the wall, rests his forehead on

his exposed arm, shuts his eye, starts to piss. It runs around his boots and down the hill. Stepping past this running and frothy stream comes Dawn, creeping forwards, the knife glinting as it shakes in his hand, knuckles tight and white with grip. As the stream decreases Dawn arches his foot so that he is standing on the tips of his toes and places the knife's edge against Cutstone's throat, who, pays no heed and continues the flow. 'That knife that you got pressed up against me feels overly blunt,' Cutstone says.

'I'm holding the knife, so listen to me now,' Dawn replies

'To whom?'

'I'm holding the knife.'

'Are you?' Cutstone says then lands a solid elbow into Dawn's stomach, making him fall back with the knife clanging away upon the dull stones. The hot urine is now on his hands. Cutstone walks close and puts a solid kick into Dawn's right side. The hot liquid soaking into his clothes; freshly turned earth, grasping for air.

Cutstone goes to place another stout kick, then with recognition says, 'Welcome to London, Horatio Dawn.'

Holding his side and having trouble breathing, Dawn looks up and curses him. 'You brought plague to my farm. You killed my uncle and you almost killed me.'

'Your uncle is dead?'

'With a plagued face, black as coal.'

'It wasn't me Dawn. I told you I have immunity.'

'It arrived with you.'

‘But it wasn’t me that brought it. He got it somewhere else.’

Cutstone picks up Dawn’s knife and bends down beside him. ‘It’s almost fate that you found me here pissing in an alley. I was, actually, thinking about you this morning. I know a way to get south. What about that boy that was so keen to voyage?’

‘I’m a man now and you tried to kill me.’ Dawn is still having trouble breathing.

‘Dawn, you’re not listening. I have found him.’

‘Found who?’

‘The Great Voyager. And his name is Captain William Dampier.’

Dawn looks up at him. ‘Why do you tell me this now? What do you know?’

‘That he’s currently in Hapsworth jail.’ Cutstone offers Dawn his hand. Dawn, reluctantly, takes it and Cutstone pulls him up.

‘Do you mean for him to be released?’ Dawn asks.

‘Yes.’

As they walk down the side lane to return to the tavern, Dawn tells Cutstone about the newly discovered map. He removes a new coin from his pocket and buys two more cups. As they excitedly work out a plan they drink to the prospect that they will soon be rid of London.

‘You still carrying your scars,’ Dawn tells him.

‘Don’t worry. The waters of the Southern Land will wash them away.’

III

Dawn has no memory of ending the night or of the walk home and so wakes the next morning in his room, sick from excessive drinking. He is lying on his bed with his backbone rigid, neck cocked to the left as if lost in contemplation of a question, tongue feeling covered in fur, still wearing his clothes; a shoe on his right foot and the other near the front door. Rolling out of bed, he finds a bucket and vomits. Pulling down a rag that hangs by the window he uses it to wipe his tongue clean, tries rubbing in salt and gargling out the acidic taste, he uses his nails to scrap the thick coat off his tongue. As he picks up the bucket again, he almost trips on his other shoe; but places his foot inside it, and carries the bucket down the stairs to empty in the sounding street.

Alcohol continues to weep from his pores; if one were to hold a flame to his hand it would light and flow up his arm to engulf his entire being and he burns like an anointed saint for drunkards. Cutting through the narrow back streets as the sun crawls upwards, Dawn walks towards the archive.

By the shore of the Thames he turns east; deep current, flotsam banging together; heavy ships chart the waters. He plunges his hands beneath the cool shimmering surface, scooping it up to throw on his face, but the water is not clean and it burns. Drying his eyes until it's safe to open them to see a large mass floating downstream; a bloated human body with small twigs caught in the thick red hair –

sprawling out, white underclothes, appearing like an exotic sea animal. While drying his face with his sleeve Dawn walks across the mud and up on the road: buys hot bread for breakfast.

At the archive, Harm looks up from his scattering of documents and tells Dawn, 'You are indeed late today.'

'Apologies...Mr Harm.'

'Indeed,' Harm glares at him. 'Now where have you found this report that did spend the night waiting on my desk?'

Dawn tells him.

'And it purports to reveal vast stores of gold?' Harm asks Dawn, as he removes it from his pile of papers.

'I checked the archive and there is only one who has made it and returned to New Holland and that's Captain William Dampier,' Dawn replies.

'Captain who?'

'Captain William Dampier.'

Mr Harm's face becomes rigid with thought. 'Ah yes,' he raises a finger, 'an old has-been now rotten like wheat.'

'Dampier is the greatest navigator who has ever lived.'

'Well, can we get him under contract?'

'Perhaps.'

‘Where is he?’

‘Currently detained at His Majesty’s pleasure.’

‘Where?’

‘Hapsworth jail.’

‘It matters not. We’ll treat it as a secondment. The service continues but now there will be fresh breeze in his hair. Dawn, this could be the discovery that cracks the world open for us, for this company and for our investors. I will leave today for the Royal Mint where I will meet with Mr Isaac Newton and begin the arrangements.’

‘Why the haste?’

‘Because the Spanish, French, or even the Dutch might get there first. They have spies everywhere.’

Harm picks up the map again, looks at it lovingly, tracing a path with his finger from the map’s left hand corner, coming to rest at the centre of the continent of New Holland. He departs in his hat and coat with the map folded neatly in his pocket.

Back at his desk Dawn starts to read. His weight presses the four feet of his chair into the worn oak-coloured floor. One of the reports in his pile is about a plantation in the colony of Virginia where the slave owners have begun a program of breaking down families by separating parents from their children. By doing so they mean to destroy the very structure of these families. If a plantation’s slaves are part of a tight family unit, the likelihood of an insurrection will lead to a butchering of the masters, but remove the children and the parents become lethargic and numb. They never laugh. Their spirits are broken. The slaves will work harder for longer. They

seem to possess no link to their own future, therefore there is no reason to grow old and once their value drains, they drop from exhaustion to be buried in a mass grave.

Dawn records the key details into the ledger then places the report in the corresponding section. He completes eight more reports and, as it is late in the day, his mind is turning hazy. He is about to sit down when he hears banging on the front door: must be a patron. At the end of the long hall Dawn finds a man who is shading his eyes with his right hand while looking through the glass window to see if the archive is open. Dawn unlocks the door, opening it; the stranger presses his face forwards, speaking through the crack, 'Is this the archive of the East India Trading Company?'

'Yes.'

'I am Mr Pocock.'

He looks like a scruffy pony with a long face, a large belly below, no hat and messy hair. Mr Pocock starts to explain that he is planning an expedition to trade with China and has come for advice. 'Do you have information or even past examples of anyone who has successfully opened up commerce with sealed lands?'

'You want us to reveal to you the key to the great Chinese box?'

'Precisely.'

'Just the reason that we exist.'

'What do you have on any successful penetrations into China?'

Dawn asks to see Pocock's membership papers to the archive. The man pulls out his letter and points to his name recorded at the bottom. Dawn notes that he is

currently working for a private subscriber. These are usually individuals who want to invest in overseas trade and require the archive for preparation. Dawn welcomes the man in and together they walk down the hallway. When they turn the corner, the light from the bright marble floor envelops them, accentuating Pocock's dark eyes. Dawn sits at his desk, removes the large ledger; looks up both *China* and *Cathay*.

'The last known successful entry into China was undertaken by an Italian Jesuit priest named Matteo Ricci.' The archive does have a file on him, Dawn is sure of this as he created it himself. Pocock is still standing, looking around the room: not knowing where to sit. Dawn runs to the next room, fetches a stool and places it down for Mr Pocock to sit on. He does so and then looks above – through the wire walkway, all the way up, where three levels of information stretch to the ceiling.

'How many books do you have in here?' Pocock asks.

'Our aim is to catalogue the entire world.'

'A Godly task if ever there was one.'

'God resides in just such details.'

'But where does it all come from?'

Dawn looks up from the heavy tomes. 'When boats dock in London they have their papers seized. Copies are made of ship's logs and all other documents and sent to the archive for us to sort through. We write up all the important information. When one ledger is filled then we sew all the pages together, file them in one of three levels above and start a new one.'

'May I examine the file that you have on Ricci?'

‘Indeed.’

Dawn climbs the staircase to the second level, making the iron frame rattle and reverberate around the chamber. In the middle of the isle is the China section. The folders are arranged alphabetically; he searches, with his fingers tapping along until he finds the ‘Ricci’ file. It sits between ‘Raw Material’ and ‘Rivers’. He slides it out, casting dust into the air that gently hovers like disturbed pollen and carries this file back down the stairs.

‘I am glad that we were able to find this one. Sometimes files go mysteriously missing and then it is as if that country never existed.’

Dawn places the sand-coloured file on his desk. ‘Your penetration of China may now begin,’ he pronounces – untying the string.

‘Our main concern is for information on how to establish communication with the Chinese rulers. After an accord has been reached we wish to build factories and draw on the labour of their massive population.’

‘How many live there?’

‘Millions!’

‘Millions...’

‘Have you ever touched Chinese silk?’ Pocock asks Dawn.

‘No.’

‘Soft as a babe’s skin it is.’

Dawn scans the file and tells Pocock that Ricci was there to start the process

of converting the Chinese to Christianity. ‘He arrived wearing the simple cloth of a poor monk but they rejected him, claiming that such a simply dressed man must have nothing to add to the already complex and ancient civilisation. But Ricci was determined and so returned three months later, but now he was wearing the complex robes of a Confucian scholar. They welcomed him, and then he further impressed them by creating a map of the world, but using Chinese place-names attached to the relevant countries.’

Dawn continued to read and tells Pocock that Ricci’s aim was to rewrite the gospels so that they matched the rich history of China. Ricci blended the spiritual traditions of both the Orient and the Occident; pushing them together to create a new and truly Catholic Church for all men.

This request was, of course, denied by Rome and Ricci died years later, never having finished his task. He did, however, create the first Chinese/Latin dictionary and a beautiful translation of the Chinese Odes.

‘May I take that file?’

‘No, we are an archive, not a lending library. But I will copy out all the relevant information and have it sent to an address.’

‘Very well.’

Pocock makes a note of his residency and, folding it over, passes the paper across the clerk’s desk. Dawn reads the note and places it down on his desk. Standing then he escorts Mr Pocock to the door and farewells him.

Returning to look at the file, Dawn turns a page. Feeling its thick texture – much thicker than the other pages - and not knowing what to expect, he gently peels

back the layer to reveal another piece of paper hidden secretly beneath. He removes the sheet and holds it between his thumb and index finger: it stands rigid with a slight curve – like the ocean’s horizon. He gently separates the two pages, tearing open the pocket. Beneath the reports Dawn pulls out a folded piece of paper: it’s another hidden map.

This map shows a large Oriental ship with its anchor dropped upon the shores of New Holland. It appears as a trade ship from China. What commerce could possibly pass between these two places? Is it spices, or slaves? Moreover there are strange symbols that, Dawn believes, must be written in the language of that land. But if, as Francis Bacon believes, China is the centre of reason and it has maps of New Holland, then what is the importance of that southern land? What is it hiding?

IV

Dawn folds up the map, slides it into his bag and puts on his coat. Walking quietly down the hall and past Harm’s empty office, he continues outside, locking the front door behind him.

In the dark streets mud is attached to everything. He squelches along the road. The Thames silent to the North, day old bread being sold for cheap turnips, faded carrots and rhubarb. An emaciated woman glares out with two ashen eyes, her thin steps mixing the mud with the white powder that falls from aristocrats’ wigs. Rats scurry ahead of him; mud, horse, donkey shit spreads out across the street. Dogs wander with their noses in the dust.

Almost halfway home he enters the Crown and Rose tavern. It’s mostly empty, dimly lit by struggling candles. Two men enter wearing riding garb, coats and

two periwigs beneath their hats. They make straight for a dark table, tucked away to the side. Most of the tavern's patrons are lost, staring at their half empty glasses, dreaming, and oblivious that these men are women: their petticoats showing from beneath their men's coats. One of the women makes brief eye contact with Dawn, then turns away. He approaches the bar, buys three new cups to place in a triangle to carry to their table. The shy one is around five foot five inches tall with a few strands of thick black hair emerging from beneath the perwig. Her chin is knotted over with a bright yellow scarf. Her friend looks up, rolls her eyes and mouths the words 'sod off.'

'I accidentally purchased three cups of ale and need help drinking them,' Dawn announces upon his arrival, trying to keep his smile subtle.

They both stare at him.

He feels his restless innards roll over like a sleeping animal on a hot summer's night. Leaning forwards, he places the cups down. The friendly one has a long nose, thick curly hair and wide almond-shaped eyes that glint with an orange glow when they reflect the candlelight.

'So these cups are bribes to sit with us?' the friend asks.

'Only so long as the liquid remains,' he replies.

'Be careful there. I know how to drink and I do it well.'

'Relax Jane. This is a gift, our favourite gift.'

The friendly one holds the cup towards Dawn; they touch rims – the retreating crown of froth.

'Don't worry, I know who you are and I know why you must hide and who you are and I don't care. No, not that I don't care. It's a pleasure to drink with you.'

The other one has a round face with high cheekbones. Dawn cannot see the colour of her hair. She speaks with a faint Scottish accent, showing disinterest. The plan now is to entertain them both by playing the fool until one feels insulted and departs, leaving him with the other, and keep the supply of talk and ale until they can do nothing but just be unclothed, together.

‘So you give us drink but not your name?’ the friendly one asks.

‘Horatio Dawn. And what shall I call you?’

‘My name is Samantha.,’ She is about to offer her hand for him to kiss, then remembers what she is wearing and where she is and stops.

Noticing the ink all over his hands she asks, ‘Let me guess, a squinty eyed scribe?’

‘My eyes, now, are wide open. And, yes, I work in the archives of the East India Trading Company. But what are your employes, gentlemen?’

‘I make my own money,’ she tells him.

At times he feels that the ash in the streets has moved into his stomach, into his mouth – so that when he speaks the words emerge muffled with black soot. But she is beautiful.

‘So you sit tight all day, copying?’ Jane asks.

‘Yes, that’s how we build the archive.’

‘Why? What use is just another copy?’

‘Eventually we will have a record of everything.’

‘Everything?’

‘Everything that has ever been written about, we aim to get it into the archive. All things in the world exist for a corresponding note to record the details of their existence.’

‘There is more happening than what gets written about. Am *I* in there?’

‘No, would you like to be?’

‘I most certainly would not. And if I’m not there then it is not, indeed, a copy of everything.’

‘It is, but only of things that will matter to the coming age.’

‘What’s that?’

‘An age where science will snuff out the plague and an age of glorious expansion.’

‘But an expansion of what?’

‘To bring commerce to the world. This country aims to build a great empire. And our archive is providing the knowledge to facilitate just such an expansion.’

‘A storyteller for business men?’ Samantha asks.

‘Every ship that flows out of the Thames comes back filled with information that must be recorded and stored. But these are not stories.’

‘Well, what are they?’

‘Facts. Hard and irrefutable facts.’

What Dawn does not tell them is that at times he can hear the documents screaming amongst themselves; demanding to be heard; circulated – sometimes their cries reach a ringing crescendo in his ears. His appreciation of Samantha’s beauty is deepening as the details continue to register. It is more than aesthetic; within his mind the trace of her will registers as a tonic. He is hoping that it will come to be the dominant chord within his life. Feel her as real weight. Their conversation builds in a steady rhythm that is now animating his entire being.

‘Jane works as a housemaid, but she is able to leave the house occasionally and tonight the family is away from London and so we decided to come to the tavern to drink.’

Jane finishes the cup and puts it down loudly, looking at Dawn with a large grin.

Putting his hand inside his bag he feels the edges of the map, radiating out with warmth. Samantha removes a single coin that glints as she raises it before him. She throws it down onto the table where it lands with a heavy clunk. ‘Fetch more, master scribe!’

Dawn nods, picks up the coin – as soon as his back is turned a happy smile opens across his face.

The tavern is filling with more clerks and sailors from the docks. As Dawn returns with their drinks he passes Jane, on her way to the street. In her disguise she cannot risk squatting in the public pisser. He puts down the three new cups and Samantha says ‘Thank you.’ He leans closer to ask, ‘Where’s Jane gone?’

‘She will be back soon.’

‘When can we meet?’

‘Meeting is what we are doing at this very moment.’

‘No, I mean when again?’

‘Just close your eyes to imagine us two together.’

‘I will be doing exactly that.’

‘But don’t think of my disrobing.’

‘What...the naked truth.’

She laughs.

Dawn feels that he should leave soon, on a high note before he gets drunk enough to say something dumb – maybe he just did. But London is a big town. And he rarely can be seen outside of the archive and besides what else does he have to do this evening? Return alone to his small, cheese-smelling room alone to pass out; returning to the archive the next day for another session of constant copying – the longer it continues the more disembodied he becomes. Copy and file, copy and file, copy and...

‘Here comes Jane,’ Samantha says.

Dawn stands at her approach.

Jane asks him, ‘Where did you come from Mr Horatio Dawn.’

‘A small village to the far north.’

‘That’s some way to get here. And not just the physical distance.’

‘It took me many weeks.’

‘What of your people?’

‘They remained. I came here hoping to earn money and join a ship.’

‘Well, why haven’t you done so already? I mean jump aboard and go.’

‘Not just any ship will do,’ he counters. ‘I want to sail so far away to a world so new that the plague can’t take hold.’

‘I can’t blame you for leaving. I have lived through three plague outbreaks, each worse than the one before. The last spread like fire across the town. I don’t know which is a worse way to lose London: by plague or by fire?’

‘You should join a voyage too,’ he says.

‘If I’m going somewhere then there better be a map to mark the way.’

‘There is a map to show the way to New Holland. A new untouched land that will make your body pure and clean again.’

‘New Holland? Aren’t we at war with that place?’

‘Sometimes it is referred to as *Terra Australis*, the Great Southern Land. Indeed at the moment there are plans for the great voyager Captain William Dampier to navigate a ship there. Discover it. Chart it. Catalogue the contours of its land. Its resources and its people. In the archive we have located a map showing precisely its location. And Captain Dampier has been there before. His ship will make it.’

‘When will the ship depart?’ Samantha asks.

‘Preparations are now under way.’

Samantha turns to Jane, ‘Imagine the possibilities.’

Dawn interjects, ‘Fresh unpolluted air, a new landscape and walking across it a new type of being who lives in a rationally ordered society. Ancient Atlantis filled with wise and benevolent scientists.’

‘How long will the journey take?’

‘Months, at least, perhaps over a year. But this distance is natural. For what we are searching for is the opposite of London. What we search for is a civilisation that has no need of paper archives or books. The land is the archive. Knowledge is stored in the trees and in the mountains.’

All three are silent as they strive to imagine what just such a place might look like.

‘To New Holland,’ Samantha yells.

The tavern hushes as the other drinkers look over at the conspiring table. The three are quiet until the chatter begins anew.

‘I am ready to leave this town,’ Samantha tells them. ‘At times it feels that the sun itself has abandoned these streets. There was a plague victim lying in the road with her skin disintegrating off her body.’

‘What kind of talk is that? The skin... that’s foul.’

‘Jane?’

‘We live that. It’s my own wound. Why would you bring that up now?’ Jane abruptly stands up. ‘Good night to you both,’ she says and then looks around the room. ‘Why did I even consider spending my night off here? Visit me next week if you will,’ she says to Samantha, then turns and departs.

Dawn is trying to feign embarrassment, but he is relieved that Jane has finally left. Now it is just the two of them; both rich and loose with alcohol. Dawn suggests that they walk by the docks. A new scene would be like a blank page – and oh how he loves filling up blank pages. She grips his hand and smiles as he pulls her up. The other sailors in the tavern watch these two overly friendly fellows depart together.

The streets swarm. People are walking out on business or evening strolls. The river is close, cooling the air. Dawn buys two hot pies and passes one to Samantha. She bites away a layer of crust; exposing the meat, blows away steam. The chipped moon – cold as a broken plate – glows above. Circulating around them are Finns, Orientals and Turks. The babble of new languages clanging together. They move, walking through the music of the piazza.

Ahead of them they can see an illuminated tent with a sign and a spruiker out the front who is jumping with excitement. He is wearing a grey coat and a red velvet cravat sticks out from his clean white shirt. He is trying to lure passers-by to witness the magic lantern show inside.

‘This show will replicate your most horrific dreams,’ he assures the crowd. ‘Come inside to view the arrival of devils most foul. Demons who push themselves up from Hell to promenade through grand London.’

Samantha says, grabbing Dawn’s hand, ‘Let’s go inside.’

‘Won’t you enter and see our very town be licked by hot tongues of flame and reduced to a valley of ashes,’ the spruiker calls to them.

Samantha removes a coin and pays. The spruiker tips his hat and parts the canvas door, emitting perfumed smoke. She lets out a small cough as they enter. Bending down in the darkness, Dawn bangs his right leg against the hard planks of a bench. With his free hand he feels for the smooth surface and pulls down on Samantha’s right hand until she is sitting beside him. The show begins.

The first image projected into the smoke is the skyline of London with silhouettes of people walking the streets. Beady eyes appear, small rats crawling over the roofs as their number grows to an infestation. A demon, Death itself, with a rat face and the wings of a large bat, swoops over London from one side to the other. Its stomach opens and fire pours out to drip down onto the rooftops. Soon the whole cityscape is burning.

Samantha feels for Dawn’s other hand in the darkness. He can see that she is afraid and leans over to whisper, ‘I often dream of the destruction of this city. The hot wind pulling buildings apart as if they were made out of sand and the streets still hot as if holding the heat of the Great Fire. Looking up into the sky, sometimes I hallucinate that there is fire dripping down from the sun and the Devil lives there and stares down at the world from above. He gently drips down flames onto roofs and a new fire begins.’

Samantha looks away. ‘This is all just smoke, candles and images etched into glass,’ she tells him, remaining entranced by the show.

‘What I suffer are not dreams. As I walk the streets the heat is beating on my face. A large ember – red like the setting sun – fell to my feet and I bent over to pick

it up. I could smell my own flesh cook. The next morning, when I awoke, my hand was swollen red.'

Dawn often dreams of books. He opens them but before he can read the words the ink turns liquid and runs off the page. He picks up a pen and makes contact between the nib and the page and it opens like a fountain, running over his hands. Cleaning just spreads the ink.

'You should write out those visions and place them within the archive,' Samantha suggests.

'They will put me in jail.'

'How will they catch you?'

'Falsifying the record is a crime against future generations.'

'Those visions seem to feed on what's in the archives, so that's where they should belong.'

Dawn puts his hand on her leg, bends over and lightly kisses her on the right cheek. She is smiling but does not look at him.

'I could at least start to write them down. There is plenty of clean paper at work.'

'I've had enough of this show,' she says.

The worker of the lantern gives them a disapproving scowl as they leave.

In the Docks they smell cloves of garlic and cumin. A noisy monkey is tethered to a stake by a long piece of leather. A Chinese man with a shaved head and a long ponytail watches a group of piglets in a pen while a boy in a dress of bright green silk chews his fingernails.

They purchase baked potatoes and chip away the flakes of charcoaled skin – steam rising from the flesh. Dawn takes small bites but his stomach is closing; he knows that he will not be able to finish. When he has premonitions of the destruction of this city his body slows down. Sometimes his stomach knots itself up like an eel pulled out of the river and his appetite will desist – making him hungry but unable to eat – his eyes will ache, blurring his vision. It's times like this when he is reminded that his body can give up on him at any time. All bodies will someday emit the odour of corrupted meat. After surviving the plague what has lingered is not pain but numbness, as if ash had been sprinkled upon the world. These visions are the gestures of a lost mind attempting to flee from its body.

They return to the potato seller and, after inquiring about rum for sale, are directed to a nearby ship. They see a docked ship's master sitting on a box and smoking his pipe. He removes a bottle from underneath the box and passes it on. Dawn goes to pay but Samantha stops him. 'Paying for this is my pleasure.'

The flavour is strong but once the bite desists a calm mellowness washes over them both. She swallows with a contorted face. They are walking along and Dawn asks again, 'So where is all this money coming from?'

She stops and looks around to ensure that no one can hear her. 'I'm a counterfeiter.'

'So that's what you meant by making your own money,' Dawn says.

'It's not too complicated. I have all the tools and necessary chemicals at my flat. And I have an eye for forging signatures and documents. Bank notes are still new and unfamiliar so that people can't see the difference between what's true and what's forged. Between what's real and fake. At the prospect of getting all that money they

just accept the notes and I leave with their products. Those are then resold at a low price so that I can quickly get some legitimate money in my hand.’

‘So what we have is you the forger and myself the seer,’ Dawn says.

‘Yes!’

‘So that is why we are having such a merry time together.’

‘Why?’

‘You forge things and I am haunted by each thing’s possible alternative.’

She laughs. Dawn looks around, they are alone, and he grabs her by her wrist. The yellow handkerchief is poking through. He kisses her on the mouth, pulls away, her eyes are closed and she is smiling, he kisses her again; taste of burnt sugar and warmth. He puts his hands beneath her shirt, he wants contact and is surprised to feel a series of small scars along her body: points where plague ruptured its way through her skin. His hands pause then start to follow the line.

‘Just ignore that...an old scar.’

Dawn recognises what they are and he lifts his shirt to show her that he too is a survivor of the plague. As Samantha reaches forward to trace out his small bumps her hands move in patterns of recognition.

‘I was sick two years ago,’ he tells her.

‘Only one for me.’

‘How did you survive?’

‘I don’t know. I just did.’

She leans over and as she kisses him she gently pushes her tongue through. Her breath is working its way into him.

Dawn remembers that she is dressed as a man and they must present a scene of two men kissing and so he takes her hand and they run, laughing.

They come upon a three-storied town house with grey panelled fire-licked walls. Black trimmings form a line of ten crosses and the entire building seems to be leaning to the right side like an old man waiting on a street corner.

‘This is home,’ she says.

Dawn leans next to the basement door as she opens it; they hurry down the stairs. She unlocks a second door; they enter her chamber – low and dark with a fresh smell emitting from an opened bag of spices.

‘Are those what you been spending the fake money on?’

‘Yes.’ She uses a flint to spark the lamp. The light grows, releasing the fragrance of rosemary.

‘What’s in the next room?’

‘That’s where I work on my forgeries. But I’ve run out of paper and getting the colour of the ink right has been difficult.’

‘Will you make more?’

‘I don’t think so.’

‘Why?’

‘Because I don’t want to end up as dead and rotting in a gibbet. It’s the face of the King that I’m tampering with, treason.’

Dawn pulls her close and kisses her with his eyes closed. Then he looks down to see the yellow scarf poking through her shirt. The image of this scarf is driving him wild. They are undressing each other, pulling back to look down and see what they are fumbling at. They walk in tandem to the bed and stop at the foot. He removes her under-top. She starts to untie her yellow scarf but he stops her. She smiles. He can now see her beautiful breasts with deep red and glorious nipples that he puts into his

mouth. She is holding his head, twisting his hair around her fingers. He continues sucking and licking then removing his pants she reaches down to grab his cock and holds it while he quickly pulls down her underpants. Samantha helps him, stepping out, grinning, stroking his balls as she sits down, then using her elbows to drag her body up the bed. He lies down on top of her. Gripping his buttocks, she pulls him forwards until he is inside of her and her eyes briefly disappear as she looks up and holds her breath before making eye contact with him and they begin slowly fucking. Their hands are searching the other's body as if they are blind and feeling for knowledge with their fingertips. Both are aroused with the recognition of bumpy sites left by the buboes; the collective marks of a shared and painful history. For they should both be dead and fully decomposed, but now they are fucking each other as a combined spit in the face of Death.

They both lie still and are breathing heavily in the rumpled bed that is now slightly askew to the wall. His pointed finger circles her breasts then moves down to trace out the shape of her hips. The rosemary lamp has burnt out.

‘I am covered in sweat,’ she says to break the silence.

He turns his finger so that his nail gently scrapes her skin as it climbs and then descends down her right knee.

They sleep a few hours. Dawn wakes to the noise of morning traffic. Standing up he moves around the room.

‘What are you looking for?’ Samantha asks with a sleepy voice.

‘I want to show you something,’ he says, finding his coat and removing the folded map.

‘What is it?’

He lays it before her. 'This is the map of New Holland.'

'What does it mean?'

'I believe that paradise is hidden somewhere deep within this continent.'

'And it's Atlantis?'

'It could be. How can we tell from London.'

'What does Atlantis look like?'

'You should come!'

'Why?'

'We both know what it's like to have bodies free of the numbness of plague.

We're both survivors. You and I.'

'These symbols here, I know them.'

'I thought they were a record of that land's alphabet.'

'No, they're alchemical symbols. This here,' she points with her right index, 'marks the presence of the Philosopher's Stone.'

'The what?'

'It's a state. A type of being. Marked by transmogrifying base metals into gold.'

'How do you know all this?'

'My father and mother died trying to reach this state. I still have his book on it. Just wait there.'

She fetches a small blue cloth-bound book. Opening it she turns to the page that reveals the symbol of the Philosopher's Stone and places it next to the map. Both symbols match.

The noise of the morning is growing. Dawn carefully folds the map and gets dressed. 'When should I visit again?'

‘Anytime. And next time you need to tell me the name of the ship.’

‘I will.’

He kisses her on the lips. She nods and climbs the stairs out into the bright streets. A deep tiredness lingers in his body as the sun lumbers over the horizon, stretching loving hot fingers over the manic streets. Then Dawn feels the original impulse that pushed him south all the way to London inside him again.

V

On entering the archive Dawn hears Mr. Harm calling out, ‘One hour late!’

Removing his coat to leave in the hallway, Dawn sticks his head around the door, ‘I was up on level three so had trouble hearing you. I am sorry if you had to continue to call.’

Harm is holding the first map. ‘Forget ruined documents tucked away up on level three. It’s not up there that is now our focus. Now we must break out of this archive. Now we stretch this archive into the unknown.’

‘Does that mean we’ve got their support?’

Harm puts the map down in front of him. ‘If this map is correct we will be like a new aristocracy.’ He gestures to Dawn to sit down. ‘And possibly I may be able to marry.’

‘But what do you think Mr Harm? Is this indeed a sign of gold?’ Dawn asks.

Harm looks up with focused beady eyes. ‘Yes, I do. Or at least I want this to be true and so, therefore, it is. I’ll see it when I sufficiently believe it.’

‘This voyage will occur?’

‘What rupture can a single ship with a fresh map bring upon the world!’

‘What of Captain Dampier?’

‘They agree that he is the man for the voyage and the state has already got him, so to speak. We will reduce his sentence and install him on board.’

‘Did you tell them that he was a pirate?’

‘A privateer, Mr Dawn. In that sense he has already received the blessings of the state. Is there anything in his book about the discovery of gold? There is nothing in the report.’

‘No, but the map seems to hint at the existence of something within the interior.’

‘What’s in the interior?’

Dawn quickly fetches the Dampier folder and, returning to Harm’s office, proceeds to read out:

The inhabitants of this country are the miserablest people in the world. They seem to inhabit no real civilisation that we know of. They have great heads, round foreheads and great brows. Their eyelids are always half closed, to keep the flies out of their eyes, they being so troublesome here that no fanning will keep them from coming to one’s face.

‘No mention of gold, the natives were not wearing any?’

‘Captain Dampier concludes with *I saw no iron, nor any other sort of metal.*’

‘But there must be metal, there must. And as it is so close to the equator then, as science tells us, the presence of gold must increase. I am surprised that the natives weren’t picking it up off the ground.’

‘Perhaps that’s why they are so miserable.’

Harm laughs. ‘Tell me more of the writings of Captain Dampier?’

‘It actually can be quite a tedious read. Detail on detail on detail.’

‘And the people of New Holland?’

‘They are but a lack and, according to Captain Dampier, barely above the brutes.’

‘We must speak to him. See what he says to a fiery trial. What do you say to a trip today to Hapsworth Jail.’

‘I’ve waited to meet him for years.’

Two hours later Mr Harm calls again for Dawn’s attendance. Entering he sees two red coat soldiers with shouldered muskets resting by their sides.

‘Get your things. We are leaving, Mr Dawn.’

‘Hapsworth Jail?’

‘I want to see what he looks like. Want to see if he can undertake the task that will be required of him.’ Harm puts on his coat and fixes his hat in position. ‘If this is the Great Voyager then first I must see him with mine own eyes. I have the appropriate letters of introduction here.’ He pats his right breast pocket.

Dawn retrieves his coat and, leaving with the soldiers, they mount a carriage that sets off along the cracked bumpy London road.

The King's highway feels empty; bereft of wandering plague victims. Patrolling soldiers have been ordered to whip away any sick individuals upon sight. Mendicants can still be seen, however, exhibiting their palms to display pink skin – free of the marks of plague. The carriage leaves the oppressive city. The landscape opens to green fields with clean sunlight and fresh air.

After one hour their destination appears as a long line of brown brick buildings stacked like square biscuits. Dawn turns up his collar; massages his sore hands. Harm whistles to get the driver's attention and they slow down until the cart is still. Harm and the two soldiers dismount, followed by Dawn. They make straight for the front gate to show their letter of introduction from Mr Isaac Newton at the Royal Mint. A guard disappears with the letter to confer while the four men wait in the mud. The sky clouds over, dimming the light, and the soldiers are becoming bored. Dawn is staring at the long building that looks cold, like a dull flint stone that can barely be sparked. The guards return and open the gate; they shuffle inside. Carrying a candle they move through dark halls, past inmates who are kept in cages so that they appear like animals, as if they have adapted to the conditions of their confinement and thus surrendered to what is most bestial in man. With each new stage in the prison the guard has to retrieve a new key. The labyrinthine corridors are rich with the smell of rotting bodies – a concentration of the smells of a typical London street.

At Captain Dampier's cell the guard announces that they have arrived. He bangs on the bars. 'Visitors, Captain Dampier. Why don't you brush your hair?' he

sniggers, swinging his key chain, catches it and separates a single key with which to unlock the door. Harm and Dawn walk inside the dark room. There is a small window – three bars of light are projected down onto the dusty floor. The soldiers remain outside as the guard locks the door.

‘We demand utter privacy,’ Harm says.

The three men wander away, taking the candle with them.

Harm puts his hand on Dawn’s shoulder, pushing him forwards.

‘Captain Dampier?’ Dawn projects into the dimness.

There is movement; both men freeze. Dawn’s eyes are slowly adjusting as objects begin to gain an edge: he can see a desk with open book and writing papers. A man is seated with his back to the window where the light falls around him, illuminating two huge shoulders, like flying buttresses.

‘Why not bring a light with you? You ask to see me, yet we all remain in the dark,’ Dampier’s voice emerges. He stands and approaches, growing in size, cutting past them to the door where he places both hands on the bars and calls out, ‘If you please, send us back some light.’

The hall lightens with the guard’s approach. Dampier reaches his shaking hand out past the bars to grip the candle. As he turns his face becomes washed with heat and light, revealing a large nose, pronounced chin and two blue remote eyes. His clothes are clean and neatly arranged. But his hair is stuck across his face as if the only way to remove a spider’s web from the cell is by walking straight through it. He hands the candle to Dawn, saying, ‘Light the two candles on the desk, then get the other by the bed.’

As Dawn steps away Harm's hand drops from his shoulder. 'You have been described to me at the Great Voyager,' he says.

'By whom?'

'By Horatio Dawn.'

'Who's that?'

'The one who is now carrying the flame,' Harm motions with his face. 'And I am Eugene Harm, chief archivist of the East India Trading Company Archive.'

Dampier walks back to his chain. 'And why are you here?'

'Have you, indeed, been to Atlantis?' Dawn asks.

'Where did you read that? Are there people forging travel narratives in my name.'

'Is it there?'

'Is Atlantis where?'

'In New Holland.'

'New Holland?' he laughs. 'No, what is there is nothing.'

'We are offering you the opportunity to return,' Harm responds.

'You two gentlemen?'

'With the support of Mr Isaac Newton of the Royal Mint. We are organising a trip to New Holland and we want you to command the ship. You can work off the rest of your sentence aboard one of His Majesty's ships. You will even be allowed to turn

privateer upon the return and, what's more, keep one tenth of the takings,' Mr Harm informs him.

'Very well. But first can you explain to me your interest in New Holland?'

'That will only be known upon arrival.'

'But there is nothing to arrive there for, just a desert of red dust and dull-looking shrubs. An entire land that is but a lack. Not like the richness of beloved England.'

'But Captain Dampier, I have read your book and I believe that there is more to tell.' Dawn removes from his coat a copy of *A Voyage to the New World*. 'And, what's more, while I'm here, can you sign it please?' he asks.

Dampier's face freezes; he gently puts back his head and fills the cell with laughter. 'I most certainly can. Fetch a pen from the table, me boy.' He holds out his hands as if he were to receive a wafer of Christ.

The three flames hover as if wickless in the damp room. Dawn walks to the desk, searches and picking it up says 'I have the pen.'

'Bring it now, it should still be charged,' Dampier tells him. Dawn opens the book to the title page. Dampier is about to sign when he pauses and looks at Harm. 'How should I address it?'

'Call me your keenest reader,' Dawn interjects.

Dampier signs his name.

Harm takes out the map and unrolls it on the table. Dawn carries over a spare candle, while Dampier approaches. 'This,' Harm tells him, 'is the only known map of

New Holland. And can you see what is written here?’

‘This map is incomplete. What of the eastern half?’

‘This is as total as it can currently be,’ Harm responds.

‘*Aurum*,’ Dampier says, reading the words, ‘you are looking for gold.’

‘I see you’re a man of science.’

‘Both an explorer and a scientist.’

‘Good, because we mean for you to penetrate the interior.’

‘All you will find is ugly and brutish things, lacking in anything resembling a language. There are no roads or buildings. I don’t think they even sleep in houses.’

‘Am I correct in my understanding? That you would rather stay here than go there?’

Dampier looks momentarily worried. He extends his hand. ‘I accept.’

Harm shakes and continues. ‘Your task is to get the ship to New Holland to explore and chart the landscape. Prepare maps for a future colonisation and mining. And, if possible, bring back samples.’

‘Samples?’

‘Samples! Of soil, plants, animals or rocks. And grab a native or two if you can. Alive would be preferable.’

‘Indeed. That is my hobby.’

‘And this comes with a commission in the Royal Navy for the duration of the

voyage and payment upon safe return of the ship. That commission will carry a pension, of course.'

'Can I get my book back?'

'Why?' Dawn asks.

'I need to add something to my name.' He takes the book and writes below the signature, 'Signed upon the Inception of a Wondrous Voyage'.

'Your next one can be called *Voyage to Australis*,' Dawn says.

Dampier looks out the tiny window. He can hear the cry of a single bird.

'Pack a valise, we depart for the Royal Mint,' Harm tells him.

'Am I free?'

'Yes and no,' says Harm. 'You work for this place, but now you work for us.'

Dampier starts to pack his papers and clothes into his box. He stacks his books, tying them together with string.

Dawn notices a small clay statue that is surrounded by burnt out candles and an old crust of bread. 'What's that for?'

'That's my saint.'

'Saint?'

'Saint Jeronimus. He is a deceased captain that I like to speak with to fill in the quietness of evening.'

'Deceased?'

‘Like all saints he did indeed pay that price.’

‘How did he die?’

‘By almost making it to New Holland. Almost.’

‘Do you want to pack it?’

‘I have no need for the statue anymore.’

Harm calls out to the guards and they open the door. The soldiers enter with wrist chains to attach to Dampier; they all exit with the soldiers directing him while Dawn carries his possessions. Dampier squints as they step into the sunlight. Harm opens the carriage door and they clamber in. The two soldiers sit either side of their guest while Dawn places himself opposite: the carriage jolts away.

‘Is it true?’ Dawn asks, while tapping on the book. ‘Is this a factual and correct account of all that you witnessed?’

‘It’s true enough,’ replies Dampier.

‘We are trying to build a scientific expedition to that land and cannot have any inaccurate documents as part of our planning,’ Dawn tells him. ‘All writing on New Holland must correspond with the reality of that land.’

‘There is one section that was edited out.’

‘What was that?’ Dawn asks.

The carriage is bumping down the road.

‘One afternoon we killed a few of the inhabitants. They retaliated quite ingeniously as that evening a strong wind was blowing and they lit a grass fire. It

raced down the hill, leaping from tree to tree and quickly burnt through our camp, destroying everything.’

‘Your publisher took it out, why?’ Harm asks.

‘That kind of information can be crucial,’ Dawn adds.

‘It was not my editor, but my solicitor. I had the court-martial pending and was told not to publish any material that may present me in a violent light.’

‘And here we were thinking of you as a man of science. But you are happy to go to war over a few barrels of water,’ Harm adds.

Dampier locks Harm in his sight. ‘I am whatever this voyage needs me to be to succeed.’

Harm glares back, ‘Your court-martial was for excessive cruelty to your First Lieutenant Fisher and loss of ship.’

Dampier looks out the window, ‘Yes.’

‘You admit to it.’

‘It’s not a matter of being cruel or not. I was what I had to be to maintain my position.’

The carriage rides in silence, continuing down the King’s Highway into the city’s limits.

VI

The Royal Mint is located within the larger Bank of England and, as the carriage is admitted through the gates, the soldiers remove Dampier's wrist chains. They wait outside. The bank has ten windows set high from the ground, above a man's reach – all protected by crossed steel bars. A large brass door marks the entrance. They knock and are admitted into the quiet space. The door scrapes closed, the lock echoes and they walk down a polished hall that smells of cleaning alcohol. The three men are led to a large wooden table and, as they wait in silence, Dawn opens his notebook and charges the pen with ink. Dampier is massaging his wrists while looking at the elegant ceiling trimmings – crystal lamps make the room sparkle: his eyes wince, the white walls heightening the brightness.

The opening of the far door ruptures the silence; all three men stand with expectation. A clerk enters and announces, 'Mr Jason Joram will attend shortly, followed immediately by Mr Isaac Newton.' The first to enter, Dawn recognises, is the mud raker who tried to leave him for dead in the plague tent two years ago. Dawn lowers his chin and tries to hide his identity. As they approach, Mr Isaac Newton is nodding at them with a grainy, melancholic face; Joram walks with a slight limp.

'I would like to present to you the Great Voyager, Captain William Dampier,' says Harm as the subject bows. 'And this is our scribe, Mr Horatio Dawn,' Dawn bends his head and looks briefly at Joram. The Dawn of today is quite a contrast to the muddy and starving version from the shores of the Thames.

Harm removes the map and spreads it across the table. 'The possibilities

contained herein, that will, hopefully, lead us to the combined thrust of colonisation of land with the extracting of precious minerals – primarily gold – make this the greatest textual discovery since the Ancient Greeks arrived into English.’

Mr Newton interjects, ‘But it’s silver that the King requires now.’

‘It could be gold or it could be silver. The primary objective is to arrive, clear the land and build forts and we must do this before the Spanish beat us to it.’

‘Curse them,’ Newton adds.

‘If they combine Potosi with all the metal takings from New Holland then their economy will become a perpetual wealth generating machine,’ Harm says.

‘This is excellent news, as the King’s currency is almost at a point of collapse. People have faith in our coin’s value, but they do not value the physical coins. A British silver piece is worth far more melted down and sold as silver ingots on the continent than it is in a market place here.’

‘And again we are undermined by scoundrels,’ Harm adds.

‘We cannot allow our people to lose faith in their own currency. These coiners are rendering the King’s currency worthless. To forge a coin – with His Majesty’s portrait on it – is treason. This entire bank,’ he raises his hands ‘was founded to fund war and now we must also fix the King’s currency, so that we can continue with the war economy. But to do so we need deep mines that stretch down to all the precious metals that are buried deep in the earth,’ Newton tells them.

‘Captain Dampier has been there, not down in any mines, but to New Holland and he assures us that the natives will offer little resistance.’

Joram leans forwards, ‘Captain Dampier, tell us of New Holland.’

Mr Isaac Newton starts to rapidly sketch something on paper.

‘I can only speak of the coast, for I did not push for the hinterland,’ Dampier replies.

‘Why?’ asks Joram.

‘What can I say? It is a place that seems to resist the biting words of our beautiful English language.’

Newton finishes his sketch and holds it up, revealing a quincunx, to show to Dampier. ‘Did you see this pattern spread anywhere across the land?’

‘No, not on the land. But it was present in the sky.’

‘The sky?’

‘Spotted across the rich evening sky. Looking up is like viewing an elegant display of diamonds.’

‘Captain Dampier, the presence of this pattern is important, for I have arrived at this pattern after extensive studies and surmise that within this five-pointed diagram is to be found the structure of all of Nature. It’s to be found in leaves, in the topography of landscapes and can be traced out endlessly if one joins the dots of stars in the sky. So I find it enlightening to hear that you saw it in the cosmos over New Holland.’

Joram grins.

‘We would be honoured to be a part of such a sacred project,’ Harm insists.

‘I have seen this pattern before, but it was not in New Holland.’

‘Go on.’

‘It was in the Spanish Americas. We landed to do trade and found two very large temples that seemed to fit a perfect square base. And at their top was a peak. We talked to the Spanish padres who had established a mission nearby and they told us that the natives would drag still living sacrificial victims up to the peak and there they would cut open their chests and remove their still beating hearts. And that extraction occurred within the very centre, mathematically speaking, of the pattern which you seek.’

‘Captain Dampier, you saw this?’

‘No, but there is no reason not to trust the words of the Spanish padres.’

‘What became of these people, of their forms of worship?’

‘I believe it is they who are working in the Spanish mines.’

Newton looks at Joram and gently nods his head.

‘If man must now take up our rightful place in the world, then the task is clear: man must now learn to overwhelm Nature. Nature must be made into the dog with man’s hand upon the leash. With time we will build entire cities according to the logic of the quincunx,’ Newton says.

‘That sounds like the same logic that drove the hand that held the knife to cut out the victim’s heart,’ Dampier adds.

‘Captain William Dampier you understand! And therefore this voyage will proceed with our blessings. But, true to your own reputation, we will need complete

log books to be filed as soon as you return.'

'That will be the work of the voyage's scribe,' Harm says, looking over towards Dawn.

Dawn stands nervously; bows again.

'Mr Dawn, if this voyage is to succeed then you must maintain exact records. Gaze upon the land through reason-soaked lenses and locate the presence of the quincunx.' Joram is staring intently at Dawn making him quickly look down at his shoes as if his eyes had been stung.

'Where did you find this scribe?' Joram asks suspiciously.

'He is a clerk from our archive.'

'But what of the introduction, how did it come to be?'

'I believe that an acquaintance of the archive facilitated the introduction, from memory,' Harm replies.

Another clerk enters with more paperwork, contracts for all three men, and they quickly sign.

'Try to establish contact with the natives,' Joram instructs them. 'Observe and write of them. If they mean to start a conflict then retreat and poison their water supplies. It is known that to sever a native's connection to the land can damage them on a spiritual level. It's the fastest way to destroy an entire people. If one cannot kill the native man, kill that native in the man.'

Newton stands, signalling that the meeting has come to an end, 'Mr Harm and Captain Dampier will be left to recruit the sailors and find a ship. Furthermore a

senior merchant will be installed on board to monitor those that are obliged to the contract.’

‘Who will that be?’ Dampier asks.

‘We have yet to decide. There was some doubt if this voyage would even occur.’

‘Why not?’ Harm asks.

‘We are looking for profit, of course...always,’ Mr Newton responds, ‘But we wish to see what, if anything, is there? And if it is there then what is to be its true nature?’

VI

Captain Dampier rides on the right hand side of the carriage. The wind in his hair is shaking out dust, making his head like a threshed bushel of wheat.

Dawn carries Dampier’s possessions into the office.

‘Captain Dampier and I must begin planning straight away,’ explains Harm, ‘go and purchase lunch for both of us.’

‘And what of my lodgings?’ Dampier asks.

‘Yes, book a room at the Tempest Tavern for Captain Dampier. We have credit with them.’

After visiting the Tempest to reserve a room, Dawn visits the markets to purchase lunch. The streets are slowly thickening as if being stirred with flour.

He deposits the meal in Harm's office; both men fall upon it with ravishment. Returning to his desk he titles a new report: *The Voyage to New Holland*, then stuffs it with Ptolemy's *Geography*, *Letter of Prester John*, Ibn Tufai's *Philosophus Autodidactus; the self-taught philosopher*, Bacon's *New Atlantis* and *Natural History*, Mandeville's *Travels*, Raleigh's *A Discovery of the New World*, *Sir Francis Drake Revived*, Descartes' *Meditations*, Boyle's *Experimental Philosophy*, Hooke's *Micrographia*, Speed's *Prospect of the Most Famous Parts of the World*, Ringrose's *History of the Buccaneers*, and fifteen copies of the Royal Society's *Philosophical Transactions*. Finally he adds Captain Dampier's *A New Voyage around the World*.

Closing the file, he rests his elbow upon its exterior then puts his head in his palm, gently massaging his brow. When they return this folder will be disassembled and reinserted into the archive. Each piece broken down into its constitutive parts, carried to its rightful place in the hierarchy of knowledge. Push the preceding folder forward, and the proceeding folder backwards, until a gap appears and ram in the new entry: by the time he returns he hopes he can retitle it, *The Discovery of Atlantis* by Horatio Dawn.

But a sense of doubt lingers with the pile in front of him. What will they do if that land is nothing like its image as represented in the archives? For archives burn far easier than entire countries. How can the stories of new arrivals be knotted into the long history of a land and change the narrative, without erasing all previous presence? As the scribe of the coming history of that land, he is looking for a systematic disordering of his senses; for how else can a travelling scribe expect to arrive at the

unknown? Dawn's sacred task is no less than writing New Holland into existence.

Merriment is sounding out from Harm's office. They must be enjoying their feast. A loud banging is heard from the archive's entrance.

'Attend to that,' Harm yells out.

Dawn rushes down the hall and opens the door to see a rider from the docks in a long dusty riding coat, canvas sack over his shoulder and dust across his face. 'A delivery from the docks,' he announces. 'I require the signature of Mr Eugene Harm.'

'I am he,' Harm calls out then steps outside as his chin glistens with pork grease.

'I have four barrels waiting outside.'

'Four barrels?'

'Yes.'

'Of what?'

'Pickled Indian bodies.'

The rider produces a receipt. Harm reads it over and signs.

'Shall I bring the barrels in here?'

'No, Mr Dawn here will meet you in the loading docks on the north side.'

'And your tiger skin is in the canvas bag,' the man says, putting it on the ground.

'My tiger has arrived!' Harm shouts with glee.

Dawn leaves the office and moves down the main corridor, past the closely stacked shelves that are gently humming, and, descending twenty more steps, arrives in the dark loading dock. The smell of wet cats. He waits in the darkness until the rider bangs on the door and, removing the bolts, opens it, emitting light. The rider is with three additional workmen: they are carrying four heavy barrels.

‘Can’t you put them down and just roll them in?’ Dawn asks.

‘That would damage the bodies that are sealed inside,’ the rider responds.

‘Bodies? I thought you were just having some fun.’

‘No Sir, real Oriental bodies.’

The four barrels are stacked as one long row. The men depart without saying their farewells. Dawn, with great effort, swings the door closed and the darkness returns. With the light of a single candle the shadows from the barrels lengthen as if they were welcoming him close. He rests the candle on the lid and flattens down his hair with the palm of his hand.

‘Who is floating beneath me now?’ he thinks. ‘And how did they die?’

He feels a sensation like thousands of tiny ants marching beneath his skin. He bends down and, placing an ear to the barrel, hears a deep thumping heart. Moving his ear away he looks at the barrel. He can still hear the strong beating Oriental heart locked inside.

Dawn flees to the safety of his office.

Back at his desk he sits with hands shaking as if it were a winter’s night. He tries to overturn a new piece of white paper but its blankness is screaming at him, as if

it longs to be filled with words that can catalogue the pain of all these forgotten bodies. He presses his pen down into the whiteness, the ink leaks out, spreading across the page, not in cursive writing, but as a single black meaningless smudge – bleeding black blood. He places the stained sheet in the rubbish and replaces it with a fresh one. In the distance he can still hear the revelry of Dampier and Harm.

Dawn's eye catches movement above. What looks like a dislodged paint chip breaks off and flutters down. It lands near his feet, spreading out to reveal a moth that must have become trapped in the room, attached itself to the ceiling, died, the suction cups on its feet wearing out to dislodge and its wings catching the air, making its final descent as gentle as a falling feather. He fills the blank page with all the pathetic details about the dead moth's final descent.

'Mr Dawn, where are you?' Harm yells out; it arrives muffled by the distance.

He quickly stuffs the page into *The Voyage to New Holland* folder and walks with measured steps down the hall. Entering the office he finds Harm wearing a menacing costume of Oriental armour – hundreds of gold coins hanging from thin chains on his shoulders with a jewelled belt wrapped around his waist. Over the plated helmet a tiger's head rests with a fierce expression.

'Where is Captain Dampier?' Dawn asks.

'Tempest Tavern to sleep. Hapsworth Jail can give a man a real thirst for ale.'

'How will he locate it?'

'I drew him a simple map,' Harm responds, extracting a large curved oriental sword from its sheath.

'But can he follow it?'

‘I assume so or this voyage will be a catastrophe,’ Harm says as he holds the sword aloft and pivots his body around. Dawn can see that the tiger’s skin spreads down his back with the dried, flat tail hanging between his legs. ‘This uniform of a conqueror is to become my new working suit. There was a vast battle in the north west of India. Our archive provided maps, river charts to guide boats and all information pertaining to the society of the natives. In exchange for the supplying of information I requested a suit of armour and the skin of a lion to be delivered. It seems they were not sure if my request was for a live or a dead tiger. So they sent me both.’

‘A live tiger?’

‘Yes, it will soon be delivered. But before it arrives please direct your attention to the small black clumps on my desk.’

‘What are they?’ Dawn asks with a focused glare.

‘Dried up flesh. I had to wedge it out from the grooves inside the helmet.’

Dawn removes his handkerchief from his pocket and places it down on the table. He picks up the pieces and puts them, one by one, into the centre of the handkerchief.

‘Have you catalogued the bodies in the barrels?’

‘I did not open them.’

‘Well, with haste, Mr Dawn, do it with haste. I plan on selling them to the School of Medicine at Oxford before we depart.’

Dawn bows and turns to leave, when Harm reminds him, ‘Don’t forget to take

the flesh.’

Biting his lip, Dawn picks it up, returns to his desk.

Back in his office he is about to deposit it in the waste paper basket. Wrapped in the handkerchief, the dried leather flesh is gently pulsating.

Dawn gathers a candle and makes for the basement.

When he enters, the smell of chemicals almost overwhelms him. Using a hammer he opens the first lid and places it on the floor – the candle’s flame catches his reflection on the surface beneath which thick black hair floats like a giant sea creature. With the handle of the hammer he reaches forward to part the strands and comes across a brown face that is angled upwards to expose two opened eyes and a row of bared teeth: in the rocking liquid the head nods gently. Dawn feels a sense of dizziness. He drops the hammer, everything sparkles; starts to flicker, becoming covered in buzzing granules of snow; as he grips the barrel’s edge, looks up to see...*the Indian child’s body has raised itself out of the barrel like a siren – the black pool is leaking out of its lungs, running down its body – and now it breathes deep, as if it were a soprano, but instead of singing it screams and Dawn can see the cavalry of the East India Trading Company led by a pack of foaming dogs charging the village. Above them is an open and deep blue sky. They are firing hot lead at the running Indians. At the edge of the valley they halt, reload and form a rigid line to perform a second sweep. By their fifth they have drawn swords and swipe carefully to stop spurting blood from landing on their sparkling uniforms. Dogs remain afterwards to pick at the slain. Bodies are gathered. The air is sick with death and the dust hovers like a reckoning God. The corpses’ blood and piss and shit is caking the sand together.*

‘Are you feverish?’ Harm asks him, still wearing the armour.

Dawn feels dizzy and looks around with confusion. Harm reaches down to feel his temperature. The vision is fading and the loading bay returns into view. Looking up he sees the tiger hovering over him and screams.

‘Be comforted,’ Harm says. ‘It’s just a hat.’

Dawn stands, exhausted, and slowly walks to the last barrel. He looks down and sees three small bodies packed tightly together, swaying in their liquid casing.

‘I can’t have you sleeping in the basement. You can sleep at home for the rest of the day. Tomorrow morning we can continue to plan for our great voyage,’ Harm says.

Dawn sees the ghostly faces shimmering beneath the pool as the waft of chemicals encircles him lovingly.

‘To home and to rest, Mr Dawn.’

He walks out with a fever in his mind.

VII

As Dawn approaches his building, he views someone pacing anxiously around his stair well. Coming closer he can see that it is Cutstone. ‘Is it true?’ the man asks, getting near, ‘is our great voyager Captain William Dampier out of jail?’

Dawn stops.

‘How do you know this?’

‘He’s been spotted drinking in taverns. Is it him?’

‘Yes, it is.’

‘And will he pilot a vessel all the way south?’

‘Indeed and I have been nominated as scribe of this voyage.’

‘Dawn, you must get me on board.’

‘With our history, why would I do that?’

‘Dawn, I must walk upon that land.’

‘And I must have an uncle.’

Cutstone sits down on the front step and rubs his forehead. ‘You know what it is to have a scarred body, to have trouble sleeping as the tingling pain, the numb muscles, dominate one’s days. I need to walk into that land: it may just prove to be Atlantis yet. And I want to feel this cursed skin shedding from my body, so that I, Cutstone, can wiggle out like a newly born insect with fresh all-seeing eyes.’

Dawn pauses by the door and whispers, ‘To shed one’s skin...’

‘You understand. You’ve had plague; you desire what I desire.’

‘But what an undertaking? Sailing for over one year. And for what? Because the answers might be there? Well they might not be.’

‘Isn’t that the nature of all pilgrimages?’

‘But we don’t know what that may be. Even Captain Dampier does not know.’

‘So go we must. And you must take me. I will protect you Dawn. I will protect you and anyone else that you nominate for my protection. I’ve killed before, I’ll kill again. But you must get me on board, Dawn, you must.’

‘I don’t even know if I have to power to do so.’

‘You have helped build an archive. What’s one name slipped into a ship’s manifest? We’ll walk there arm in arm.’

Dawn opens the door, ‘You will have to leave your request with me, for now I have pressing business.’

‘What could be more pressing than a recasting of our bodies?’

‘I have some flesh to burn,’ Dawn replies and steps inside.

‘Indeed you do,’ Cutstone puts his foot in the way to prevent the door from closing. ‘Where is the Great Voyager now?’

‘Tempest Tavern.’

‘He sleeps?’

‘Of course.’

‘Did you fill him up with drink?’

‘Don’t disturb him. He must rest.’

‘Dawn, imagine that you are fresh out of jail. What’s the first thing that you go hunting for?’

‘He started drinking with lunch.’

‘Yes, drinking. That’s all a part of it.’

Cutstone bids Dawn farewell. He turns down the street until a rattling carriage cuts the line of sight and is gone.

Inside Dawn drops the five pieces of dried flesh into the bucket, grabs a large spoon and, with the bucket in his right hand, joins the waves of people moving and jostling in the streets. He walks to a nearby copse with thin summer grass. In the shade he finds a section where the ground is soft and scrapes away until he gets to the dirt. With the spoon he cuts out a large square the size of a man’s spread hand. He carefully lifts it out, maintaining its structure and places it next to the hole. He scrapes out more soil and tips the dried flesh out of the bucket. The remains of the slaughtered Oriental fall out.

‘Looks like dried snacking meat,’ Dawn says while he sits and picks dirt out from his fingernail. He uses his spoon to sprinkle dirt over the hole, slots the square of dirt back into its place, like a door in a frame. Placing a rock over the disturbed earth he finishes by praying, but the words do not seem to emerge naturally. He has to force them out; to spit them out.

‘Here lies a small piece of the mass slaughter that was visited upon a foreign land. It will never taste justice for the crime that tore it apart. I don’t even know why I buried it when I could have just fed it to the dogs? But it feels like this flesh should be allowed to decompose in peace and join the dust. What else can I do but bury it? I am only a simple scribe.’

He finishes by bending over to kiss the earth. The ceremony is complete; now the flesh will join the process of breaking down until no trace of it exists. Except for

Dawn's memory, he will remember.

After washing out the bucket and leaving it by the door to dry, he charges his pen and opens the notebook. He sketches the five chunks of dead Orientals. Beneath he records the words of the prayer. Closing the book, he is ready to become clean; starts by stripping off all his clothes. Unwrapping his soap he dips it into the bucket; lathers his hands and washes his face, cleans inside his ears, scrubs his hair. After the face he cleans his neck and moves down to wash his chest. Flinging a long cloth over his back he pulls it back and forth to remove dead skin. Then his legs and feet. Rinsing himself clean he stands near the window to feel a gentle breeze slowly enter, drying his skin so that it stretches tight over his bones. Next, remaining naked, he washes his underwear and socks. Hanging them near the window he cleans his shirt – hangs that too – puts on a new one, fresh socks and sits, staring at the open door. Now that he is thoroughly clean he can approach Samantha. Today he will tell her that she must join him on the voyage, nay the pilgrimage, to New Holland.

Dawn is getting tired of the pulsating throngs of people that move through the streets, seemingly without purpose. As the idea of escape has become real his feet barely connect with the ground. As he arrives he is profoundly dizzy, banging on the door – he hears her walking up the staircase, 'Samantha?'

Opening the door she is smiling, until she sees his exhausted state. 'Dawn, you look like you are about to collapse,' she says with worry in her voice.

'I must come inside.'

Descending the stairs he has trouble focusing. On entering the room he removes his shoes and coat; the familiar smell of burning fragrant oils.

‘You can sleep if you like. I won’t disturb you.’ Dawn is already making for the bed. ‘When you wake we can go to a coffee house.’

Dawn nods his head and lies down. The soft sheets of her bed press against his cheek.

VIII

Remaining in repose, lazily, on the bed, Dawn watches her reading by candlelight. It’s late at night and she is doing the most exquisite thing possible: engrossing herself within the pages of a small red book. He moves gently to get a better view; to drink up the visual feast; she notices, turning her head while she closes the book.

‘No don’t. I love to watch you read beside the warmth of a single burning candle.’

‘Well, I love to watch you sleep in my bed. It suits you.’

‘What is that book?’

‘A tale of sailing to Byzantium.’

‘So share it.’

Samantha opens the book again; angles it so that the letters become illuminated by the soft candle’s glow. She recounts the narrative.

‘In the year 666 a goliard leaves Scotland for Byzantium. The pilgrim wants to learn the craft of illuminating books and that is the place to do it. It’s a hard road and the pilgrim only survives with the hospitality of strangers. People on the road welcome him in. Strangers take it upon themselves to wash his feet, feed him and share the warmth of their fire. Making it to Venice he is overcome by the beauty of that city, but the beauty is tarnished when he learns from a Kurdish trader that all the gold and jewels that he sees have been plundered from Byzantium. That same trader agrees to provide passage to the pilgrim and so they cut across the jewelled glassy surface of the Adriatic and circle around Greece, up the Aegean and through the Marmara Sea until that holy city emerges upon the horizon. Upon their approach he knows that he is coming into a city that has been built specifically to enable God’s habitation. This should, therefore, be a city where the food has more flavour, where the light is brighter and the grass feels more solid beneath one’s feet. Where he will lie upon the shores of the Bosphorus and as the sun animated his morose muscles he will feel the sludge of the river rush into his lungs and his flesh will melt as if he is made of ice – Horatio Dawn trickles down to join the ancient sea. For are not all pilgrims naturally drawn to Byzantium like thirsty men drawn to a well? (This is, after all, the centre of civilisation.)

However, when he disembarks he finds that an outbreak of plague has laid siege to the city. Pushing on, through the rotting and pus ridden bodies, he makes it to the Hagia Sofia. For only there – in that exact location – can Man come into the presence of God. As a destination the Hagia Sofia is easy to find. It dominates the skyline and undoubtedly God is invested in the very stones that support the vaulted nave. If man were to get in unison and somewhere deep in the country of Ethiopia build a mountain then it would look something like this.

The pilgrim's heart is racing as he approaches, ignoring the yells of the fishmongers and the waiting, dying, holy mendicants. Coming into the building's shade he feels all sickness weep its way outside of him. Sweat is leaching out as if a Devil were squeezing water from a rag. Walking deeper into the building – the coolness of the stones – he feels that the building itself is crawling inside of him and its architecture is pressing down into his bones, fusing with his skeleton to become a new rock-hard frame. Its interior is decorated with stained glass windows. No base metals are to be found in here as the alchemical wonder has already occurred... all metals have been purified to gold. Inside it is like no other building that exists. Singular. Walking down the long hall he can feel the solidity of the stones and the very air itself is rich with the Hagia Sofia's acidic taste. Charting his way through the dim interior is to taste a construction's history. In the centre he looks up at the height of the dome with its mosaics and intricate designs and – uncontrollably – he begins to spin. With his arms stretched out and looking at the revolving ceiling, increasing in tempo, he spins, spins and continues to spin.

Looking up from the page Samantha tells him, 'The pilgrim's account ends here.'

'Why was he spinning?'

'You know how charwomen will spin washing around their head to extract the water. I think the pilgrim spins to extract his self out of his own body.'

'Well... what else do you have that you can read to me?'

'Aren't you sick of books?'

'There aren't many pilgrim accounts at the archive. Although I would

certainly like to add my own.’

‘I do have one more. It’s from my father.’

‘He wrote books?’

‘Translated them. But he always claimed that the translated works were as much his, as they were of the original author.’

‘What was his name?’

‘His name was Thomas Vaughan and he was an alchemist. His practice of the form, ultimately, killed him.’

She raises her hands in seriousness but her face gives it away: they both laugh.

‘How?’ Dawn asks.

‘I have been told that during an experiment the fumes overcame him. But I don’t believe it. I think that he almost discovered the secret to the philosopher’s stone. I believe that, ultimately, his spirit tore its way out of this body, damaging the vessel so that it could not get back in again.’

‘And what of your mother?’

‘My mother, Rebecca Vaughan, was his *soror mystica* and she died in the same experiment. At first he undertook the experiments by himself in his laboratory. But with the experiment that killed him he was wrapped in an entranced embrace with his wife, my mother. For what is the ultimate aim of the philosopher’s stone? It is to redeem crude human flesh, in a process that will change one’s body, while, at the same time, turn base metals into gold.’

‘You must avoid their experiment.’

‘I will and I won’t. I certainly don’t mean to poison myself.’

‘I promise you that I will get you on the voyage. And I also promise you that you will return.’

‘What will we see when we arrive? Will there be plague?’

‘Impossible. For how can it be there?’

‘And our marked bodies?’ she asks.

‘Scrubbed clean.’

‘Clean?’ she asks.

‘How did you make it to London?’

‘After their deaths I lived with an aunt. But there was something my father told me. This was long before he died. I was asking him about the Great Fire and I asked him what would be left of London after it burnt. His response was that as a result of the intensity of the Great Fire the base metals buried beneath London may have changed enough to affect the circulation of the bodies that were moving along the streets above.’

‘My first vision was of London burning. It occurred on the shores of the Thames and I saw a legion of rats evacuating the city.’

‘You saw the Great Fire?’

‘Yes, not the one of 1666. But the lingering fire.’

‘A vision?’

‘Yes,’ Dawn waits and asks, ‘Be my *soror mystica*.’

‘Kiss me,’ she urges him and he pulls her close. Kissing and searching with their hands and their tongues. He takes off her dirty work clothes, while she removes his in turn. As soon as they are naked he kneels down and puts his head between her legs. Dawn feels an emptiness stretch over his body. On the ceiling above yellow mould grows.

The candle hisses as it burns down and the room fades. The only illumination is the light from a night lamp that crawls in through the smudged window.

IX

In the early morning Dawn rolls out of bed and dresses as quietly as he can. Before leaving he looks at Samantha then reaches over to touch her shoulder. She moves gently in bed and opens her eyes. ‘Are you going to the archive?’

‘Yes, but sleep some more.’

‘Wait,’ she says. ‘There is one more thing I want to ask you about. It involves your family’s farm up north.’

‘My family is now gone.’

‘Dawn...how?’

He gestures towards his marks of plague.

‘That farm is still yours.’

‘I haven’t been there for years.’

‘But it’s still yours. The townsfolk know you, enabling a legitimate claim.’

‘Why are we talking about this now? We’re pushing out to the edge of the known. I don’t care much for my past.’

‘Because we will need to return. And your land remains, you are tied to it. You helped built it and work it. Your stories are woven into its hills and the various descendants of your family’s sheep, all are eating from the regenerating grass.’

‘We are on the cusp of our great venture.’

‘Yes, we are.’

Dawn kisses her. ‘We will survive and we will return.’

Dawn expects to see Captain Dampier at the archive. But Harm is there alone – his office is filled with opened files as if the man were trying to read up on the entire southern hemisphere to prepare for the voyage – and the tiger’s fur cloak remains upon his shoulders, the head folded over his scalp: two blank marble eyes glaring out.

‘Mr Dawn, you missed an early morning delivery,’ he says as Dawn arrives.

‘The live tiger has arrived?’

‘I just can’t bring myself to descend down into the docks to look at it.’

‘I can sketch it and add it up on level three,’ Dawn says with a slight grin.

Harm looks up from his work, ‘There’s a spring to your step, and a gleam to your eye?’

‘I guess I am excited for the future.’

‘Attend to the tiger.’

‘Is it dangerous?’

‘If it ever gets out of the box it is.’

‘A real live tiger here in the archive! It is as if the rage of the Orientals has flowed back up the trade lines.’

‘I prefer the one resting on my head.’ Harm reaches up and strokes it. ‘And I believe that I have found us a ship.’

‘Does Captain Dampier like it?’

‘Hard to gauge a man’s opinion when he has been drowning himself in ale all evening. I went to the Tempest Tavern last night. The keeper said that he was drinking with another sea-fellow and that they departed in the evening drunk and baying like a pair of donkeys.’

‘I will attend to the tiger.’

‘No, visit Captain Dampier first. That tiger is not going anywhere.’

Dawn rushes to Tempest Tavern and asks the innkeeper for access to Dampier’s room. As they are climbing, the innkeeper says to Dawn, ‘I think that Captain Dampier is still out from last night.’ After the key opens the rusty lock, they both peer inside to find the room empty.

‘It’s just like I told you. Room’s empty.’

‘I will wait for him here,’ Dawn says while entering.

The keeper nods in reply and closes the door.

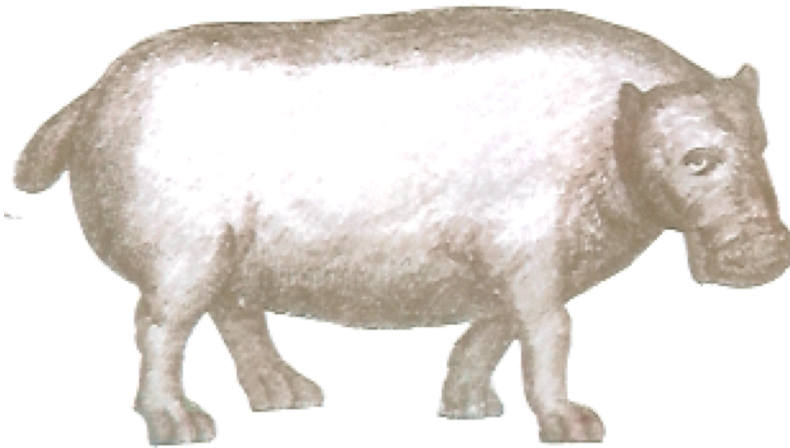
The throbbing life of the streets filters into this quiet space. Dampier’s valise is open on the desk; the notes seem jumbled into a terrible mess, so Dawn, instinctively, starts to lay them out. He retrieves one that shows a dolphin with the snarling face of a demon.



A strange collection of animals, frozen onto a piece of paper.



What is that abomination that is hovering at the bottom?



Next he is onto the map of New Holland. The East coast trails away as if it were shrouded in mist.



His eyes start to blur so he tries to rub them clean and another of his visions sets in. He is staring at the map; the East coast is slowly shading in, as if a wind were

lifting the mist. Dawn can see *a beautiful city built in the alcove of a bottle green harbour and the foreshore is packed with drunken revellers and these people are the most refined and beautiful members of a strange tribe that he has ever seen. The sun is setting and some kind of religious folk carnival is occurring here: they seem to worship the water that is in the harbour and dance around it in an ecstatic revelry. Heavy sounding music with a demonic beat is soaking the atmosphere and the people are drinking and dancing – some of them are kissing in public, others remove their clothes entirely and start to run around naked. Dawn looks into the water – the focus of their worship – and all he can see are hundreds of bodies, floating face down in the water, their skin riddled with plague marks. These black bodies have been floating for over two hundred years after their original infection; becoming so sick that they dove into the water and started to drink the salty water to try and wash their mouths and their stomachs free of the disease, and now the harbour is thick with them.*

Dawn wakes; he is lying on the bed. He reaches towards the map and tries to touch where the city used to be alive but all that he can feel is the cool graininess of the paper.

The door bangs open, Dampier comes into the room with a red face and reeking of drink. He stops when he sees Dawn sitting on his bed and a look of confusion breaks across his face. ‘Have I missed an important meeting?’ he asks.

Cutstone enters behind him. ‘Dawn, you’re here!’

Dawn stands while saying, ‘Captain Dampier, I’ve been sent to check on your state.’

‘Mr Dawn this is my companion Mr Cutstone.’

‘Yes, we are known to each other’ Cutstone responds.

‘Captain Dampier I’ve been send here to check on your state’ Dawn says.

Dampier walks over to the desk. ‘My state is drunken, Mr Dawn. I am drunk.’
He notices that his papers have been rustled and the map is opened on his bed. ‘What do you mean to do with that there map?’

‘I was looking at it. Dreaming of our voyage.’

‘You mean you suffered another vision?’ Cutstone adds.

‘So you are, indeed, known to each other.’

‘Yes,’ Dawn responds.

‘Well, what visions?’ Dampier asks.

‘Tell him Dawn.’

‘Tell me what?’

‘Sometimes I suffer from visions.’

‘Suffer? Anything but...’ Dampier replies and looks at the open map on the bed. ‘But what is your vision of our destination?’

Dawn looks up to answer him. ‘I see the destruction of the Holy of Holies.’

‘This voyage is becoming more enticing the more I hear about it,’ Dampier responds as he picks up the map.

An ominous banging is heard on the door. It swings open and Joram, the mud raker, peers into the room. He is wearing his large peacock feather hat and a heavy

black coat. Dawn looks at Joram's feet – hoping to see the hoofs – but, alas, all he can see are his large leather boots.

‘How long have you two been here?’ Joram asks as he walks into the room, shutting the door behind him.

‘Dawn has been waiting for some time. I only just arrived.’

Joram looks at Cutstone, ‘Who is this?’

‘One of our new crew members,’ Dampier responds.

Joram focuses his beady eyes on Dawn and holds his gaze, ‘Mr Dawn, did you attend the archive this morning?’

‘Yes.’

‘Was Mr Harm there?’

‘Yes. But he sent me here to check on Captain Dampier.’

‘I see you have sewed yourself back into the fabric of London, Captain Dampier?’

‘A night of whores and drink is what it was and a wondrous night at that.’

‘Dawn, how was Mr Harm this morning?’

Dawn looks at Cutstone, then responds to Joram, ‘He was in good spirits. I think from his tiger skin more than anything else.’

‘I must inform you that a tiger has killed him.’

‘A tiger?’ Dampier asks. ‘How?’

‘A live tiger was delivered this morning,’ Dawn tells them.

‘Did you see this tiger?’ Joram asks.

‘No, I came straight here. I had to tell Captain Dampier that we’ve found a ship.’

‘Was the attack savage?’ Dampier asks.

‘Savage? His innards are spread over the office,’ Joram responds.

Dampier laughs.

‘Is the tiger still there?’ Dawn asks.

‘I don’t think so, it must have escaped into the streets of London.’

‘We must return at once,’ Dampier tells them. ‘This cannot end our voyage.’

Joram nods his head and replies. ‘Indeed. It’s quite a sight.’

Dawn stands and makes for the door. Joram reaches over and places a hand upon his shoulder. ‘I would be most interested in what you do view of the new archives. All those documents soaked in blood.’

Dawn walks away from Joram’s grip. All four men descend the stairs.

‘Should we have another cup before we depart?’ Dampier suggests.

‘We make for the archive,’ Joram snaps back and leads the way with Dawn trailing behind.

The pool of blood has leaked out into the hallway, forming a thick skin over its

surface; flies are landing to swim in the red muck. Dampier steps aside. Joram nimbly steps over the leak and enters Harm's office.

Dawn can see the tiger prints left in blood. Harm has been eviscerated. 'So who will fund our voyage now?' he asks.

'This will not stop the voyage,' Joram responds with the hum of flies sounding in the background. 'It is crucial that this voyage goes ahead and you will remain its captain. The contracts remain valid. I myself will replace Mr Harm as first mate. Someone must be there to ensure that the interests of the Royal Mint and the East India Company are maintained. I will be there because, Captain Dampier, you did indeed lose your last ship and that will not occur again. Also I do desire to see New Holland with mine own eyes.' Moving around the office, Joram starts to inspect the collection of documents. 'Here is the certificate of purchase of your ship,' he says, handing over the document.

'We talked of this ship yesterday and Mr Harm told me that he would inspect it. He must have purchased it on the spot,' Dampier responds.

Joram sits down in Harm's chair. 'Why is he wearing a lion's skin?'

'It was delivered the day before,' Dawn says. 'I believe that it gave him a feeling of power to wear it.'

'He kept it on as we planned all afternoon,' Dampier adds. He reads from the certificate of purchase, 'Our new ship is to be called the *Lantern*.'

'I trust that you will take possession of the boat and gather a crew. This fellow can aid you.' Joram looks at Cutstone, 'Do you have experience with crew?'

‘Much.’

‘Then I will bid you both good day.’ Joram stands to leave.

‘What of the body?’ Dawn asks. ‘What can we do with Mr Harm’s body?’

‘I will send soldiers to clean up the slaughter. Our guards at the Royal Mint have all spent time in India, they know what they’re doing. This will be complete before sundown.’

Joram steps over the body and exits through the front door with a gentle whistle.

More flies have descended; one has, evidently, drunk too much as the blood is over its eyes. With coated wings it fights in vain, only to sink, suffocated in the rich sludge.

‘What now?’ Dawn asks.

‘Now we drink,’ Dampier says.

Cutstone grins as they move outside.

IX

Captain Dampier makes his way through the emptied streets. As they move past the reconstruction of St Paul’s Cathedral a flock of swallows cuts across the sky in formation then brakes to descend into a distant square. Dawn is walking behind him, followed by Cutstone. He likes connecting the tip of his foot to Dampier’s shadow;

imagining that he can pick up the stretching black presence and put it on like a cloak.

Boatswains in long coats chart the Thames, ferrying people from one bank to the other.

Outside a town crier is slowly moving down the road. ‘Take heed people of London,’ he yells, ‘for a great tiger is loose in the streets and hungry for babes and children. A reward will be offered for any citizen who can hunt it down.’

‘Good sir, tell me, have there been any fresh attacks?’ Dampier asks.

‘A small child was torn asunder. But the tiger escaped. That is the first to be reported,’ replies the crier.

Dampier looks at Dawn.

‘Did it try to consume the child?’ Dampier asks.

‘Just opened its belly and then departed. A feral beast loose and free to slash its way through London.’

‘These empty streets remind me of London the last time plague hit. I would be keen to undertake a tiger hunt,’ Dampier tells Cutstone.

‘Imagine the rewards,’ Cutstone adds.

‘The last thing I ever hunted was an eagle. I’m a keen shot. Got it at two hundred yards, and with a rusty old number, remaindered from the Civil War. The bullet struck well and true. The wings of the bird seemed to give and it began to spiral down, all spinning in a gyre, releasing out a single whoop before splashing down into the marsh. For a long time it sat above my fireplace with its mighty wings spread like this,’ and Dampier acts out as if he were flapping with his arms, ‘and its beak open

like this,' he puts two hands over his mouth, forming an open beak. His tongue wiggles inside of the cavern.

'How did you ever get a large tongue like that?' Dawn asks.

'I changed many things about myself while incarcerated.'

'To a tavern,' Cutstone says, 'follow me.'

They enter a small drinking room, order three ales and, after quickly drinking them, continue walking.

Dawn can see that they are moving into an older part of London. In some streets a carriage can barely squeeze through and there are signs warning larger carriages to desist from entering roads, if they are indeed roads; some continually narrow until a carriage becomes wedged and the horse has to gently back out. In the distance a golden orb seems to hover over the roofs and as Dawn gets closer he can see that it rests on a long pillar of stone.

'What is that ahead?' Dawn asks.

Neither of them answers him.

Dawn can hear a military band playing with flutes and deep bass drums. 'This is the part of London where they used to burn witches and Jews,' Cutstone tells them.

'We are almost there,' Dampier.

'What is the light that we approach?' Dawn asks. 'Is it a carnival?'

'It's the opening of a Monument to Fire. Last night while waiting for Cutstone to finish at the bordello I saw a poster announcing that today would be the ceremony

for its opening. To remember the dead of the Great Fire they have erected a huge stone pillar with fake golden flames blooming from the top. I missed the fire as I was at sea. But I can still witness its memorial.’

The monument appears large and silent. Moths are circling it, drawn to its reflection of the afternoon amber sun, as drums and flutes create a festive atmosphere. They arrive and move into the courtyard. People hover together, swaying in tune with the piping flute, the deep rhythm of the drums that reverberates through the skin, registering its presence in the pits of their stomachs. They push their way through the crowd to get to the front. The Monument to Fire looms over them like a war hammer about to come crashing down.

The music desists. A man clammers onto the temporary stage and raises a cone to his mouth. ‘Today is the opening of the Monument to Fire. It is here as a reminder of that horrible day of the Great Fire, when the entire city was almost lost. I would like to thank, on behalf of London, Sir Robert Hooke and other Fellows from the Royal Society for their help in designing the monument and to the Corporation of London for its munificence. A fire spotter will now sit, at all times, at the Monument’s peak. And below this, in the laboratory basement a series of experiments will occur. We aim to make real the dream of cities that do not burn like tinderboxes. We will understand bodies and we will cure them of plague. Now please welcome Sir Robert Hooke to the stage.’

He signals to the band to play as a well-dressed gentleman climbs the podium. Wearing all black with a small trace of red neckerchief protruding out. He bows to the crowd. ‘We have already completed our first dissection within this tower. In order to understand the body we must break it apart and separate it down into smaller and

smaller pieces. Only by looking at a body's innards stretched out can one see how that body may be alive and as we come to understand a body as an organic system can we see how plague may then be beaten. To mark the opening of this ceremony we will now present to your viewing pleasure the recently dismantled body that has travelled to London from the distant Spice Islands. I present to you the painted prince, Gioli.'

'Gioli?' says Dampier.

'Who?' asks Dawn.

'He is mine. I am the one who brought him back and they have gone about and cut him up like a pig for a roasting spit.'

Hooke steps back and a large wooden frame is wheeled out with Gioli's skin stretched out and lashed to the outer edges of the frame. The face is missing. The head was removed at the neck. The band plays a tune as the crowd applauds.

'What was good about him was the intricate tattoos, now with loose skin, his elegant patterns have been smudged out,' Dampier says.

Hooke continues, 'With science we will discover all that is strange and beautiful in the world and we will take that beauty and put it in a frame. Now Gioli will not rot but his body will remain preserved for all to see. And it will continue to hang for the viewing pleasure of generations to come.'

'No!' Dampier says as he puts his hand on Dawn's shoulder.

The band begins and behind them the people start to clap. Hooke steps off the stage and walks away. Dampier charges forwards, pushing through the crowd until he comes to Hooke and declares, 'That's my man you have strung up there.'

‘Good sir, have we previously met?’ Hooke asks.

‘I am Captain William Dampier and that is my man who you put through that profane and scientific crucifixion.’

‘Indeed it seems that we have met! Perhaps not in the flesh but I am familiar with your books. All of the Fellows of the Royal Society know your work. We study it very closely. You are *the* Captain Dampier?’

‘You have been studying me in the basement of this monument and at the same time dissecting my man Gioli?’

‘How can we not? Your reports from the fringes are magnificent! The way that you create an exact account of those strange lands. Reading your book is like travelling there oneself.’

‘How did you come to own Gioli?’

Hooke looks up at the displayed skin. ‘A circus master contacted us after his death. Gioli had been shown around London, caught a cold and subsequently perished.’ His gaze returns. ‘I guess they don’t have the fortitude that we have here. My eight year old has been sniffing, it seems, since the day that he was born. We started to dissect Gioli as soon as he arrived, as a putrid smell had already begun. But tell us of your own experiments? Are you planning on any new adventures?’

‘I will have you know that we are about to voyage to the end of the world, to New Holland?’

‘You have been there previously, have you not?’

‘We had to retreat due to a growing menace from the natives. But this time we

mean to return and penetrate far inland.’

Dampier looks over at Dawn. ‘Allow me to introduce the scribe of my next voyage, Mr Horatio Dawn.’

‘You won’t write your next work yourself?’

‘If I do then I will be working from his notes.’

Dawn bows, ‘It’s a pleasure Sir.’

‘And you both must meet a mutual fellow of the Royal Society, a Mr Samuel Pepys, who is an especially keen reader of your work and would enjoy your company. He has a dinner at his residence tonight and you must partake.’

‘We are currently preparing to depart,’ Dawn responds.

‘They you had better make it now, you probably won’t return until late next year.’

‘We will attend,’ Dampier says. It is important that Mr Dawn joins if he means to write the history of our voyage.’

‘Mr Dawn, some paper if you please,’ Hooke requests.

Dawn removes a piece of paper from his coat. Hooke takes it and writes down the address. ‘We will see you at nine o’clock. Mr Pepys will be most keen to meet you and hear about your voyages.’

Looking up at Gioli, Dampier asks, ‘What will become of the displayed skin?’

‘The School of Anatomy at Oxford will add it to their collection.’

‘What about a proper burial?’

‘That would lose our knowledge of the Oriental body.’

‘Are you afraid of the tiger?’ Dawn asks.

‘What tiger?’

‘A tiger broke out of the archive today after attacking the chief archivist. Now it is loose in the streets of London. Has already taken one small child,’ Dawn tells him.

‘This menace originated from the East India Company’s archive?’ Hooke asks.

‘It originated from India but it subsequently arrived in London via the archive,’ Dawn responds.

‘It’s great that people won’t be chased away by that beast. We must consecrate this monument. One cannot let a single escaped wild animal keep people from their mourning.’

Dampier bids a farewell. They turn a corner and Dampier starts to mutter violently, then turns and watches as Gioli’s skin is taken down and moved back inside the Monument to Fire.

X

The crowd disperses, moving in united groups. The Monument remains stiff and cold with fake golden flames emerging from its tip. London is the right place for a solitary

walker, the constant movement, and a way to empty the mind; but now, out of fear, the people huddle together. Dampier, Cutstone and Dawn leave the crowds and walk down Pudding Lane.

Around a corner they are approached by an older gypsy lady who is circulating, led by an older man. She has a red embroidered shawl slung over her black dress. Her husband wears a dark blue canvas shirt with green pants. He has a large roman nose and golden teeth that shine when he smiles. The older man sees Dampier with Dawn and approaches. He mutters something to the woman; she holds up a deck of tarot cards. ‘Would you partake in fortune-telling?’ he asks, dragging her towards them.

Dawn puts up his hands, ‘I’m not interested.’

‘We can read your future.’

‘I can see more than an old hag with a deck of creased cards,’ Dawn responds.

‘For you, Sir,’ he turns his attention to Dampier.

‘Since when have the Spanish known anything about the future?’ Dampier asks.

‘Spanish she is not, but a wandering mystic, exiled to this land. She has no home and lives wholly within her own mind. She can crawl into yours as well, if you choose so, for the price of a small coin.’

Dampier reaches into his vest’s right pocket; pulls out a single coin. ‘Let me hear it then.’

The woman approaches, shuffling the deck of cards. All the time her gaze is

fixed on Dampier. She separates the deck in half and begins to rapidly fold one corner of a card beneath the card below, then when they are all locked together she arches back the spine; flicks the cards down as a flowing stream to arrive, shuffled, in a single deck. She again lets it fall down from her right hand to her left. Straightening the edges so that they appear like a solid block. The deck of cards sits silent and charged with meaning. People gather like pilgrims around a holy meteorite that has just fallen to earth.

Dampier picks up the first card; places it down – The Lovers.

He picks up the second card; places it down – The False Prophet.

The third – The Devil.

Fourth – The Hanged Man.

Fifth – Judgement.

Sixth card – Justice.

‘What about number seven?’ Dampier asks.

She stops and allows all six cards to remain.

The fortune-teller looks at him and shrugs her shoulders. The man steps forwards. She speaks to him; then he translates her reply to Dampier, ‘On the seventh day is rest, the Sabbath. Nothing of any note will occur on this day.’

Dawn runs his eyes across the six displayed cards.

‘A false prophet, lovers and justice. Is there no card for the scientist?’
Dampier asks.

The man asks her. She shakes her head.

‘These categories no longer apply,’ Dampier picks up the cards and then shuffles them into a six-card pile: he then rips it in two and throws the fragments at the woman so that they rain down on her like snow. Turning, Dampier signals to his two companions that they should exit.

In the streets the people continue to move.

‘Do these people know they have become the hunted?’

‘They know little if anything at all’ Dawn responds.

‘I must drink, Dawn. I want to drink and drink.’ They come upon an open field where the carnival continues. Dampier makes for the tent where barrels of ale are stacked; attendants are issuing cups and the ale is flowing. Scattered around the tent are small wooden tables with metal cups strewn around. Dampier buys three cups, passes two to Dawn and Cutstone then drinks the remainder.

The crowd is slowly thickening; at the far end of the field a small gypsy cart is being dragged by a single donkey with two strangely dressed men who look like Magi from the East. The donkey and the wagon slowly chart their way into the centre point of all the drinking tents; the driver pulls on the reins for the beast to stop. They alight, open the back flap and four women and five children, all bearing instruments, tumble out. Their clothing shakes with beads and small bells as they hold hands to bow in unison. The drums begin a rapid beat; the harps and guitars join in. The curtains part to reveal the figure of Death, wearing long black monk’s robes with a dark hood over its head. Inside the dark hood is a wooden facemask with heavily raised cheekbones and a long reaching nose: it wears a plague doctor’s mask. The gypsies bow to the figure; it raises its long robes, begins the furious dance: the gypsies form a circle and play the music with a wild mania, spinning in revelry. Dawn looks up at Dampier; his

eyes are focused and sharp as blades. He steps forwards and undertakes a gentle jig in the dust. The gypsies see Dampier's responding dance; they laugh and yell: *angelo della morte* and *benvenuto medico della pesta*. Dampier raises his hands and with nimble tread dances towards them. He embraces Death lovingly and they start to furiously dance together. They dance and spin as if their purpose and the centre of their being in a rotting world is to take the other's hands and to dance and dance; forgetting their lot while their skin becomes hot with rhythm, their breath panting: all that matters is that they dance and dance, dance and dance some more. The musicians build the music to a crescendo and the Londoners empty their glasses to throw behind them and run in to join the dancing circle. Soon all the people are embracing each other and dancing as a vortex with Death and Captain Dampier in the middle. As the surrounding tents empty, more people see the shifting moving flowing mass of humanity and run to join in, elbowing their way to its centre so that they can hear the gypsy music and join in the dancing: they dance as if they know that they will all be dead soon, but here, in this revelry they feel utterly alive, as if their skin can barely contain the energy.

On the outskirts of this whorl the tiger appears. It pauses and sniffs the air. Two green eyes momentarily flash as the tiger lowers its head to the ground where it follows the traces of humans dancing; remaining still, sitting in repose, its stubby tail darting from side to side. Its two flashing jewelled eyes fix upon a small child that has become separated from its parents. The tiger slinks closer, rubbing the dirt with its belly. Now, close, it lunges forwards, bearing down on the young girl, blond hair tied back beneath a scarf over a dirty face and picks her up with its jaws; growling and dragging the child away.

The circle of dancers erupts into a mania and people are yelling, 'WE ARE

UNDER ATTACK' and 'THE ORIENTALS HAVE ARRIVED.'

The spinning circle breaks as people run in all directions. The tiger returns from a new side and swipes at a man who removes a pistol and fires, to no avail. Dampier stops his dancing; sees the tiger through the outskirts of the crowd. He looks back at the figure and continues to dance. Dawn is pushed into the dirt by the mad rush. His mouth fills with the kicked up dust as the revellers roll over him. He crawls away from their feet and when he can feel only blank space around him, he tries to stand up but dizziness overcomes him and he collapses.

The field is open; the tables and cups scattered; the tent overturned and fabric strewn to the edge of the field.

Dampier stands over and bends down to shake him. Dawn opens his eyes. 'How long have I been here?' he asks.

'Some time,' Dampier says, as he pulls him up. 'The tiger is gone.'

A solitary donkey is pulling the gypsy's cart away.

'They must be disappointed with their taking today.' Dampier waves them a farewell. 'I did give them a gold coin, for their trouble.'

A hat is half submerged in the dust. Further on, a green scarf is twisted around in the mud. 'We must return to the tavern and prepare for Mr Pepys' dinner party,' Dampier says. 'I will need these people when I return from the voyage so it's important that we arrive well presented.'

Dawn looks to Dampier who is pushing forwards through the mud.

'Where is Cutstone?'

‘He left to hunt the tiger.’

Back at the Tempest Tavern Dampier empties a jug of water into a washbasin and begins to scrub his face clean. He dries his face using a clean rag and says, ‘I haven’t had any shine to my skin for the entire time of my incarceration.’ Gently he runs his right index finger from his right cheekbone down under his mouth and up again to his left cheekbone. He puts on his black suit and uses butter to set his hair rigid. He coats his lower face with a thick lather and, snapping open the razor, hands it to Dawn. Dawn reaches forwards and uses the razor to gently scrape away the bubbles to remove the man’s stubble. When the shave is finished, Dampier washes his face and runs his index finger over his new smooth skin. ‘Good job, scribe.’

They charter a cart and donkey for the evening. Dampier emerges into the streets; takes the reins into his two gloved hands and whips the animal’s side. The city appears as a fast-moving magic lantern as they bump along.

‘Seething Lane is the other way,’ Dawn mentions as they cross the river then turn right.

‘First I want to revisit the Monument.’

‘The Monument, why?’ Dawn sees the concentration upon his face. ‘You mean to return for Gioli?’

‘Gioli has never left me. I used to think of him often. He was and will always be mine.’

‘The tiger is still loose in that section.’

‘Exactly!’

They continue to ride in silence. The carriage moves with a swift grace until they come upon the forecourt of the Monument to Fire. Dampier kicks down the steps

and approaches the door. He raps on its wooden exterior with his walking stick, waits, then impatiently raps again, harder. A viewing hole slides open and a guard's eyes peer out. 'It is late and I am supposed to be watching for more fires,' says the fire warden, speaking through the gap.

'I have been sent here by the Royal Society to clean out their monument for pestilence resides within.'

'Who was infected? A guest from the opening?'

'No, Gioli's skin may still be infected. I am here to collect it.' The fire warden opens the door. He emerges, putting on his coat.

'Take it and I will wait at the far end of the square.'

They quickly enter then lock the door.

The fire warden has left his burning lantern, so they pick it up by its metal wire handle and move down a long set of stairs in a circle of light. The hall is bare, with a thin layer of sand that crunches beneath their feet as they walk. The thick stone walls cool the air. Moving with the beam, the hallway opens out into a large laboratory. Resting against a wall, suspended on wire hooks, there he is: the hanging body of Gioli. Dawn puts the lantern down and it projects a large shadow on the roof that hovers with its two stretched arms appearing as large bat wings. Dampier approaches it. The strong smell of alcohol and preserving agents. Looking under Gioli's skin he says, 'They have taken out all of the stuff inside him, and his bone as well. This is barely him, just his skin and a system of wires.' He moves around it, looking at the front and the back; absorbing all of the details.

'It's not here,' Dampier says in an exhausted voice.

'What?'

'Gioli had a map tattooed across his back and it showed the existence of a rich

city deep in the Southern hemisphere. But he must have died of the pox and the damage to his skin has made the map unrecognisable.’

‘So we can leave now?’ Dawn asks.

‘We still take it with us.’

‘To New Holland?’

‘This skin,’ Dampier asks, looking up. ‘No, we bury it. For Gioli was my friend and saved my life more than once. Bodies must be respected and when they die they must be given a proper chance to break apart, beneath the ground to become dust again.’

‘I agree.’

Removing a knife, Dampier cuts away the stitching that attaches the skin to the frame, the shadow slowly folds away as the loose skin falls over his shoulder, until his old friend is draped over him – all surface with no inner depth to penetrate. By the time that the captain has finished there is a pile of thin wire that glints in the lamp’s light. Gioli’s skin is the colour of river sludge. Dampier rolls up the skin and places it inside his coat pocket. Picking up the burning lantern they move up the staircase and exit.

‘Is that it, on your shoulder?’ the fire spotter asks.

‘It is and you can re-enter, it’s clean again.’

The spotter laughs as he walks inside; locks the front door. Dawn unties the donkey and they are away to Mr Pepys’ residence. The still streets are occasionally peopled. But, seeing this procession approach, they seem to duck down side streets, or just turn and run.

XI

The Tower of London is looming on the horizon. They approach Mr Pepys' house – it's well lit and the sound of laughter emerges from within.

Dampier fixes his hat and walks down the carriage's stairs, hitting the street; a loud squelch and, looking down, he sees that he has landed in horse dung. He nods at his foot, lifting it up. Dawn quickly bends and, using his handkerchief, wipes away the mess.

Mr Pepys' house is three stories, narrow and, surviving the Great Fire, retains its Elizabethan design of white washed panelled walls with intricate black designs adorning the eaves. Every window is alight. They can hear voices of men talking within.

Dampier gently touches his hair and walks towards the door. Dawn picks up a silver metal rod that is hanging by a gold coloured chain and uses it to sound the visitor's bell. A maid opens the door, curtsies and they enter to follow her to the smoking room. Here they encounter three men who desist from talking as Mr Samuel Pepys approaches.

Pepys is wearing a burgundy coat with a silver collar that sparkles. His wig is immaculate and hangs down past his shoulders. His face is gently dusted white and some falls off as he proceeds to shake Dampier's hand. 'Captain William Dampier, our honoured guest, you are most welcome.'

'I have brought my scribe, Mr Horatio Dawn, as I may wish to include tonight's conversation in my account of the voyage.'

Dawn bows low.

‘This is a gentleman’s affair, not a voyage.’

‘Our voyage will push into the unknown realm of ideas, so a gentleman’s affair is the perfect place to begin.’

‘Indeed.’

Pepys introduces his guests, ‘Sir Robert Hooke, who you have previously met, is the inventor of the microscope and author of its accompanying book, *Micrographia*. A book that will truly make you realise the complexity of what one previously thought simple, the details on a small flea, for example, become horrific, as if it were a large monster.’

‘We are familiar with it,’ Dawn says.

‘Are we?’ Dampier asks.

‘Yes, we have already prepared a copy to take on the voyage with us.’

‘Oh heavens above,’ Hooke responds.

Pepys continues, ‘Mr Warrant here is a designer and manufacturer of lenses for spectacles. He also imports cloth.’

Both men raise a cup and then look confused. Pepys recognises that Dampier’s hand is bereft and pours him a drink. Dampier takes the cup, salutes the other men and empties half of it down his throat. He walks towards the table where food is spread, picks up a boiled egg in a piece of bread, swallows it, washing it down with another long drink.

‘Hot as a city on fire outside it is,’ Dampier says after finishing the entire cup.

Away from the action, leaning on the doorframe and with his right hand in his pocket, Dawn feels the presence of the pencil and paper. Pepys stands next to Dampier, ‘We have all travelled from the luxury of a stately chair next to the fire as we turn pages of our favourite travel books but Dampier is actually the one who has

been to those most foreign of lands. The first to witness what is most exotic and write about it so that we can read it while still wearing our slippers by the fire.’

‘It is true. Writing about it is almost as much fun as being there oneself,’ Dampier tells them.

‘Did you fight the Spanish privateers?’ Mr Warrant inquires.

‘I was there but I chose not to fight. Mostly I just stood back and made dutiful notes. I see my role as recording all that I can see.’

‘I met Captain Dampier at the opening of the Monument to the Great Fire. And the scribe, lingering by the door, he was there as well,’ Hooke says.

Removing his hands from his pocket Dawn steps forward – and is unsure as to how to respond. He looks around to ensure that his actions will not connect with any other bodies and arches his back to perform a low bow.

‘I hope that the history of *New Holland* will be a just and true account!’ Pepys says.

‘I’ll do my best,’ Dawn responds.

‘You were at the ceremony?’ Dampier asks.

‘Indeed,’ Mr Pepys replies. ‘I was inside the very Monument and watched it all unfold from above. It gives a terrific view of London. We would like to invite you inside sometime.’

‘That’s most kind.’ Dampier looks over at Dawn and smiles.

Hooke intervenes, ‘When Mr Wren and myself were in long discussions as to its design we decided that a true monument must present a view of the destruction from above, while below, in the basement, the soul of the building should contain a space where man can work towards a solution to destruction.’

‘And the past?’ Mr Pepys asks.

‘It’s remembered in the structure itself. But it is in the bowels that truly count. There is the laboratory that will host the experiments of the Royal Society. It is we scientists who will solve the dilemma of cities that are tinderboxes and burn during the summer. Cities that die from disease.’

‘What is the design?’ Dampier asks.

‘The Monument to Fire was built to encode our city’s desire to never needlessly burn again. And because of science London will never burn again. We now live in the light of reason, not the light of flames. A true monument to any catastrophe must have a built-in solution to ensure that it never happens again. Otherwise it is not a true monument, just an empty gesture.’

‘When the Great Fire did break I was prepared and even was able to bury my Parmesan cheese in the garden,’ Pepys says. A maid enters and whispers in his ear. He smiles in response. ‘Empty your cups, gentlemen, as more wine will be served with dinner which will occur in the main dining room. We can continue our recollections of London’s destruction by fire over a delicious meal.’

They follow the maid into the dining room where a large table is set with silver. The fireplace is crackling, lighting the room and releasing a burning smell. Next to the burning candles four bottles of red wine filter the firelight from orange to red velvet. The three wives enter the room.

‘Captain Dampier, this is my wife Elizabeth, accompanied by Lady Hooke and Mrs Warrant,’ Pepys says. The three husbands step to their wives, pull back three chairs for them then ease the chairs forward as the women sit. The men take their places next to their wives. Dampier finds his own chair while Dawn sits on a stool by the door.

‘First course, ladies and gentlemen. Please fill your glasses with wine that we

have brought from Bordeaux.’ The men fill the women’s glasses, then their own.

Pepys says, ‘I am quite happy to share this with the ladies. A fine and delicious wine that arrives with a hint of plum. The sort that I imagined Montaigne might have drunk in the evenings after writing his essays.’ They toast Dampier and wish that his voyage be one of enlightenment. A Moorish dish arrives—rice mixed with pumpkin, carrots, aubergine and spices.

‘As we eat this we can all imagine that we are with Captain Dampier away on one of his adventures.’

Mr Warrant takes the opportunity to speak.

‘I recently heard a wonderful lecture by John Locke on what is becoming most sacred to London and that is the institution of private property. Mr Locke makes an excellent contribution to the discussion. He says that to build this new world we need to see the labour within each man’s body and hands.’

‘Did Mr Locke mention the hours that one must work to maintain a private abode?’ Pepys wonders aloud. They all laugh.

Mr Warrant continues, ‘We must mix our own labour with the land. Transform it and improve it. It is only by investing oneself in the land that one can establish ownership.’

‘Captain Dampier, have you seen evidence of labour in distant lands?’ Pepys asks.

‘Man’s natural state is a state of war,’ Dampier tells them. ‘In distant lands they build nothing, Make nothing, use nothing. In a material sense they can barely maintain their people. I plan on visiting a grand alteration upon their societies.’

At Dampier’s pronouncement they all raise their glasses and take large gulps.

‘To the coming glories of the Enlightenment,’ Hooke proposes, ‘to the glory

of London's future. For soon we will become the centre of global trade. This is the new Rome that will one day, hopefully, enlighten all of Man. And what we have now is the practice of the New Science and a holistic system of knowledge. Knowledge as Pythagoras and Plato understood it. A new science where no fact and no new technology can be understood without its corresponding ethical and cosmological significance.'

Mr Pepys turns his attention to Dampier. 'Sir, we desire the knowledge that you can gain from this voyage. Until recently we funded voyages to search out the Straits of Annan.'

'How did you learn of the Straits of Annan?' Dampier asks.

'I found it referred to in the work of John Dee,' Pepys responds.

A large covered dish is brought out by the maids and placed in the centre of the table. The cloth is removed to reveal a large crispy pigeon pie. More wine is poured and the pie cut into eight separate slices. Each individual takes a slice and begins to eat. Mixing with the sound of the glugging out wine soft echoes of shouting can be heard from the street. The maid carries a single slice with a fork over to Dawn who eats while remaining seated on his stool.

'Captain Dampier, you mentioned that you make for New Holland.'

'Yes.'

'And what do you hope to discover?'

'New Holland is a blank sheet of paper. We will see what we see when we see it.'

'So why go? It may reveal nothing.'

'I go as there is no restraint.'

'Why not try to discover the island of Calejava? For there all the inhabitants

are models of good sense. Bring a few back and teach us all how to become utterly infused with reason.'

'What we need is models of a new spirituality.'

'But where are the pilgrims of today?' Mr Pepys asks.

'The trails have all been washed away. Now it is time for scientists to create new paths,' Dampier responds.

'Captain Dampier, you don't believe in pilgrimage?'

'I believe in it and take great pleasure in finding the trails then covering them with the sealed roads of commerce.'

'Severing pilgrim trails. Captain Dampier, this is the first time that I have learnt of this side of your character. There is nothing to indicate it within your book,' Pepys says.

'Do you think that is what the people of England want to read about?' Hooke asks.

'It sounds like a horrific voyage,' Mr Warrant adds.

'On the contrary it was my most successful voyage thus far,' Dampier responds.

In the distance Dawn can hear yelling, cheering and the breaking of windows. It sounds like more carnival has arrived in London.

'But what of the new voyage, Captain Dampier?' Hooke asks.

'New Holland seems to be inhabited by a simple people,' Dampier informs them.

'You must stop your destruction of pilgrim trails,' Mrs Warrant begs him.

'Whatever you find in New Holland, leave it alone!'

'Is it possible that Atlantis resided somewhere within New Holland?' Hooke

asks.

‘Atlantis, but it was submerged thousands of years ago,’ Pepys responds.

‘Perhaps the remnants of that civilisation washed up on its shores. And if it’s Atlantis, then we have found the greatest and the oldest civilisation to ever exist,’ Dampier tells them.

‘You claim to sail for the greatest civilisation?’

Dawn responds, ‘If they dwell in the oldest civilisation then they will still possess knowledge that has been forgotten across the entire stretch of Europe. Knowledge forgotten and thus incomprehensible to us all. Ptolemy thought of the Southern continent as an exact counterweight to Europe. It may indeed be this in both a physical and spiritual sense.’

‘Is this true, Captain Dampier?’ Pepys asks.

‘If my scribe Mr Dawn can see this then it’s worthy of our attention.’

The yelling outside is growing past a level of revelry; hinting at the beginnings of civil unrest. The guests look at each other with nervous expressions. A servant enters the room in haste and whispers into Pepys’ left ear. He tilts his head slightly over to listen with a serious look on his face. The servant departs. The host holds up his glass, ‘Down your drinks, my friends. We must finish this party early. Mendicants have flooded into this part of the city and your carriages will not be safe. We cannot fit them all into my stables.’

The couples look at each other, stand up and gather their things. Dampier drains his glass of wine and picks up the rest of the pigeon pie in his left hand to eat it like a street snack. On his way out Pepys says, ‘Good luck, Captain Dampier. I know that you will find something wonderful,’ and claps his hand on his shoulder.

He pushes the last of the pie into his mouth, saying through the mashed up

meal, 'Good luck with the rioting mendicants.'

Dawn walks behind Dampier, carrying his coat. They quickly climb the carriage steps and Dampier whips the donkey forwards.

'That pie was delicious. And now I get to enjoy a fast ride home.'

Cutting through the streets, swaying, jumping over the rough patches of road, they pass three rioters with their hair tightly knotted together and long beards rich with mud. Dampier hands the reins to Dawn and produces a glistening pistol to stroke with glee. Dawn's teeth are chattering from the rattle of the carriage wheels on the paved stone road. The ominous smell of smoke wafts over the carriage and, turning a corner, they pass a house that is starting to smoulder. An emaciated woman is holding up an elegant vase with a complex green Chinese dragon design on its exterior. 'Thief,' Dampier says and, aiming his pistol, fires. The bullet cuts through the vase, shattering it in her hands then pierces her forehead; the fragments of porcelain sprinkle as she falls to the ground.

'Are they trying to start a second fire?' Dawn asks.

The carriage moves along the edges of a square where starving people are kicking down doors. They are carrying clubs, knives and farming equipment. 'They are trying to take what they can,' Dampier says, while using the rod to pack down a second shot.

'What a night! The poor are rioting,' Dawn replies, wide-eyed. Dampier finishes and looks up to see a carriage filled with red coat soldiers racing towards the action. Elevating his pistol, Dampier scans the scene. There are no more bodies that he can shoot. A fire carriage bearing a large barrel of water rushes towards the flames. After the fire carriage moves away, a man darts across the street. Dampier beads his shot with the distant limping figure and fires. The bullet connects to nip off the crown

of his head. 'Contact,' Dampier yells with excitement.

Dawn watches as the carriage turns a corner to approach the river. They push forwards. Dampier looks around. The rioting is now behind him; he returns the pistol beneath his clothing. The terror of the roaming tiger has vacated most parts of the city, except for where the desperate are rioting.

With Dampier's heart beating with a deep blood lust, Dawn decides now is the time to tell. 'Captain Dampier I wish to explain to you my task, as it appears before me.'

'Yes?'

'A book about New Holland will be not a plain history, but a seer's history. History as it will be written by a prophet hallucinating upon the precipice of the Apocalypse. A history that should not be written unless the historian has become haunted, has become possessed by the sources. Documents that whisper to one as they sleep, the lingering voices scratching upon the historian's mind. The only history that matters is one written after – and reflecting – a state of intoxication. The writer of the history of New Holland must be a seer who can see through the sources, can see with all five senses the world that gave birth to the sources.'

Dampier is scanning the streets for another target. He sees movement in the distance and fires a second shot. 'Once the weather sets in it will be a brutal trip down the west coast of Africa. And the summer is now at its zenith,' he shouts.

Dawn says to the wind, 'I must destroy Reason if I am to write my history.' The air is smokeless and enters his lungs cleanly. The moon is almost touching the crown of the sky as midnight approaches.

'Perhaps it is Reason that will destroy you,' Dampier says.

They pass a solitary smoking building. One of its windows explodes from the

heat.

Untying the carriage they push it back to the rental stables and walk on foot to the Tempest Tavern. Dawn sleeps on the floor, next to the door. Gioli's skin is rolled up in a tube while the captain snores in the bed.

XII

The next day Dawn awakes to find that Dampier has gone (probably with Joram to finalise the voyage, procure the ship and register a full crew). Dawn decides to visit his old friend Harvey Kircher before he departs.

When he arrives at the Kircher residence Dawn can see that Harvey has become a new man. He has colour to his face; his eyes seem alive with no remaining traces of sickness.

'You have completely returned to full health?'

'It's been, what, two years? But yes, I feel great. Even better than before I was sick.'

'What's the secret to full recovery from the plague?'

'The secret is to act as if it never happened and to tell no one,' he replies while leading Dawn inside his house.

Harvey has established his own business – importing chocolate from Jamaica. He orders a servant to prepare two cups for them to drink.

'I can still see faint traces of your scars,' Dawn tells his friend.

‘You see them because you already know that they are there.’

Dawn will always know Harvey as his plague mate. The ends of the scars are barely contained by his neckerchief.

‘Soon I will leave for London.’

‘So your dream of escape has materialised.’

‘It has.’

‘Where will you go?’

‘It’s a land that you have never heard of. That no one has ever heard of. We will discover a great continent in the Southern Hemisphere.’

‘What could possibly be there to call for such a long voyage?’

‘From the time that I first saw you I thought, there is a man who requires a new body. And that’s what we are going to find.’

‘You think these scars will just fall away? Look at me now. Do I look like I need a new body? I do not need a new body. It works just fine.’

The maid enters with the two drinks.

‘I will give you a taste of chocolate. If you come across any more, bring it here and I will give you a fair price.’

Dawn drinks it, ‘This flavour is wonderful.’

‘That’s real Virginian sugar that you are tasting.’

‘Do you remember what we used to talk about?’

‘Of course.’

‘To find a new world and wash our bodies clean of our scars.’

Harvey takes a drink. 'This sweet drink is the closest to new adventures that I require.' He gently touches his neckerchief to ensure that it covers as much of his scars as possible. 'Dawn, I am due to be married next month. Soon we will move into a new house and start a family. I have nothing to give to your voyage.'

'This city will provide nothing for us. We both know that to be true.'

'I care not. After I am married I will create my own future for myself.'

'I came here to get you on board.'

'And you will leave disappointed.'

Dawn stops speaking and looks around the dark room.

'But please visit me as soon as you return.'

'I think I plan to not return.'

'They say that people like us should no longer be here. If we start families and die old men while our grandchildren cry in the background, then that is the sweetest revenge,' Harvey tells Dawn.

'Nothing gives me more sense of dread than being responsible for a child.'

'I welcome that dread. The task at hand is to create a mundane and small life for myself here in London. Waiting for the arrival of ships filled with cocoa. And then home to a family. My scars will never drop. I know that and so am resigned to being a secretive leper shuffling around London.'

'You will live a long life.'

They both finish their drinks.

'Travel well Horatio Dawn.'

‘Farewell Harvey Kircher.’

‘Will you write of this trip?’

‘Yes.’

‘How will you get the manuscript back to England if you plan on never returning?’

‘I don’t know.’

Harvey walks his friend to the door. While opening it he asks, ‘Have you ever been in love?’

‘Yes.’

‘Good then.’

That evening he sleeps at Samantha’s place. The next morning he helps her prepare for the voyage, pulling out the man’s disguise that she will wear once she is on board. For she must travel incognito if she is to make it, this way, to New Holland.

XIII

Assistants wheel in the tiger’s carcass on a trolley and set it before the prying eyes of the members of the Royal Society. Its long purple tongue hangs down like a giant slug trying to escape from its mouth. Both of its eyes remain vacant and dead. The scientists circle around it in one swift motion and remove their scalpels, holding them

up to glint in the candlelight and make the scene sparkle. One by one they descend upon the cold tiger's carcass and make meticulous incisions, cut the follicles and peel back the fur. Now the tiger is bright pink with its skin stretched and hanging on a rack. There is much commotion. The scientists are whooping and jumping up and down. Two are bending down and are using lenses to examine the tiger's exposed teats. One reaches forwards and gently squeezes it to release a long stream of yellowed milk.

‘This tiger has recently given birth, but if that is so then where are the cubs?’ a scientist wonders aloud.

They continue with their work and, holding up the tiger's paws, they cut along the chest and remove each organ to a large clean table. The tiger's muscles are tough and hard to separate from the bone. They blunt numerous scalpel blades and finally use a wedge to rip it apart.

All that remains is the bloody skeleton still showing its teeth: they place it in front of the display of internal organs and behind the collection of muscles. Hovering over this fleshy mess hangs the tiger's skin – stretched out like a rug.

The members put down their scalpels and applaud each other. The blood splatters from their pounding hands.

‘We must issue a reward for the cubs. We can domesticate and train them.

Offer them up as a gift to the King.’

The applause becomes louder.

‘Anything to stop them prowling the streets of London and hunting us down,
one solitary walker at a time.’

PART THREE

I

The *Lantern*, with sails filled out like a dove's chest, is now weeks from England. Faint traces of Africa linger along the horizon: a high pitch squealing is heard, a pod of dolphins are following the ship. The sailors try to shoot them as offerings to Joram: but not a single shot connects and the dolphins dive deep; emerging again, far out of range, they jump out of the water, mockingly.

One week passes: Captain Dampier is pleased with their progress.

Two weeks pass: they are still sailing down the west coast of Africa.

Close to the Ascension Islands and a heavy fog fills the length of the ship like music: cold air pressing against their teeth. A sailor's stinking breath carves a clear tunnel through the woolly air. Dampier assures them to trust the instruments, so they continue blind through the fog; too thick to see the ocean – they only know of it through the occasional sound of splashing or the squeal of dolphins that must be playing with the cruising ship somewhere beneath the thick white blanket.

With the third week ending the watch sends a runner to Dampier's cabin. They have heard, through the fog, faint traces of *foreign words* emerging across the water. Dampier grins with expectation and emerges on deck. He opens his mouth, closes his eyes and listens intently. Spanish words find him from across the cool ocean. A signal

for total silence is given; the men rouse from their sleep like enraged Vikings. The ship is coming upon its target. The woolly air hides their approach. Each man gathers a weapon (cutlasses, axes, chains, knives, pistols) and creeps onto deck to line up along the starboard while brandishing weapons. Samantha, still hiding her true identity by dressing as a man, takes a large knife, too big for the boy she passes for, and joins the line. The knife feels even heavier than it looks, absorbing violence as it leaks from the pores of the surrounding stinking men. Dampier has two pistols, a compass and his sheathed cutlass hangs from his right hip. He steps through the fog that is now running over the entire deck, walks to the wheel and takes control: listening for voices, smelling the wind. The illuminating sun strengthens through the clouds. Joram appears by Dampier's side with two pistols, one in each hand; his belt has a series of knives, and a small axe attached. The smell of olive oil and crushed onion is travelling over the cool surface of the ocean. Suddenly the Spanish start to yell out in alarm at the *Lantern's* approach.

Dampier steers them close. They have the advantage of surprise. With the boat quickly moving, Dawn can see the fog flowing over his drawn sword. The ship curves to the right and swings as the Spanish ship comes into view: as if a curtain were rising upon slaughter. Their ships make contact with a deep scraping sound. The men throw over grappling hooks. Then, with battle cries, the crew of the *Lantern* leap onto their opponent's deck. Joram jumps into the fog, followed closely by Dampier. Through the fog Dawn can hear their cries and screams. Exploding charges illuminate the clouds, freezing an act of violence – dimming and then without trace. Dawn yells and follows them over the railing.

He lands in a pool of blood. The body at his feet is still gagging as it tries to speak through a whistling and opened throat – the hot air dissolving the cool fog,

creating a cocoon around the dying man. Dawn steps over the dead body, continues deeper into the mist. A shot whistles close to his right ear, looking back he can trace the corresponding corkscrewed wormhole. He moves forward, gently; crouches next to a wooden barrel; sees two Spanish sailors fighting with Joram. After plunging his sword into the stomach of one of the Spanish, Joram receives a club against his right hand from the other: forcing him to drop his spare dagger. He falls onto his remaining opponent; grabbing his long hair he pulls him backwards and bites down on his nose to sever it from his face. The Spaniard falls away, screaming with terror as Joram spits the chunk back at him. Joram pulls out a dagger and buries it in his opponent's chest: the splattering of blood has soaked Joram's face to appear as if he is wearing a mask; looking through the hot spray; he retrieves his sword: surveys the scene. A new Spaniard approaches, hesitantly, holding an axe, still a young boy not beyond the age of ten. That boy is now looking at the growing monstrosity of Joram – who is sucking in the mist and rising – large, domineering, as if he is consuming the atmosphere. The boy drops the axe: Joram cleanly slices off his head. Picking it up, Joram tumbles it through the fog as if it were a small boulder.

‘Dawn,’ Dampier is approaching, his coat red with blood. ‘The ship is ours,’ he yells through the mist. Dawn looks back at Joram, who is smiling.

Joram repeats Dampier's words, ‘The ship is ours!’

The crew cheers in response.

‘Search for survivors,’ Joram yells.

The remaining Spanish are tied with their arms secured behind their backs. Some are in chains but most have been killed. Dawn learns that some leaped overboard to disappear in the fog.

The men are standing in a circle. As he walks over, Dawn comes upon Cutstone lying face down with a circle of blood spreading out like a blooming flower. He bends down and, avoiding the leaking blood, pivots Cutstone's head around so that he can see his face. A shot connected with his left temple; the gaping wound is deep red with white fragments of bone and pink brain. Dawn puts the head down and wipes his stained hands on his friend's yellowed shirt. 'Eject Cutstone overboard,' Joram orders the crew.

They gather up his body.

'Wait,' Dawn says.

But they quickly toss him past the railing and he quickly disappears into the white atmosphere; a corresponding crash...gone.

Dampier appears from the fog, 'What is this?'

'Cutstone caught a shot in the head. We jettisoned him before he could leak out any more,' Joram responds.

'Cutstone is gone?'

'Right overboard,' Joram replies, motioning with his tilted head.

Dampier walks to the railing and looks overboard. Thick fog still covers the ocean, no corresponding mark in the fabric to show Cutstone's descent.

Dawn is still.

Dampier notices and walks past. He puts a hand on his shoulder and gently squeezes.

The Spanish that survived are put on a long boat. Dampier gives them a compass and

using his fingers signals that it is two days to Africa if they keep a true course.

Below deck, rich cargo has been discovered. Joram moves to investigate. Dawn follows and descends the stairs, until he can hear strange moans. Entering the hold they come upon around one hundred women chained together, cowering in fear and covered in their own filth.

‘This is a slave ship. These women were taken against their will to be worked to death in the Spanish colonies,’ Dawn says with a horrified face. Dampier does not know what to do with this cargo and after conversing with Joram it becomes obvious that they will trade them at the Cape. Joram decides to rename the second ship the *Bachelor’s Delight* in response to the riches that they have found.

The *Lantern* and the *Bachelor’s Delight* move as a squadron with the crew evenly divided to each ship. Samantha is forced to stay on the *Lantern* while Dawn is ordered to follow Dampier on the *Bachelor’s Delight*. In addition to its human load the Spanish galleon is carrying spices and oils to trade. The men eat well due to new supplies found on board; the delicious aroma of spices makes it a pleasant place to be – once they have washed away the bloodstains, and if they can ignore the cries of the women locked below.

Circumnavigating the bottom of Africa they are caught in a strong wind that blows them further south. The wind remains strong, with no sign of abating. For the rest of the day, all night, and the next day they are pushed south. By the evening of the second day it is bitterly cold; the men are ill prepared and keep working, keep moving, with blankets draped over their shoulders to remain warm.

Those that remain below drink brandy to keep the numbness away. Once they

are drunk it becomes easier to ignore the death moans of the women who remain chained below. Dawn drinks until he can no longer understand anything that anyone says to him and he falls asleep with only half of his body successfully in the bed. That night he sleeps cold, the alcohol preventing him from waking; he dreams that *the women have frozen and covering their hard bodies are not icicles but their frozen and foreign words. They have frozen together – one big lump – and their death rattles have also frozen solid and lie around, slippery and hard to pick up. The men try to pick up the words and rub them in their hands to try and thaw the words out. A brazier is lit and some are thrown in as if they are chestnuts. As the words are melting they follow the logic of liquids and slowly run downhill (without, curiously, being absorbed by anything) to gather in the lowest section of the deck where the various final words, cries, screeches, curses combine in a large babbling pool and the sounds that emerge are otherworldly as if the fire is possessed and the words that they can hear are: goog, braph, pffft, slopgp, cricker, chink, kuboaa, bou, bou, bou, ouououooun, kuboaa, frack, frrrr, trrr, frtract, whinnnn, slooph, millllllner, gog, magog – all bubbling together. The pool of water is starting to boil and steam is rising, the words dissipating with the rising steam – like liberated spirits. One word slips out: it is kuboaa and Dawn grabs a bottle of oil and tries to pour oil over it to rub into the word and preserve it, but oil – of course – does not mix with other liquids and however much Dawn rubs and rubs the word will not solidify enough for himself to successfully grasp it. The clatter of the slave’s language is clashing and banging around the room like gypsy music.*

When Dawn wakes from his dream it is strangely quiet in the deck below. Most men are sick from last night’s drinking. They all notice but none choose to speak of the silence. The storm has passed; Dampier takes charge and they return their

course north, making for the trading port of Cape Town. Dampier sends two sailors below to inspect, but, alas, he returns to inform that all the women have frozen to death.

These bodies must be brought above deck and thrown overboard before they start to turn rancid. It is a thankless task, all the crew must work for the rest of the day.

Sharks have been following the ship all day; white flotsam turns red as the sharks feast on the ejected corpses; occasionally a shark will ram its head against the ship, mad with the frenzy of offered food.

At the close of the next day they have almost cleaned out below deck. The final task is to unleash two sailors who must run around and use a strap of leather to try and swat dead the outbreak of hundreds of flies.

II

The *Bachelor's Delight* arrives in Cape Town with the *Lantern* trailing behind. The two ships tie up together and Joram crosses over to meet with Dampier. They decide to send a single long boat ashore and purchase food, water and a new supply of wine. Dawn sees Samantha and tells her what has occurred.

‘How many?’ she asks.

‘One hundred and thirteen.’

‘And they just froze to death?’

‘Like a large clump of dirt.’

‘So what did you do?’

‘Me? What could I do?’

‘You tell me what could you there? Did you do anything?’

‘I barely survived myself. Had to drink brandy to stay warm. I guess we forgot about them.’

‘No, you did not. You drank to give yourself the excuse to allow to happen what you knew would ultimately occur. You could have taken braziers below deck. Or blankets. Some warm liquids for them to drink?’

‘I can’t make those kind of decisions.’

‘If you did, and they were still alive now, you would be a hero. They would remain in slavery but you would be a hero for the money that would come from their sale.’

‘What could I do?’

‘You acted like a coward.’

A call goes around for volunteers to go ashore. Dampier has decided to stay and Joram takes four men.

They return before nightfall loaded with supplies; it takes four additional trips to bring the cargo aboard. Joram has taken the opportunity to purchase four animals, all dead: a tiger, two large lizards, and a monkey. They also have fresh water, salted pork, mutton, wine, fruit and vegetables. Joram disappears straight to his cabin where he starts to dissect his new carcasses. The *Lantern*, in tandem with the *Bachelor’s Delight*, is now making for New Holland.

PART FOUR

Above, five white gulls fly in formation.

The sun is hot; all metal burns gloveless hands.

Thin clouds.

Thick blue sky.

Gruel and salted pork for dinner.

A cool evening breeze.

**O
O
O
MOON**

Daybreak.

Scrubbing all blood stains clean.

Wood refuses to return to original colour.

Ocean still and flat as a ceramic plate.

Dawn can see Samantha in the distance on the *Lantern's* deck. They wave to each other and he can tell that she is thinking about him but he cannot hear her thoughts. As the days stretch the men stop communicating and seem to harbour inner monologues. At times Dawn believes that he can hear their words linger along the deck before a strong wind blows it clean.

Samantha

With every single day that New Holland approaches, I feel something buzz inside of me, as if insects were caught under my skin. A growing heat, a tingling, like the kind one gets when one sits in a position for far too long. For this body fails and fails me, and fails me again. I know that it is the plague that has damaged my body. The scars on the skin are a signal of a cut that goes much deeper. For I am at the end of a long line of people, stretching far back, and I know that my own parents were upon the cusp of a fantastic discovery, but their manipulation of the elements was a crime against nature and they perished as a result. But not Dawn, and not I. No...we will manipulate nothing, for it is New Holland that we will allow to manipulate us. It will be a deeply spiritual land – I know that this will be true. Its strange trees will appear as a crystal forest. The Magi will still walk its roads and Leviathans will still chart its rivers and oceans. And as we – my lover Dawn and I – walk across the landscape we will be filled with song and as the words emerge from our mouths the black bile that has been hiding in our spleen will start to leak out through the very pores. It will be the Devil's tears leaking out. And we will swim in crystal clear water and we will drink so that the waters will clean us out from the inside and when we emerge from the spring all scars of the plague will be removed and we will be fresh and pink as if we were newly born and it will all be because of contact with New Holland.

This all started with the death of my father. After that I went to live with an aunt and she arranged to marry me off to a local farmer, a pig farmer. A very successful one with a large farm of over fifty pigs. But he was old and wanted

children. So I did not want to become a part of that. So what could I do? Late at night I packed my things and I ran.

After being loose for one week the buboes arrived. I don't know where I picked them up. Was it in a tavern, or while catching free rides with travelling carts?

I knew the plague when I saw it. I had seen two outbreaks in my own town, where all entrances were closed and marked with the accursed red coloured cross. I knew that they would stone me and so ran towards the Black Mountains, climbed to the top, found myself a quiet cave and entered then lay down to die.

But death did not come.

The plague increased and for about two days I have no memory. I climbed out of there, exhausted and went to a farm to beg for food. They refused to meet me but left out some stuff to eat. I returned to the cave and sat there. The heat was burning and all I could think of was the need of my parents to work out why the human body fails us so often. The mind can create incredible dreams, and invent whole religions, but if a body walks up a steep incline, it often collapses from exhaustion. But alchemy and working with metals was supposed to purify the land and when the alchemist performs his scientific ceremonies he purifies himself as well. But in my experience all occurs is that metals release noxious fumes. And it was dangerous work. Alchemical labs are notorious for burning down. Or the alchemist becoming overcome with the fumes, they turn mad and cut themselves until they bleed to death. Alchemy is the right thing. But it's our bodies that are holding us back. We, as humans, as scientists, are incapable of changing them. It is nature that we must become immersed in, become changed by it: renewed.

But what of this land? As if the plague has burrowed its way right into the very soil itself. And what will bloom in New Holland if Captain Dampier and Joram

have their way: hard roads and the flames of industry? Large blades that cut open the earth and extract metals like ravenous Mongols tearing the babies from the bellies of pregnant mothers? What horrific alterations will be visited upon the land?

Sky

Water

The clouds are gone and the sky is expansive – melting
to cover the world.

A turtle is speared and dragged on board. They turn it upside down: fresh meat.

Liquid moon and Dawn reaches for it on the tips of his toes and tries to slurp it up.

Captain Dampier

Decimate the land. Wipe it clear. Wipe it clean. Drink the rivers. Burn away the trees.

Eat the soil. Roast the animals. Slaughter the natives. Swat the flies. Mine for metals.

Hide the pilgrims' paths. Soil the air.

Samantha

I need to get with child in New Holland. If it does not happen there then I know that being a mother has been denied to me. And if that is the case then I will have to walk down the path of my parents, for it will probably kill me but so too will the loneliness of growing old by myself. If Dawn is to perish in New Holland then I will lie in a grave beside him.

And he wasn't the first. My uncle was the first man that I watched slip into madness. But it wasn't from alchemy or even the ecstasy of religion. In my earliest memories of him, he was a normal man. Somewhat strange, but nothing that signals what he would become. He still worked and contributed to the family. He just spent his spare time drunk in a small lean-to.

He was well known for his lyrics. And then one day he announced the end of all his singing. There was no reason for this. If asked why he stopped he just replied that he needed to gather his strength. He thought out a series of poems about a mystical experience that he had, while lying around. But he never wrote these experiences down. People asked him to talk of what he had seen, but, alas, he told them it was impossible to find the right words.

He sometimes undertook long walks and tried to work out the lyrics within his head, as his feet connected to the ground. He complained that if he even tried to write the words then the ink wouldn't cohere to the page. I believed that trying to bring those two opposing forces together, with his already fragile mind in between, was what crushed him. He started to laugh uncontrollably and he muttered obscenities, even when no one else was present to receive the insulting phrases. At night, by the

light of the full moon, he ran through fields, lying with the pigs, rolling around, squealing and putting his head next to theirs. He would casually mention that he meant to climb the distant Black Mountains and that he planned to be gone for weeks, only to emerge nine days later upon the verge of collapse. And it fell to me to nurse him back to health. I think everyone else wanted him to die. My uncle was now the village idiot.

I won't let the same process consume Dawn. I worry that the reality of New Holland will barely resister within his reports. All histories of that land will be, in fact, shadow histories that will continue to whisper back from out past the light. For Dawn to write his history he will probably go mad, become mad, and remain mad for as long as he tries to mould those English letters – nay Latin letters – and create purchase on the land. Or will it just be easier to mould the land to match the language?

We buried my uncle three years after the rupture. He ended up locked in a small barn that was made especially for him. Within weeks he was more beast than man.

Dawn and I both survived the plague. With our redeemed bodies we will be able to see and to hear. We will see the land of New Holland as rich with history, knowledge and God. We will hear its voice whisper to us of its tales. I want to bury us there; and I want to dig us out again.

I have survived plague and I won't allow myself to die, subsequently, in inferior circumstances.

Captain Dampier

My childhood was claustrophobic. For its entire duration I lived in a small room with my mother. She was employed as a maid at Hymerford House. Now that I know the ideas that make men do what they do it's obvious now that the master of Hymerford House is my father, and I, the embarrassing bastard.

The bullbaiting ring of East Coker was between the church and the almshouse. Further over the hill a derelict chapel was being used to house cock fights. An old tinker once told me that before the arrival of the message of Christ the people worshipped a golden calf in the forest. One day, after my chores were done, I lost myself for the entirety of the day looking for the lost and buried golden calf. I went deeper and deeper into Coker Woods. The tinker told me that it was still buried – and more – that it was waiting to be found. He even sold me a spade that I traded for five silver spoons, stolen from the kitchen of Hymerford House.

So I dug and dug, hole after hole out there in the woods. I dug under trees, searching for caves. I cleared away overgrown shrubs, and minutely inspected all paths for any sign of the soil's disturbance. But the brilliance of the golden calf never appeared just the lack-lustre brown and grey foliage.

In the late afternoon the sun was arriving perpendicular and so I napped beneath a thin bush with the spade's blade lying across my chest as if I were a deceased knight. After dozing off I woke to the confusing sounds of a woman groaning. It sounded as if she was dying and turning my head I saw two naked people: a man and a woman. It is indeed her and the master of Hymerford House and he is on top of her, mating like I've seen dogs do. And the groans sounded so much like dying

that I didn't know what to do and so remained still as the cries grew to soak the gently swaying branches above, making the dim light of the sun flicker over my eyes. The man finished then stood up to reattach his britches. He pointed to the direction that she must return to find Hymerford House again, and left without saying a single word. I was relieved to see this interaction: two bodies that include none of those grating words that seem to infect all light – dimming it down until I can barely see what I am trying to look at for all the noise that recognisable words are blowing into my ears.

She just lay there, and she started to softly cry and so I pushed the shovel aside, climbed out of the bush, swung it over my shoulder – like I have seen labourers do – and walked over to her. She saw my approach – she didn't seem afraid. She just looked at me as I stood over her. She didn't even move, just remained in the leaves and the dirt as if she wanted me to see what she had to do so that we could both live at Hymerford House and eat their beef and their onion stew and sleep in a solid room and be offered protection from harm.

So I pointed in the opposing direction, away from the house. And I started to walk and then I started to whistle and I still don't know why.

A changing of the watch.

The men lie around as if the ship has become a plague tent, yet their bodies remain
clean.

Dampier seems anxious in his cabin. He is speaking aloud in the empty room. As
Dawn walks past he touches the door and feels an incredible heat beating through the
wood.

A moth begins its fatal flight into the slender flame of the
morning sun.

Captain Dampier is laughing uncontrollably behind a locked door.

Samantha

Then began a new period on the road. I decided to make for London without knowing why. But its attraction was unmistakable. Some evenings I woke up to a slight ringing in my ear and looked outside to see that the moon was full and bright and low – rousing me to witness it.

It had been months on the road and, finally, I was able to stop and establish a home in an abandoned cottage. The red cross of plague was marked across the door but, entering, I could not smell the sickness. I found bodies that had all rotten away, only yellowing skeletons remained. After burying them far from the abode I swept it out, collected all useful things, changed my clothes and took some pans from the kitchen to sell in a local town. Returning with some bread and side of pork I decided to cut back the garden and try to begin life again.

Within one month pumpkins were sprouting and I had plugged up all of the holes in the roof and the walls. I watered in a nearby stream and gathered berries and dug for tubers to eat. In times of need I used a knife to remove the inner layers of tree bark and chewed on it to make me feel full. It was at this time while searching through the woods that I found four wild chickens. I caught two, but the other two remained stubborn. Catching the third, the final black one ran, so I tied the third's legs together with cord and chased the fourth down a hill. While running the ground gave way and I fell down to screams. But the screams were not mine; my weight had collapsed in the roof of the hiding place of two parents with a small child. The dirt was everywhere, rich in my hair, and as I crawled out, looking up, I tried to laugh to show them that they had nothing to fear.

The man's gaze was fixated on the black chicken. He pounced on it and walked back to me while holding it gently under his arm.

'Who are you?' I asked

'No person.'

'I won't hurt you. Are you hungry?'

The woman nods. She brought forth the babe.

'That chicken is yours. I saw you grab it. You are welcome to return to my place. We can cook it together. We can share it.'

They looked at each other and spoke briefly in their own language. They nodded and picked up their hessian sacks and followed me home.

We gathered all four chickens together. Three are kept for eggs and the oldest – the black one – is put in the pot and that evening we all dined together. They told me that they came from Europe and that they were looking for an empty part of the country where they could raise their child and grow crops.

'Why empty?'

'We want to be left alone?'

'Won't your child require companions?'

'No, all people are plague.'

I looked at the mother with child and was filled with a sense of longing to have one of my own. To create my own society and erect strong walls around it, so that there will be my world and my people and the actual society, outside those walls, that can be approached only when things are needed, and also ignored when nothing is required.

The next day the chickens laid two eggs so I boiled both and gave them to my two guests. They ate and I farewelled them off on their way to Ireland where they will try to claim cleared farmland.

The look in that woman's eyes as she stared into the inquisitive eyes of her child, her future: I wanted what she had...

Captain Dampier

On Sunday mother and I were both clean and in church. The minister was talking, “The flourishing churches in Asia Minor and the learned churches of Grecia, the manifold churches in Africa; which are now all gone. All that remains is the Turk with his sword. And even worse is the Bishop of Rome who will dare to set a King against his subjects. It is truly a sign of the End of Days when the Turk is a kitten to England compared to other Christians that stream out of the Papacy like rats. For soon our blessed Halcyon days will lose their warmth and the spiritual winter will arrive.

“So fond are English men of strange and foreign things: so unnatural to ourselves, so greedy of newfangled novelties, that we think our life not quiet, unless it is seasoned with the blood of others. The Lord will not descend from a cloud until we will have our blood and spill our lives.”

And I looked up at my mother and her face was beaming with the blues and the purples that the stain-glassed window was filtering down onto her. And I looked at the window and it displayed the Christ as a babe with an illuminated halo above.

The minister continued to tell us that we were indeed here to fall into Hell and that Hell was indeed here within this world and as we moved through it we gathered heat from the fire that was known to be ever present with the Father and the light that was ever present with Christ.

By our incredible luck, and by his incredible lack of luck, an Italian stranger appeared in town. He had a long black beard and was dressed in black pants and shirt. He carried a long flute, seemingly a travelling minstrel. He set up in the town square, just near the almshouse and the church and began to sing. People avoided him, circled

around in a large radius. Some even walked past with their fingers locked into their ears. By the late afternoon the minstrel had stopped and with an empty hat it was apparent that he would earn nothing and sleep hungry. While packing up he was approached by a number of men. They set upon him, smashed his jaw and tied him up.

Two hours later he appeared again, secured with ropes and they carried him to be deposited in the bullbaiting pit. By now word had gotten out and the whole town was filled around the edges of the pit. I was there because this man was so fascinating. He had long black hair and soft olive skin. They gave him a blunt sword with which to defend himself; introduced into the ring a large, all white bulldog. Previous weekends the bulldog had fought bulls, using its flat face to set its teeth into the bull's nose and drag it down to the ground. But now a real treat was on offer.

The Italian stranger picked up the sword and then looked upon the scene with horror as the cage doors were opened and the bulldog stepped into the ring. It had been starved for two days and approached the Italian stranger with its hair raised out and puffy. The victim threw away the sword and collapsed to his knees. He made the Catholic sign of the cross upon his chest and, placing his hands together, started to mutter out a prayer. The bulldog arched its back and seemed to charge its shoulders with a terrible reckoning. It waited as if it were drinking in the cheers of the crowd – until it pounced forwards, arriving to lock its jaws around the stranger's neck. As it dragged the Italian through the dust it started whipping its strong neck, shaking it from side to side until it tore out the victim's throat. While doing this I observed the accompanying facial expression: the bulldog had a look of beatific calm; two hollow black eyes amid the horrid crunching as it chewed the cartilage. The rupture was now whistling and small red bubbles of blood formed. As the bulldog continued to chew

there was no expression of emotion across its face, just a calm destruction. After the crowd became satiated, and then bored, they began to depart.

What was so thrilling about this event was the rational calmness with which the bulldog undertook its destructive task.

Samantha

The bastard soldiers took my chickens. I was foraging when I started to smell smoke wafting through the trees. I dropped my collection of berries and ran back to the cottage, but hid before making it. The soldiers were burning down my home.

They were standing troops who must be returning from the clearing campaigns in Ireland. They still wore their red uniforms and watched in silence as my cottage was consumed with flames. I wonder how they could have found it. A company of troops would not have made it this far into the forest. Then I realised that they must have found the wandering family and pressed them into revealing all the people they had had contact with, in the belief that any contact with foreigners was a kind of disease. When the flames were low the soldiers roasted the plucked and gutted chickens in the hot embers.

I ran back to where I had deposited my foraging and so began the second period of my life on the road to London.

Captain Dampier

To New Holland and to get there we must pass by the shadow of the *Batavia* massacre where I hope to become possessed with the spirit of Jeronimus.

In 1628 a Dutch East India Trading Company trade ship called the *Batavia* crashed on a small island close to New Holland. It had over one hundred civilians on board who were subsequently abandoned by both the captain and the first mate. These cowards took the only long boat and fled to Java. They said that they were going to raise the alarm, but this is not true: they fled to preserve their own lives. But from these conditions for a catastrophe comes a great fire to forge a new type of man and his name is Jeronimus.

Unable to swim, Jeronimus chose to stay aboard the sinking boat. Knowing that the end was nigh he broke into the armoury and removed pistols and a large knife. He also took jewels and started to drink the tapped rum barrels. Sheltering in the bow, he heard a great crashing as his section of the boat broke away. The broken bow flipped on its side as he gripped it and the waves pushed it ashore. He rode it like a shell and arrived fully armed, assured that his survival had been a type of election by fate. Jeronimus believed that within himself was a small spiritual spark that required nurturing, a spark that would come to shroud his entire being in light. He could move across the earth as a lantern moves through the darkness. Jeronimus knew that to cultivate the light, turn the spark to a furnace, it must be fed. In this fallen world he must give himself to the demiurge that remains always in control. One must choose damnation.

Jeronimus told a select group of men, those harbouring a propensity for violence, that all that he did, God gave the same into his heart. Now they are incapable of sin. They will come to build a world that is free of restraint, but first they

must clear the island of bodies. They need to conserve bullets to fight off the captain when he returns to claim his treasure and they must use their swords to hack apart the civilians, one by one.

A fresh sun.

Changing of the watch.

Heavy air.

Sleep.

The full moon is close.

With a gentle breeze whistling through a crack and dancing down Dawn's skin he can feel the air as if it were the comforting words of Samantha hot with sex.

The days stretch out; with no distinguishing features on the ocean it is difficult to chart forward movement; time falls away. Often, at night, Dawn goes to the top deck to view the stars.

He can only see Samantha during the day. At night she must sleep and he is alone. He likes to think that the stars are communicating to him through their dispersed bursts of silvery light. He makes patterns by imagining that he can tie threads of silver from one sparkling star to another. Dawn tries to impose a system of order on the chaos of the southern sky. But order seems not to hold; the intensity of the stars seems to shatter his arbitrary designs. Tonight the wind is soft and the *Bachelor's Delight* keeps course, continuing east. The texture of the starlight falls onto the ocean in such richness that Dawn likes to think that he can scoop it up with a cup; drinking it as if it were hot cream.

Quietly a long boat approaches from the *Lantern*. Joram is the only one inside. It pulls alongside, a rope is lowered and Joram is pulled on board – Dawn is watching as Dampier welcomes him. They immediately start to walk towards him. Dawn quickly climbs into an empty barrel: waits, breathing as quietly as possible. Joram stops near the barrel with Dampier standing next to him.

‘Where are we now?’ Joram asks.

‘We should arrive at New Holland within two weeks.’

There is silence as they look back in the direction of Africa. Joram asks Dampier, ‘Do I need to remind you of your task?’

‘You do not.’

‘New Holland must be wiped clean to successfully build it anew.’

‘It will be so.’

‘Tell me all that you know about the scribe?’

‘He is a survivor of plague, still marked by scars.’

‘Why did he survive?’

‘Providence allowed it to be. But now he is immune and he can interact with the sick, remaining safe.’

‘So that’s why he was able to return from the plague tent!’

‘What? What tent?’

‘And do his visions continue?’

‘He has told me that he has been seeing our destination in his dreams.’

‘He must accompany you when you land.’

‘Indeed, to write its history?’

‘He is charged with more than that. Visionaries are of no use, not anymore. And he is no use back in England, and certainly he cannot be trusted near the archives. He will pollute their clean stream with his knowledge. No, his visions are contrary to the needs of the archive. For visions are a danger of the most insidious type and the time for visionaries is at an end.’

‘You speak only of Mr Dawn. What of my own task?’

‘You will land and you will see that land with the cold eyes of reason. And that is all. For that is all that is required to begin the processing – the transforming – of the land. It will be as the mustard seed.’

They walk towards the stern, continuing their conversation. Dawn slightly lifts his head, trying to move his right ear past the rim of the barrel, but they are too far and he hears nothing. Alone in the barrel, he thinks of Samantha who is riding on the opposing ship.

Dawn climbs out stealthily, disappears down the deck and crawls into his hammock.

Over the following days Captain Dampier isolates himself within his cabin. Occasionally he will check directions with the sextant, marking their positions on his map, and at times he navigates by dead reckoning, as if he is being driven by forces that he does not understand. Dampier has been covering his walls in various maps and charts. Dawn notices that they come together as a factual representation of their entire voyage. Using a small sharp knife, Dampier charts the ship's position; pacing the room, staring at the world that he has created before his very eyes; a cold hard world, the oceans are still on the page, the stars dark: he frantically paces to and fro in front of it. Changing the details as the ship continues to crawl south. The lines continue along his cabin until they end at New Holland situated next to the entrance. Spotted all over their destination are tiny quincunxes. In the centre of New Holland he has driven in a nail and tied a red string that stretches to Batavia, out to the Malay Archipelago, up to China and across to Africa.

Dawn has seen this complex pattern grow, 'Dampier, what is this web that you are creating?' he asks.

'I am charting all the possible connections that New Holland has to the world.'

'To follow them?'

'No, Mr Dawn. I mean to own them and I mean for you to help me.'

'Captain Dampier you need to walk more on deck.'

'My work is down here.'

'For fresh air. And to show the men that you are still here. They are starting to

talk.’

‘Then let them talk. All they need to do is to get me there.’

‘Captain Dampier...’

‘...Patience, Dawn. Soon you will arrive and you will begin your task.’

‘My history?’

‘Precisely that.’

Over on the *Lantern*, Joram remains in his cabin and is dissecting animals with glee,
the innards flying like notes from a symphony around the room.

The evening's sky eaten
By the termites of the Kosmos
Sawdust falls as light.

Africa has not been seen for twenty days; the two ships seem to be swallowed by the deep blue ocean. In the distance a system of dark clouds approaches like a pack of panting, ravenous dogs.

Dampier checks the sextant and, as the storm envelops the ship, he returns to his cabin. The ocean quickly transforms to a system of fluctuating mountains.

To protect Dampier's meals from the splashing sea, Dawn keeps them pressed between two plates. He is about to bang his fist on the cabin's door when he hears Dampier talking inside and, desisting, presses his ear against the grainy wood. All that he can hear is that Dampier is having a passionate conversation with another person. And he keeps hearing the word Jeronimus repeated over and over again.

Dawn knocks and enters. He greets Dampier then places the plates of food on his table. Turning to look at the map he notices that off the coast of Africa, one more nail has been driven into the wall. Dawn walks to it, touches it.

'Are we planning an additional stop?' he asks

'One final stop before New Holland.'

'A new strange country.'

'A small island. Populated by one man from Scotland.'

Dampier stands and approaches his walls that are now adorned with maps.

'I was on a voyage five years ago with a sailor named Julius Klapproth and he chose to be marooned there.'

'Why was he marooned?'

‘In the light of his background it is easy to see that he was never to be a part of a British ship. He has now been there for over six years.’

‘Won’t he be dead by now?’

‘Most likely. But if he has survived I wish to know how being free of society has changed him.’

‘It must turn one into a brute.’

‘Yes, he may have degenerated, or he may have animated into a new model of man.’

‘Son of Awake?’

Dampier looks up, ‘Son of Awake indeed.’

Captain Dampier/Jeronimus

And so Jeronimus sees that his sacred task is to establish a new world upon this banal island and to do so by cultivating his inner flame to a level of wondrous subtlety. The bodies that fill this island must be buried in a deep pit. He will call his victims forth, invent a crime; order them to die – without performing the act himself.

After the slaughter he waits for the dead bodies' nutrients to soak into the soil, allowing small flowers to spring forth. And the first flower to bloom will be picked and placed, beautifully, in his mangy hair. And by the time that many flowers bloom, their rescue ship will have arrived and they will take it by force – as each member of his group will be, by now, burning with a pure and brutal will-to-violence.

‘All that I do God gave the same into my heart,’ he makes his disciples chant over and over again, swearing fealty to him alone.

Jeronimus produces a manifesto and they each sign. He places each disciple's manifesto in a box and keeps the box near him at all times.

‘As you follow me a flame will grow within you and it will animate all of your actions. Be not afraid for you are becoming incapable of sin as it is God that works within.’

Now that a necessary number of men have been sufficiently seduced they set about killing victim after victim. It is a thankless, but necessary task. So many bodies that every evening they have to resharpen their dulled blades.

Meanwhile Jeronimus sits in his tent, sipping wine and enjoying the women who have been given one choice from two options: become his concubine or be buried with the others.

Jeronimus knows that he is growing in light. Soon all that he gazes upon will be saturated in light for reason has, by now, imbued his gaze.

Samantha

While the men seem to drift off so that they perform their tasks like barely animated bodies, I must remain constantly alert and focus on the movement of all the bodies that move around me.

While working below deck (washing grease from the ropes), it suddenly feels as if thousands of bugs are crawling along my spine. And I knew that I was no longer alone, so I slightly turn my head and notice that Joram has descended the stairs. I continue my work and grab a new rope to wash in the soapy water. He is moving down the central path, but his eyes are not on me. He walks around the room, acting as if he is inspecting it, and returns to stand near the stairs, blocking my potential exit.

‘Why are you here?’ he asks.

‘I was assigned to wash the ropes.’

He looks at me with a blank expression.

‘Why have you joined this voyage?’

I drop the rope in the bucket and stand up, ‘Why do all men join such a voyage?’

‘Men?’ Joram laughs.

‘We join to escape our poverty.’

‘I don’t believe you.’

‘Does it matter?’ is all that I can say.

He takes one step forwards ‘You will stay with him in New Holland?’

‘Who?’

‘The scribe Horatio Dawn.’

‘You are sentencing me to a marooning? Why?’

‘It’s what you both desire.’

He takes an additional step and so I start to scan the room for weapons. But it’s hopeless, for if I attack him they will have me whipped and then all will know of my identity. And as I realise that there is nothing I can do I feel something slip out of me and I become a lifeless shell, washed out and left on an empty beach.

‘You will stay with him in New Holland. And neither of you will return to England. New Holland will bury you both,’ he says and then turns to ascend the stairs.

I sit down and try to pick up the soaped rope but it slips from my grasp.

Jeronimus

Divinity of Hell. According to the Gospels it is the Devil who first recognises God. The Devil is the first witness and the best of witnesses. The Evangelists believed that this was a crucial detail of their witnessing and so gave it prominence in their lives of Jesus. To be a witness, to see the world as it truly is, one must choose to reject Christ and walk freely into the embrace of the Devil. One must choose to be damned. When we make it to New Holland, I will walk upon the land, with such enlightenment: pure beams of light will project onto the dismal landscape.

The storm has been blowing for five days and there is no sign of a lull. Sleep is impossible. The sound of retching. This must be none other than Euroclydon, which, after it laid siege to St Paul's craft, fled the Mediterranean to hide out here, deep in the Southern Hemisphere: waiting for the *Lantern* and the *Bachelor's Delight*.

Dawn is cowering below deck. The *Bachelor's Delight* is being followed closely by the *Lantern*, cutting through the ocean; the writhing bodies, the aching bodies, moaning with pain – ghosts of the frozen women.

One week later the storm fades and they spot an island.

'We've made it,' Dampier says as he looks through his telescope.

The *Bachelor's Delight* sends long boats to the shore with Dawn ensuring that he is on board. The *Lantern* arrives shortly afterwards; sending two more longboats, all loaded with armed crew. Joram is also on the boat and he has brought six wooden cages to fill with living specimens.

The long boat glides into the clean sparkling bay. They notice a single plume of smoke rolling into the sky. Large fish move around their boat; easy to shoot with muskets. The men scoop them up to eat later. Turtles float inquisitively to the boat and are easily picked up by their tails.

Approaching the shore they hear yelling. Not in English, nor any European language. The sounds of a babbling idiot.

A man covered in goat's skins is running towards them, mad eyed and with a long monk's beard. He comes close, moving with impressive speed; closer until they

can discern the word that is being spat out from his mouth, ‘Marooned, marooned...’

‘Julius Klaproth?’ Dawn asks as he jumps ashore.

The man looks at Dawn with confused eyes; starts nodding and points to his chest. He walks forwards with outstretched hands. ‘Yes, me, yes...’

Dawn takes Klaproth’s right hand. The man winces at the human contact, then reaches forwards and runs his left hand up Dawn’s arm until he reaches his face and feels the solidity of his cheek bones. The longboats from the *Lantern* arrive; sailors jump into the water; run up onto land. Klaproth moves around, one by one grasping the hands of the other men.

Dawn sees Samantha’s drained and exhausted face.

‘Dawn,’ she says as he approaches. Reaching out, they touch hands: hug briefly. Dawn can feel her body, thinner than ever.

‘He knows,’ she whispers in his ear.

‘Who?’

‘Joram!’

‘What does he know?’

‘Of me. Who I am. Of myself.’

‘How?’

‘I don’t know.’

‘What can we do?’

‘I am coming to your ship.’

Klaproth is running around: touching the other sailors’ faces. Dawn looks at Samantha. She nods in response and reaches down to squeeze his hands.

The men are all following Klaproth. While directing them towards the smoking fire, he tries to talk but the words only emerge as gibberish. He can only tell

them his name and simple greeting, 'Hello, welcome, please.'

At his campsite he is roasting overturned turtles in a campfire; in a scooped out shell he is boiling herbs to create a refreshing drink.

After a successful hunting trip the sailors, led by Klaproth who runs with bounding steps of giddiness, skin and gut the three goats on the beach. They load up the carcasses then add the filled barrels of water, and five overturned turtle shells.

'Will you come with us on board?' Dawn asks Klaproth.

'Where?'

'To New Holland.'

'Where?'

'You will see.'

'...After?'

'After that we will go to England.'

Klaproth looks immensely pleased as he clammers on board and moves to the bow; riding it like a look-out, he drinks in with two gaping eyes the rapidly approaching *Bachelor's Delight*.

On board the sailors gather around Klaproth to hear the story of how he survived on the island. He tries to answer but his mouth becomes tired from making all the unfamiliar sounds. He can understand the words that arrive in his ear, but his useless and floppy mouth cannot respond in kind, the sounds falling out in a jumble, like grass from a chewing cow.

Dampier watches him from afar. 'Assign to him only minimal

responsibilities.’

Later, when he is alone, Klapproth walks down into the galley and inspects the lower levels. As he enters, a horrific tone registers within his mind. He opens his mouth but it is unable to function; a small amount of saliva drops from his lower lip.

The chains that kept the women locked down are still lying around the floor like dropped lengths of hair. Klapproth turns around, looking at the horror that was encased in such small space.

Closing his eyes he imagines that he is back on the island with the rhythmic crashing of the waves, birds, rustle of leaves and the baying of goats as his only requirement. He lives to observe things, sometimes sketches them out in the sand, and then stands back to watch the wind wipe his recordings away.

Dawn comes down into the hold to find Klapproth.

‘Why?’ Klapproth asks as he bends down to pick up a chain.

‘What are you asking me?’

‘Who die here?’

‘Your language is returning.’

‘It must. Who?’

Dawn looks around the space, ‘Over one hundred women froze to death.’

‘...How?’ Klapproth asks, dropping the chain to the floor.

‘There was nothing that we could do.’

‘Nothing?’

‘Nothing I could do...’

Klapproth avoids eye contact and reaches out with a single stretched finger. He runs it along each link of the chain, pulls back and moves up the stairs to be out on

deck – the sun’s richness feeding his face he stares out into the deep expanse of the ocean. A sailor approaches and gives him two biscuits. Klaproth puts the first into his pocket and slowly nibbles the second.

Both the *Lantern* and the *Bachelor’s Delight* are making for New Holland.

Klaproth

What can possibly be worse than continual loneliness? I kept asking this to myself as I lay around the island. But, it turns out, being rescued, by these men, is far worse. I have been welcomed on board a ship run by lust-filled devils. Devils who have had their eyes gorged out so that they cannot see. But not I. I can see them for what they truly are.

I have been listening to all of them talk and what they have done on this voyage, thus far, is murder on a mass scale. Killing as usually witnessed on the battlefield. It's a wet and hot and smelly and noisy slaughter. But it will take more than a good scrubbing to remove the traces from their vessel. I still see the lingering ghosts and, indeed, they remain angry.

They died while crying out for help and the men looked through them as if they were not even there. Their words remained unheard. I can barely communicate with these men myself and we, after all, speak the same language. Although I seem to have forgotten English. Or do I run from it as to what it brings? I must write of this, but how else can it be done? But this English language, I would rather abandon it than allow it to affect my mind and infect it like plague. They do not understand because they choose not to understand.

These men stink of rot, and it is their core that is falling away, creating a ship of hollow men.

How I long to return to the island.

This is but a plague ship in disguise.

I must be free of their corruption.

A rising sun bereft of birdsong.

A sailor sits alone tracing words in the air.

BIRDS TRACE OUT INVISIBLE MESSAGES IN THE SKY.

The moon comes – bathing them in light.

Separate as stars.

The lantern's flame-red mirage lingers.

The two ships remain on course. Captain Dampier leads with the *Bachelor's Delight*. The other men are frequently seen whispering amongst themselves. They desist when Dawn approaches.

The crew no longer know what to think of Dampier. They certainly do not fear him. They should have raided more ships by now. If they do not make any money then, by voyage's end, they will have nothing to show.

The sun is glinting off the ocean and a small speck appears. Dampier is informed and, emerging on deck, he walks to the bridge. 'It's a life raft with a single mast,' he says while examining it through his telescope.

'Who is on board?' Dawn asks.

'No movement, alter course so that we may rendezvous.'

The wheel is turned. Dampier moves forwards to better survey the distance.

'They are completely alone. Or it may just be a loose vessel, wait... Yes there is someone on board. Or something But it seems small like a child.' He closes the telescope. 'Or dead, perhaps?'

The *Bachelor's Delight* moves closer and they can see one man slumped over in a heap. Behind him a single monkey waits; watches their approach.

As two men are lowered into the boat, the monkey quickly climbs to the top of the mast.

'It's a dead Oriental,' they yell out.

'Hold it up,' Dampier orders.

The crewmember gets behind and lifts the thin body. 'He's dead and starting to smell.' It's the body of a Chinese trader wearing dirtied loose clothes and scraps of hair spread across his chin and cheeks. The body hangs limp as he grips it beneath the shoulders.

'Must be a trader from Cathay. Search him and grab the monkey.'

Moving through the dead man's pockets they find nothing. Loose in the bottom of the boat they gather an empty gourd, string and fishing hooks. The monkey

is so weak that it can barely move. They approach, clicking their tongues; it does not resist them, and they scoop it up like a lost child. The men return on board; carrying up the disparate items to display to Dampier. He takes up each item, jettisons it overboard, 'Junk. No jewels, no spices and no slaves to sell.'

'No documents for me to take either,' Dawn says.

The monkey escapes, leaps across the deck then rapidly climbs a main mast.

Klaproth is watching on with keen interest. He holds out his hand; makes a gentle clicking sound to attract the monkey's attention. While doing this he offers a silent prayer to the dead Oriental man. Next he removes a small piece of biscuit from his pocket and holds it out to the monkey; its two large black ravenous eyes lock onto the delicious morsel. The monkey swings down a hanging rope and, after taking the biscuit, sits upon Klaproth's shoulder to nibble.

The small Oriental ship is pushed away. Floating into the distance, the dead body hunched over.

Samantha

All this way and for what? For love? What is love if the path that leads us there burns us both? For I exist, my body is mine and I will assert this until the crows of New Holland pick my bones clean.

The sun is an
earring
for the Goddess of
the East.

Dampier emerges after days of hiding in his cabin. He is nervously pacing around deck and constantly muttering to himself.

As he moves past, Dawn can hear him whisper the name, ‘Jeronimus, Jeronimus.’

Dawn watches him go.

A clear sky, unmarked by clouds.

Dampier halts and realises he has forgotten his telescope. Moving quickly back to the cabin, he arrives to discover a sailor inside, looking through the maps.

‘Thief,’ he yells while drawing out his pistol.

The exiting crewman stops and raises both his hands in surrender, his deep brown eyes and a thick nose jutting out from a hairy face. ‘Captain Dampier, I needed to talk to you about our location,’ he offers with his hands above him.

‘You were stealing from me.’

‘No, I was looking for you.’

‘You have found me,’ Dampier says, pressing the gun into his back. He marches the man to the main mast and orders him to kneel down.

The crew gathers.

‘This man meant to steal my maps and my gold while I was taking my constitutional across the length of the boat. Or perhaps he meant to poison my water and allow me to choke to death alone in the cabin with no one to offer assistance.’

The Sergeant-at-arms arrives, ‘What is the matter?’

‘Attach him to the mast and ensure that the knots are tight. A hand that takes

from its captain is a hand that must be relieved of its attachment to the rest of the body,' he tells the crew. Dampier approaches the mast and holds up his sword as if he means to execute the sailor.

The Sergeant-at-arms grabs Dampier's hand, preventing the fatal blow.

'Treason,' Dampier yells with a look of horror upon his face.

The Sergeant-at-arms wrestles the sword away from his hand and Dampier falls to the ground, with the sword bouncing free. The crew is staring at him with eyes sharp as knives. The Sergeant-at-arms picks up the sword.

'Jeronimus will not be pleased with what you have done to your captain,' Dampier screams at them.

'Who?' the Sergeant-at-arms asks as he levels the sword at Dampier's throat.

'Traitors!' Dampier yells and glares at the crew to show his anger. He can see the anger dripping off the men's skin. He gathers, stands and returns to his cabin, locking the door behind him.

The *Lantern* is sailing far behind them.

Dawn sleeps for a few hours then rises to visit Dampier, who tells him to stop delivering him his meals. As of now he will persist on the biscuits and dried fruit that he keeps hidden in his cabin.

'I will stay inside and eat that until we make it to New Holland.'

'I can bring you food from the kitchen, or any fish that we catch.'

'I will not succumb to poisoning. My task is sacred and it must be completed.'

An agape and empty blue sky – expansive across the ocean's ceiling.

They have forgotten how to sing

A spinning vortex

Drill.

Later in the evening a large electrical storm hits. As the waves grow in size, Dawn can feel a shuddering energy pulsate through the air, making his hair knot together. Dampier emerges from his cabin with a look of wildness in his eyes. He walks out on deck.

‘He is here,’ he yells across the deck and rushes to port. ‘Look the ocean has a temper like a mischievous child, it is entering a period of wailing.’

Dawn sees the silent crew mustering. He rushes to Dampier and puts his hand on his shoulder. ‘Captain Dampier, you are in danger. You must return to your cabin.’

‘Jeronimus is upon us. He comes with the fury of justice.’

The crew are moving closer with looks of hatred sketched across their faces. The air thickens with the storm; the *Bachelor's Delight* pushes further into the maelstrom.

‘Fix the wheel. Remain true to the course.’

The *Lantern* has disappeared from view.

‘I think you should return below deck,’ Dawn says to Samantha.

‘I will if you come with me.’

‘Go now!’

The ship quickly rolls to the port and Samantha falls over. She gets up, nods her head and disappears below.

Klaproth approaches with the monkey sitting tamely upon his shoulder. A piece of attached leather prevents it from climbing the mast again. ‘What he doing?’

‘I think Captain Dampier has cracked.’

‘He has?’

‘That monkey is not a parrot?’

‘Yes.’

‘Take it off your shoulder.’

‘It belong here,’ says Klaproth, reaching up to scratch its chin.

‘It should be locked below deck. Along with the Captain.’ Dawn looks at Dampier standing tall in the wind.

The thick rain is sounding across the ship. Soon it has soaked through to their skin.

Dampier is walking and laughing as the rain falls on his face.

A flash of lightening turns the atmosphere blue.

The monkey jumps down from Klaproth’s shoulder. It tries to make for hanging ropes, but Klaproth pulls it down again. The tops of the mast begin to glow like the peaks of Eastern Mountains.

‘Captain Dampier, the mast is alight,’ Dawn yells to him.

Dampier shields his eyes and looks up into the plummeting rain.

‘No. It’s St Elmo’s Fire. We are passing into the sacred.’

‘Dawn come below!’ Samantha yells from the entrance.

Dawn can feel his skin tighten. His lips are tingling as if he has bitten a pepper. The light hovering about the mast grows in strength – projecting out among the waves that have now grown into vast sheets of polished silver that seem to stretch towards the clouds, only to collapse back into the ocean once again.

‘It’s the lingering spirit of Jeronimus. He calls to us. His light means to feed our animations.’

The deck is saturated with rain. Dawn’s feet slosh about as he moves. The

waves are growing; they wash over the deck, dragging away all loose items. He wants to secure Dampier to a mast with a rope before the ocean snatches him away. He finds one and runs towards the main mast. Klaproth is stroking the monkey's fur that has become rigid with electricity that spreads to the beast's eyes, now shimmering with blue.

Time freezes: the entire atmosphere becomes illuminated with an intense white light. Dawn turns to see Dampier whose body is combusting into a burning electrical fire. The loose threads of his coat are stiff like nails and his hair stands upright like ripe wheat. His eyes are now two blue translucent orbs – shining like signal lamps and inside the black swamp of his mouth his teeth a row of sapphires.

Samantha's screams are muffled by the thick atmosphere.

Strands of electricity are dancing behind Dampier's teeth; Dawn feels his own skin contract; squeezing his muscles – momentarily choking. The sound of the corresponding thunder arrives with a loud boom, pushing Dawn down on the deck. He is desperately grasping the rope. There is no air to breathe; suffocating – thunder echoes away. A remaining screeching sound lingers within Dawn's skull. Dampier is standing rigid and then, as if his skeleton has been dissolved, he falls to the ground.

Dawn drops the rope.

Around Dampier's figure a blackened charcoal circle has been traced out. The warm rainwater is falling hard as small pebbles. Dampier's hair has been singed and he is gently moaning. Dawn calls for help.

The men are still below deck. Only Klaproth, carrying the monkey, moves to his aid.

'He can't die on us. We need him to get to New Holland.'

Klaproth is standing over them and gently strokes the wet monkey.

‘Without Captain Dampier we won’t make it!’ Dawn screams.

A sailor approaches with a lamp. Dawn snatches it, directing the light to see Dampier’s eyes, two pupils contracted to pin points and his mouth locked in a clownish grin.

‘Your captain has been struck by lightning,’ he tells the sailor who is now gripping the main mast to secure himself amidst the rolling deck. A wave falls on deck, pushing Dampier’s body further away. Dawn grabs it in a tight hold.

Two sailors emerge and pick up Dampier’s body. They carry it below, while Dawn follows.

Dampier is slowly regaining consciousness.

‘Rest Captain Dampier. You have been struck by lightning. The bolt went right into your head,’ Dawn tells him.

Klaproth is standing over them with his hands resting on the monkey.

Dampier is looking around the room. ‘Finally...’ he says.

‘What, Captain Dampier?’

‘I have been anointed as damned,’ he responds with his eyes bulging out as if they are trying to escape from his burnt skull. Dawn looks up at Klaproth who is staring over the scene.

After the storm passes they carry Dampier back to his cabin. Samantha places wet towels across his forehead. Dawn soaks a rag in brandy and, holding it to Dampier’s lips, lets him gently suck it dry.

‘It all rests on him. If he dies then we will not make it.’

Dampier continually mutters, ‘Jeronimus, Jeronimus.’

They pass through the storm without further incident.

All night, the next day and the following night Dawn remains locked inside the cabin.

‘What is his condition?’ the crewmember asks Dawn through the door.

‘I don’t know. But I’m keeping him watered and cool.’

Inside the cabin is a distinct stench of corruption.

‘Dawn, open the door now,’ a crewmember requests while banging on the captain’s door.

‘Depart,’ he tells them.

‘How can a man possibly survive a direct hit from a lightning strike?’

‘Depart!’ Dawn yells at them.

Next morning there is a gentle rap on the door.

‘Depart!’

‘Klaproth.’

‘...Are you alone?’

‘Just the monkey.’

Dawn opens the door and Klaproth enters with the monkey sitting on his shoulder.

‘This smell is death,’ he tells Dawn.

‘He may survive.’

‘Him dead.’

‘He is still breathing.’

‘Still dead.’

‘What are they saying out there?’

‘Mad and crazy. He Devil.’

‘He is still captain of the *Bachelor’s Delight*.’

‘They say compass no work with corpse on board.’

‘Is the *Lantern* near?’ Dawn asks him.

‘Can just see. The men use mirror to talk to it.’

‘What are they saying?’

‘I don’t know. It’s mirror talking.’

Dawn rubs his forehead.

‘Klaproth, what will you do when we arrive in New Holland?’

‘First see what this land is. Only after that will I know.’

Jeronimus

All I do, God gave the same into my heart. I bear no guilt.

The sea of darkness

The moon is low and
Churns the ocean into foam.

It reaches west, becoming pale as honeycomb
An eastern light grows with the colour of a kitten's eye.

‘Wipe the island clean. Establish a new order. I become damned.’

Captain Dampier can place his right hand upon his own forehead.

‘Destroy that which is sacred.’

Dawn is listening as he sits by the bed.

‘A snake uncurling inside my mind.’

Dawn gently moves the captain’s hand and puts down a new wet towel. Moving away

Dampier grabs it.

‘Dawn, will you come ashore with me?’

‘Indeed I will.

To write.’

‘I need your eyes.’

‘Who were you talking to?’

‘To myself, to Jeronimus.’

‘You are Captain Dampier.’

‘Yes, I am.’

‘Who is Jeronimus?’

‘It is him to whom I speak.’

‘But it’s only you and I in this room.’

‘Yes.’

‘And you are Captain Dampier.’

‘Yes.’

‘So who were you talking to before I entered?’

‘To Jeronimus.’

‘Are you Captain Dampier or are you Jeronimus?’

‘Yes.’

‘Dawn.’

‘Yes?’

‘You must protect her. You must protect her from them.’

Jeronimus

Fill the land with the light of Reason.

The ship catches a favourable wind. They are making good speed.

Glinting horizon.

Serene and pure night with tepid dry air.

Groaning knots.

Curled up in pain, twitching as if spiders are tickling him. Captain Dampier's swollen face is deep, hot and red. His ears are black and rise to a sharp point at the end.

After two days all his hair has fallen out. When he rises from bed, to try and look around his room, the detached hair remains lying behind him like silken string.

Two weeks after the storm Dampier can walk around the cabin. He slowly buckles up his belt and slots a charged pistol into the holder, picks a walking staff and emerges from his cabin to present to the crew that their captain lives. The rhythmic clunking of the staff upon the wooden deck, the sun shining off his sweaty bald dome, his newly pointed ears apparent; the crew members squint as he slowly clunks along to the ship's wheel and, after checking the course, returns to his cabin. The men say nothing and stare at him in silence. They are surprised at his appearance. Once his cabin door is closed a sailor whispers 'corruption' under his breath.

‘We are almost there,’ Dampier says after a seagull lands on their deck.

By the next sunrise a thick white cloud covers the sky; as light begins to glow through they can discern the outlines of their destination.

‘Hello again,’ Dampier says weakly as he extends the telescope. Through the tiny hole he sees yellow beaches and green shrubs that stretch into the distance.

The surrounding ocean, as they cut towards New Holland, becomes rich with wildlife. As they enter the heads of a small bay dolphins break out of the water, swimming beside them, breaking through the water. The waves, with thin tops of white foam, seem soft as pillows. They drop the anchor. Dampier, Dawn, Samantha, Klaproth with his monkey, and four additional sailors fill a longboat to make for the beach.

As the boat is charting its way through the water the sunlight glints over Dampier’s red face; his shadow projected into the sapphire sea highlights his pronounced pointed ears.

‘Are you ready, Dawn?’ he asks.

‘Yes, Captain Dampier.’

‘The history of New Holland begins.’

Dawn taps his length of bamboo. ‘I, the scribe, am ready.’

The sailors put their backs into the rowing, moving in unison. The boat bounces across the water like a skipping stone. Close to the shore they position the boat deep within the rolling momentum of a nicely arched wave. Fish are sparkling around them as they ride the wave; the front of the boat scrapes up into the sand that

seems to open out – like opening a wound – and locks the boat to the land. The wave retreats; the boat remains.

Yellow sand stretching to the horizon, where it starts to blend with the deep red earth. Beyond the horizon small shrubs tightly knit together form a natural barrier. The sun is drooping complacently in the sky and soon it will be night, with hot, heavy air. The landscape seems as alien and cold as the surface of the low moon on a harvest night.

Klaproth, with the monkey remaining on his shoulder, is the first to leap out. He says nothing, does not even look at the other men, but surveys the land. He reaches down to pick up a handful of sand and works it through his hands, grinding the small shards into his skin. Brushing his hands clean he starts to walk north, with the monkey remaining on his shoulder.

‘There he goes,’ Dawn says.

‘Where is he going?’ Dampier asks.

‘He is going nowhere. He does not know where to go and he does not care,’ Dawn responds.

‘How?’ Samantha asks.

‘Klaproth is choosing to maroon himself. He would rather total solitude than remain a part of our crew.’

‘You are mad,’ one of the crew yells. But the words do not even register to his ears.

‘Well, let him go,’ Dampier says. ‘It matters not. We arrive here, men, as bearers of the flame. Let us begin our task of cleansing the land,’ he says to the crew.

‘We need to find water and take it back to the others who have remained on board,’ they say as they unload two empty barrels of water and carry them towards the

trees.

‘You are free to do so. But we must stay true to our sacred task of building a new society from scratch. First we must turn this land to a blank page.’

The men are quickly moving away.

Dampier draws his pistol, ‘I order you to accompany me across this land.’

The men drop the barrels and swing their muskets to point directly at him. He, in response, lowers his pistol. Dawn watches the men stare down Dampier. Then one laughs and the others lower their weapons. Dampier turns around and limps away, east, towards the distant horizon. One of them says to Dawn, ‘You are both with him now,’ and they leave for a thick patch of green foliage to try and dig for water.

Dawn does not know what to do. Samantha remains seated in the boat. Dawn notices a single plume of smoke ascend into the open sky.

‘Someone knows that we are here,’ he says to her, pointing at the rising smoke. He pulls the boat further up onto the shore, Samantha steps out and sits down in the boat’s shade.

Klaproth reaches the northern limits of the beach and disappears into the thick bushes.

As it starts to get dark the men return with water and load up the long boat. Dawn asks them for a drink. They scoop out a cup and Dawn gives it to Samantha. She quickly drinks, they refill and Dawn swallows.

‘Wait here for the captain,’ they tell him. Dawn returns the cup without responding. They both watch as the sailors push the long boat back into the ocean.

‘Are we too marooned?’ Samantha asks.

Dawn does not respond.

The boat returns but when Dawn approaches they raise their guns; he backs away with raised hands. The boat's hull connects with the sand. Two soldiers jump into the waves; they carry a single chest that they deposit beyond the reach of the waves. They return to the boat, fetch a roll of old sailcloth then deposit that on top of the chest. They offer no farewells, return to the long boat and push away to return to the *Bachelor's Delight*.

Both Dawn and Samantha are frozen; the swamping emptiness of New Holland covers them like thick clouds.

With time Dawn stands to drag the box into the distant shade. He removes an axe, a ball of twine, hammer, loose nails, two knives, a flint rock, an empty wine cask, a kettle and two cooking pans. The roll of fabric is a loose piece of sail. When he unrolls it he finds two blankets have been placed inside it.

Samantha has not moved.

'Where is Captain Dampier?' Samantha asks when he returns to place a hand on her shoulder.

'I don't know if we will ever see him again.'

She looks north, trying to saturate her vision so that it moves past the distant trees, 'And Klaproth? Is it not him that we need more than anyone else?'

'I don't think that he needs us,' Dawn replies. The sound of insects is building with intensity, screeching together it forms a type of demented orchestra. 'I think we will have to maintain ourselves until a passing ship arrives.'

'What of the natives?'

'What of them?'

'Will they feed us and help us survive. Without their knowledge we might as

well die.’

‘They are aware of our arrival.’

‘How do you know that?’

‘We are not alone,’ Dawn points into the distance where the same small plume of smoke billows up into the sky. ‘It’s been like that since we arrived. They are talking about us right now.’

‘That’s it. A single plume of smoke. What of roads or houses. Farms...’

‘We will have to wait until Dampier returns. The *Lantern* should be here soon. Perhaps Joram will rescue us.’

Samantha puts her head into her hands and sighs.

*And Dawn draws his pen out of its scabbard and holds it aloft. He bends down, offers a brief prayer and walks to the flowing water. Bending down he tries to write the word **R-I-V-E-R** but the ink will not stick to the water and bleeds out like black blood from a wound. He watches the ink flow away.*

*A fish breaks through the surface and swallows the black ink: it starts flapping and shaking. With a final convulsion it dies and, floating on its side, the river carries it away. He takes the pen and walks to a tree and proceeds to write **T-R-E-E** but again the ink will not hold and runs down the trunk. And the damage to the tree releases a small trace of sap. Thousands of ants emerge to drink the running juice. Dawn watches the ants swarm around and looking at his pen he can see that he has broken the nib and the black ink is now all over his hands. What is the true name of this river and this tree – passages replace passages – ghosts replace ghosts – words*

replace words? Wheels within wheels.

Dawn walks along the beach and the blackness of the sky seems about to drop down and drown him. Continuing along he finds a line of oysters and uses his knife to shuck one open and eat its creamy flesh. He gathers ten and carries them back to share with Samantha while in the distance the single thin column of smoke continues to bloom.

He gently places down their meal. ‘It may be a forward guard of Atlantis, warning of our approach.’

Samantha looks up at the signal. ‘Is that what it means?’

‘What else would it be?’

‘They may help us.’

‘No, it’s the natives warning others that we are here,’ he tells her.

Samantha, shaking her head in dismay, picks up an oyster and uses a knife to prise it open. She eats her fill then returns to the shade and lies down to rest.

Dawn eats two more then makes for the point where the white sand stops and rough grass begins.

The bush is screaming at his approach. Insects are wailing; birds are singing in a way that sounds disjointed and out of tune – sounding more like an alarm than song. A pungent smell of oil seems to be weeping out of the trees. He continues deeper as the smell traps him, making him feel sick as the birds wail and the insects scratch with increasing ferocity. He is afraid to stray too far from the beach. If he does and the crew, or anyone, arrives then Samantha will be faced with the choice to depart with them, come looking for him, or stay and die in New Holland.

Dawn speaks to the county. ‘You cannot possibly be Atlantis! Where are your roads? What can we build upon your face? Where are the farms? How can you support us? Your wilderness is simply horrifying.’

While waiting for him to return Samantha arranges the empty oyster shells into a circle. She sees a shadow flash across the sand and, turning her head, sees them. Two native children are approaching with smiling and friendly faces.

‘Hello,’ she says and stands up. The boys become nervous and so she sits down again.

She points to her mouth and, after making the motion of eating, rubs her belly. ‘Food, food!’ she says.

The boys talk to themselves and run away.

The next morning when they wake up a large dead lizard and two yams are waiting by the side of their tent.

‘Was Captain Dampier here or, perhaps, Klaproth?’ Dawn asks.

‘No, it was those two small children, I was telling you about. The inhabitants of this land.’

‘They can feed us?’

‘Well, it’s a lizard. But yes they can.’

The next day the *Lantern* sails into the bay. After dropping sail and laying down anchor, a long boat approaches with Joram standing expectantly at the bow. As it reaches the shore he jumps into the water, walks up out of the reach of waves then

scoops up some sand to run into the palms of his hands. He walks with the slight limp that Dawn noticed the first time he saw him.

‘Now our work begins,’ he says while allowing the sand to fall through his fingers.

Dawn and Samantha approach.

‘We are here for this,’ he says as the last grains pass through. ‘This land is rich with metals. Samantha, you will help us find it.’

‘Why were we left here?’

‘If you even want to be a part of my crew again then you will do exactly as I say.’

‘The crew is Captain Dampier’s.’

‘And where is he right now?’

‘We don’t know. Somewhere over there.’ She points inland.

‘Will you take Samantha back on board? I can stay here to help you find him,’ Dawn asks.

Samantha elbows Dawn in his side. ‘I’m staying with him. We won’t be separated again.’

‘Indeed. Samantha comes from a line of people utterly obsessed with and shaped by buried metals. She has liquid metal flowing through her veins,’ Joram tells them. ‘We need her to find gold.’

‘Then what use am I?’ Dawn asks.

‘We do require you to survey the land,’ Joram says as he walks past them, making for the line of trees. Dawn and Samantha begin to trail behind. He drops some food and two bottles of water for them and they rapidly run for it.

‘Are we looking for Captain Dampier?’ Dawn asks, finishing his final mouthful.

‘No. He is gone in the mind and so can stay here. Should stay here.’

‘Won’t you welcome him back on board?’ Samantha asks.

‘With his experience and his navigational skills he has brought us here. And now that we are here we have no more requirement for a man of his disposition. After this both ships will turn privateers and there is no room in such an economy for a mad captain. I have talked to the crew of the *Bachelor’s Delight*. They know what they want and they know what stands in their way.’

‘Klaproth has gone as well.’

‘What of it? He has disappeared, that fits his position in life.’

They move across the sand and through the brush. Walking for one hour, in silence, they reach a place of large rocks, as tall as a double storied house.

‘This should do.’

‘For what?’ Dawn asks.

‘Now we climb. I spotted this from the shore.’

Dawn begins, followed closely by Samantha, while Joram climbs last. Dawn notices that Joram has both pistols on his belt.

At the top of the cliff Joram sits down and instructs Samantha to put her ear to the soil. ‘Listen to the workings of the ground.’

‘The what?’

‘Put your ear to the soil and tell me if you can hear anything below. It’s like listening to the belly of a pregnant woman.’

‘I do not have those skills,’ she tells him.

‘Are you denying your heritage?’

‘What could I possibly hear?’

‘Put your ear to the surface and you will know.’

She bends down with a look of focused attention, ‘I can hear something.’

Dawn steps closer.

‘What does it sound like?’ Joram asks.

‘Like a digesting stomach and...’

‘And what?’ Dawn asks.

Samantha sits up, ‘Like cries or lamentations.’

‘Similar to the cries of the insects.’

Samantha returns her ear to the ground.

‘And this land is certainly alive. Dawn, begin the map.’ Joram instructs.

Dawn removes the rolled up paper and pen and starts to draw the contours of the land, the coast and behind him the hinterland, covered in trees and stretching all the way to the distant horizon.

‘When I have returned to London, I want to be able to walk through this land – within my mind – as it corresponds to the map,’ Joram says, looking down the valley. ‘The *Lantern* seems small as a puppy from here.’

Dawn completes the map and hands it over. Joram rolls it up and slides it down his trousers. Then he stops and further surveys the landscape. ‘Let’s create one more map and we can all return aboard the *Lantern*.’

Joram walks to the edge of the cliff and views the land where it drops away. A body would take over three seconds to plummet to the floor.

Samantha crouches down and puts her ear to the ground, but her facial expression does not change. ‘It’s silent.’ She stands up again. ‘I can’t hear anything.’

‘Come closer to the edge. The sooner we complete this the sooner we can

leave this blank land and return to the *Lantern*. Indeed, return to London.'

Coming closer to the edge she looks at the ground then looks up as glinting deep orange sunlight streams over her. Joram takes three large steps forward and pushes her over the edge. She screams as she disappears. Dawn yells and takes three steps forward and leaps after her. He is falling, weightless, his body pushing down and clothes flapping above – then there are branches clawing at him, slowing the descent until he is suspended in a tree.

'Samantha?' he calls out.

'I'm here.'

'Where?'

'Below you.'

Dawn grabs a sturdy branch and sits up. Samantha's fall was also broken by the tree's thick web of branches.

'Are you hurt?'

'I don't think so.'

'Joram is wicked.'

'We must get down.'

'How do we?' she asks. 'It's a long drop.'

'We must hurry.'

'Dawn, Samantha are you okay?' Klapproth is below them and waving his hand, 'Jump. I catch. Hurry!'

'Where have you been?'

'He comes,' Klapproth is saying. 'I saw it and he come back again.'

'He's here,' Samantha yells and grips Dawn's shoulder.

Klapproth is standing beneath them. He extends out his arms. 'Jump. I catch.'

‘We can’t.’

‘Now. He almost here.’

Samantha looks at Dawn. After he nods his head she positions herself and then drops with a gentle scream. Klapproth catches her and puts her down. He signals to Dawn who also drops down into Klapproth’s hands.

Joram has appeared on the valley floor.

‘Run,’ Samantha yells. Klapproth leads the way and they follow.

Removed from the scabbard Joram’s cutlass glints in the sunlight as he pursues them.

‘To cave,’ Klapproth tells them.

‘Where?’ Dawn asks

‘My cave.’

Klapproth runs into the entrance of a dripping mossy cave. The ground is made of shale. Dawn can see that the whole cave has been slowly dissolved away from limestone. Klapproth grasps Dawn’s hand, and Dawn grabs Samantha’s. They push through a small dark opening. The air remains surprisingly fresh and glinting stalactites and stalagmites make the atmosphere appear like an opened chest with the rib bones jutting out.

Joram stops at the mouth. He sheathes his sword and follows them into the gloom.

The tunnels continue and they move as quietly as they can, to stay ahead of the pursuing Joram: his heavy breathing beating behind to tell them that he is close.

A cool breeze touches Dawn’s face and the passageway opens into a large illuminated cavern where a grey light descends through a small hole in the ceiling.

Klapproth points down at an ancient-looking skeleton that has been laid out on

a raised platform with both hands folded across its chest. The slow drop of water has calcified the entire skeleton, making it sparkle. Above the skeleton Dawn can faintly see a painting of a large oriental boat. Klaproth and Samantha are staring closely at the painting. The heavy breathing of Joram starts to fill the cavern.

Dawn taps heavily on both their shoulders. He points deeper. Klaproth shakes his head and, walking towards a dark corner, begins to crawl into a hidden tunnel. Dawn grabs Samantha's hand and they follow him up the hole, into a thin shaft: complete darkness. Joram enters the space; his breathing and the thin crinkling of dust beneath his feet echo up into their shaft.

Then he stops. 'What wonder I have found!'

The small space echoes the intensity of his voice.

Dawn can hear Joram snapping the skeleton apart and rolling it up in his coat. Next he can hear Joram using a knife to chip out the painting.

Before leaving, Joram addresses the darkness, 'This island is now yours, you both have violated the contract and we have no need for either of you on the return voyage. Neither of you can participate in the capture of ships. But excellent work, I must say, on locating and mapping the gold deposits. A whole colony will bloom in your name.'

With that Joram departs.

Klaproth pulls Dawn up and Samantha follows. They climb up the shaft into the flow of fresh air and soon they can see a tiny patch of blue. Moving towards it, they emerge back on the top of the cliff. From this height they can see that the long boats have returned to the *Lantern*.

'After they pick up Joram, both ships will depart. And they will never return.'

Dawn says.

‘We are marooned.’

‘Yes.’

‘Marooned, but not alone.’ Samantha motions north. Now there are two columns of smoke ascending the sky.

‘I want to return inside,’ Samantha says.

‘Why?’

‘Please.’

Dawn nods to Klaproth.

Helping each other down, they make grass torches and light one to re-enter the caves.

‘Why are we returning?’ Dawn asks.

‘To see the pictures,’ Samantha tells him.

In the dark atmosphere they weave through the narrow passageways until they come upon the site where the calcified skeleton was taken from. Above, the empty gap where the exquisite picture should sit is a gaping wound where Joram hacked out the rock painting.

‘He took both the skeleton and the painting,’ Samantha says.

The torch burns down until it touches Klaproth’s hand. He holds it to Samantha’s and lets it extinguish while she holds aloft the new light. Samantha is staring at the gap, trying to remember what was there.

‘There is nothing to look at. The painting is gone.’

‘I can still remember it.’

Klaproth is bent over near where the skeleton used to be. He sweeps up some of the remaining shards of calcification and puts them into his pocket.

‘Where did your monkey go?’ Dawn asks him.

‘Ran away.’

Returning to the beach they find both ships have gone.

‘You are safe now. Farewell to you,’ Klaproth says

‘Where are you going?’

‘I have to find monkey. I will check you, sometimes.’

Without a wave he turns and walks to the distant sand hills and, after climbing to the top, drops over the peak and is gone.

Days later Samantha walks to the bush to toilet. She digs a small hole with the heel of her foot. After finishing she stands up and a horrible notion arrives that she is not alone. Turning around she sees Captain Dampier, staring at her with a face that is sunburnt and cut up as if he has fallen down a steep slope.

‘What do you want?’ she asks as she quickly raises her britches.

He looks at her as if she is a complete stranger.

‘Where have you been?’

He does not answer but takes a step forwards.

‘Don’t come close,’ Samantha inches backwards, falling over.

Dampier steps forwards.

She stands up and runs.

Dawn is scavenging among the rocks. He has gathered a pile of pipi shells that rest in a small rock pool. One pipi extends out of its shell and, gaining traction on the mossy rock, starts to slowly crawl away from the pile towards the cool water of the ocean. Dawn notices the escaping pipi and, picking it up by the shell, returns it to the others. While gathering another handful, he hears Samantha's screams. Picking up the hatchet, he runs towards her.

'What is it?' he asks.

'Captain Dampier.'

'Where?'

'He came out of nowhere.'

'Did he hurt you?'

'No, I ran away.'

'I thought he was dead.'

'Dawn, Captain Dampier's face. His shift to madness is complete.'

The next morning they decide to walk north. They find a creek that empties into the ocean and follow its bank inland until the terrain gets swampy and wet underfoot. They hear birdsong and follow it to a rich-looking water hole. A myriad of different coloured birds flock together: large white birds with yellow crests, red birds, blue birds and large black crows. The land is rich with their colours and their songs. Dawn and Samantha linger in the distance, listening to the squawking. As they approach, the

birds flee. The air is moist and without salt. They come upon the river and, looking down, can see their own dirtied manic-looking faces reflected in the shimmering surface: two strangers suspiciously glare back. Dawn takes off his shirt and they wade in through the mud. Laying the garment over the surface of the water they suck up the fresh water through the fabric. They drink and drink until they feel sick and retreat back to the shore, sitting down. The birds return and cover the lake with their colour and indecipherable song. Samantha closes her eyes and rests in Dawn's lap. A single white cloud line covers the vast expanse of the sky, touching both ends.

Dawn hears noise behind them and turns to see two black children approaching. They are smiling as they point at him. When they start talking, Samantha wakes up and looks.

'I know these two. They will help us,' she tells him.

They are motioning towards the water and making drinking motions. Dawn nods his head. He starts to rub his stomach. One of the boys walks to the long stalks of grass. He gathers up the long leaves and, gripping it near the base, he pulls the stalk out. He quickly washes the small bulb so clean it is white. It looks like a peeled and shiny apple. The boy, with hesitation, approaches and holds up the gift. Dawn takes it from him and their hands briefly touch, making the boy recoil as if he has just been burnt. Dawn bites into the root which tastes like a sweet, tangy onion. Offering it to Samantha, she also eats. The second boy is laughing. The first boy is still holding his own hand, rubbing it as if it were in pain. They speak in their own language, the hurt one holding his hand as if it was burnt, and they quickly leave.

'Do you think they will ever come to accept us?' Samantha says, watching them go.

'They are showing us how to find food. That is something,' says Dawn who

then walks to the empty hole in the ground where the onion was just pulled up. He looks around; there are other tufts of grass and he pulls up more roots. They return to camp with the onions dangling by their side as they follow the outflowing river to its mouth.

Replenished with the water and the onion they start to gather wood and hanging vines. They build a stout frame and lash it together. Making a roof with thin branches, they fill the thicket with loose leaves to create a small and warm shelter. In the evening they have the onions for dinner. Before sleeping they scan the horizon for any sign of either Dampier or the natives. But no eyes appear. They are utterly alone.

Over the next few days they make love and pull their food either out of the ground or the ocean or they pull it off a rock. They eat and drink as much as they can contain. Finding berries they rub one along their armpits and when they feel no reaction eat the sweet fruit. They even boil some berries with a bitter grass, to make a fruity, refreshing tea.

Four sunsets over four days streak the sky with pinks that run to oranges before disappearing over the horizon.

Five days since they have seen Captain Dampier. The ants are either tearing away the skin to feast on his flesh or, finding Atlantis, he is now walking the perfectly organised and pestilence free streets.

One morning while Dawn is sitting in the shelter, avoiding the sun, he hears Samantha calling out his name. She sounds worried, as if she is in danger. He runs towards the

shore and she points into the distance. They notice a small black child is crying in pain as it runs towards the breaking waves. It's one of the children that showed them how to find onions. The child dives into the water. Dawn and Samantha run towards it. They get close and Samantha stops. Dawn continues until he can almost touch the child who is crying and picking up handfuls of sand to scrub all over his skin. The child scoops up seawater to wash out his mouth, scrubbing his tongue and crying out in panic. Samantha walks behind Dawn and puts her hand upon his shoulder. The child stops and turns to look at them. They can both see that the boy is covered in an intricate pattern of red bulging buboes.

‘He has the plague,’ Samantha says.

‘How?’

‘You know how.’ Samantha approaches but the child hits away her hand and runs for the distant sand dune. He climbs to the top and disappears over the edge. They look upon each other in horror. By the end of the day the child will collapse in exhaustion and hallucinations, but they cannot talk to him, can provide no comfort and, when he returns to his people for aid, it will begin the spread.

Returning to their camp they sleep inside the hut and Dawn keeps the axe with him at all times.

When Dawn wakes the sky is already light. Birds are squawking. Crawling out from the protective cover he stands outside their shelter and the intense heat hits his face. The dim outlines of birds are traversing the lighted sky. Looking up Dawn can see

that the distant trees are all burning as one large fire. The fire is so huge that the flames seem to lick the sky. He shakes Samantha awake.

‘What is that sound?’ she says, looking up to see the flames.

‘This is the largest fire I have ever seen,’ Dawn tells her.

The flames are dancing, growing into a large storm stretching across the ceiling of the world, slowly growing as it feeds on a hot strong wind.

‘Captain Dampier is still alive,’ Dawn says.

‘Why do you say that?’

‘Who else lit this fire?’

‘The inhabitants of New Holland! To kill us in revenge of spreading plague.’

Dawn stares at the flames. ‘I think that Captain Dampier is out there, amongst the fire.’

‘No,’ Samantha says. ‘This is his fire. I saw it in his eyes, when he tried to attack me. I think Dampier means to burn New Holland clean so that there is nothing left but dirt, ash and stones.’ They watch in silence. The cracking and the sucking of the air, the screaming birds and burning oily grasses that turn to red embers, rising vertically. The heat is increasing and becoming unbearable. They quickly gather up their things and retreat to the safety of the ocean.

An entire landscape is being rendered to charcoaled dust as they watch helplessly. They see movement. Running towards them. Worried that it’s the locals attacking them with rage. Getting closer they can see it’s Dampier returning. As he approaches them it seems that instead of two cold eyes Dampier now has two glowing hot coals on either side of his nose.

Dampier runs to the constructed shelter and looks inside, empty. Looking up he spots them.

Dampier runs towards them, but collapses on the way. Coughing badly and barely breathing. His face is red and swollen; pus leaks out of large boils.

‘Captain Dampier. You have been badly burnt.’

‘Take me to the ocean,’ he replies.

‘This fire. It’s you. This is your fire?’

‘I feel a cleaving open of my head. I can function with the animation of Jeronimus.’ Dawn puts his arm under Dampier’s shoulder; drags him further away from the fire, deeper into the waves that crash and bubble around them. The fire is growing with fury. Dampier stops speaking. His body clenches up and then he starts to jerk once the water is all around him.

‘Your corrupt mind. All this way just to immolate yourself in your own furnace.’

‘All that I am, God gave the same into my...’

Dawn refuses to suffer through this refrain one more time and so submerges Dampier’s head underwater. Pulling it up after ten seconds, the captain has gone silent.

‘Captain Dampier can you hear me?’

He does not answer.

‘Captain Dampier, can you hear me?’ His eyes seem blank and his body has turned limp.

‘Is he gone?’ Samantha asks.

Dawn shakes him, but there is no response. He drags Dampier’s body out of the water and leaves it on the shoreline. The fire is consuming the land and the corresponding light is attracting fish. They jump out of the water to die upon the

shore. Fish are now circling them, throbbing and pulsating around them. A large fish leaps out of the ocean, towards the bright enticing flames.

The fuel, the bush, must be getting exhausted. 'The fire seems to be slowly desisting,' Dawn says.

Turtles emerge from the ocean to crawl their way up onto the shore.

As the morning sun appears the fire has burnt down into a steaming skeleton of bush. Leaving the safety of the ocean Samantha picks up the fish.

'As soon as I heard those words *cleaving open the head* I knew that it would end badly. But I had no idea that the whole landscape would be burnt to a cinder.'

They stand over Dampier's corpse. His flesh is red and his face is covered in boils; fingers clenched to resemble claws. Flies gather around the empty eye sockets and ears, colliding into each other as they thicken into a pulsating black cloud. Ants are swarming in neat lines to rip apart a small piece of cooked flesh.

They find a small fire and Samantha starts to roast a beached fish over the hot coals. Once they have eaten they return to Dampier's body. Dawn uses a strip cut off from the hem of his shirt to lash two lengths of wood together into a cross. He digs a shallow grave, drags in Dampier's body and covers it with sand. Finishing by driving in the cross and then using his boot to compact the supporting sand. He carves Dampier's rank and name into a block of wood and ties it across the horizontal bar. The cross stands rigid and alien as the wind unpacks itself across the plain then swings out a tap...tap...tap that sounds along the lonely beach: Captain Dampier.

They mark out the days with an etching on a tree trunk. Seven days have passed since the great fire. They have survived by eating the burnt carcasses of animal, but what remains has now festered. Every morning they travel to the water hole to drink and dig for worms and onions.

‘I am so hungry,’ Dawn picks up a piece of clay by the pond. It looks delicious and cool.

‘You cannot eat dirt, Dawn.’

‘This is not dirt. It’s solid refreshing clay.’

‘It will make you sick,’ Samantha tells him. He scoops out a wholesome and fragrant chunk and eats it straight out of his flat palm. The wet mass slides down his throat to comfortably sit in his empty stomach. He scoops up a second handful and offers it to her.

‘Cut out from the very body of New Holland.’

She swallows it in one large gulp. They drink the creek until they feel sick then walk again to chart the landscape: shoeless, broad steps, the dried leaves and dirt. Sharp shale cuts into their feet. Samantha and Dawn climb over rocks to push their way deeper into the bush while small insects scream in a seemingly perfect orchestration.

Dawn is possessed with a vision the following day. He sees *English soldiers and their officers dressed in formal red coats. But the men are not where Captain Dampier, Samantha and himself are, no this time they are on the far eastern side of this land. Their surrounds are filled with light, the trees buzzing with insects, noisy*

birds and a fresh breeze are circling around them as they meet, for the first time, a group of Australians. Neither group can understand the other's language. Dawn can see that they are clearly getting frustrated with each other. They are motioning with their hands, approaching until the hands of both sides grasp towards each other until they can feel the grainy thick skin and then they grip each other and with joyous expectation they begin to circle in a wonderful dance as if they are children at play. They are dancing. Without music, the men are making noises with their hands, their feet, they are singing and whistling. They are dancing, they are laughing, they are dancing together, they are dancing with strangers. They are dancing.

They continue to live in seclusion, maintaining large signal beacons to light as soon as they can see a ship cut through the horizon.

One morning Samantha mentions that four months have passed since they started to notch the tree trunk.

That afternoon Samantha spots a sail balancing along the horizon and, calling out to Dawn, runs towards the fire. She removes a burning branch, carries it to the beacon and, while crying, pushes the flame inside. The kindling starts to smoulder. She blows into its centre until it breaks into flames. Dawn runs towards her, laughing with joy. He takes off his shirt and waves it over his head. The ship uses a mirror to signal its recognition and, when it comes close, drops its anchor. It displays no recognisable flag; possibly being nationless, meaning pirates. A single long boat, loaded with six armed men is dropped into the water and approaches the shore. Coming close they wave their arms and start to call out in what seems to be Portuguese.

‘We’re English,’ Dawn yells to them. The long boat rides a wave until it’s on the sand. The men climb out. They have olive skin and wear simple canvas shirts and pants with black leather boots.

‘Água,’ they say.

‘They want water,’ Samantha tells Dawn. They both signal for the men to follow them to the watering hole.

While the Portuguese drink and swim, Samantha pulls up fresh onions for them to eat. Dawn digs out a large block of clay and, breaking it down into smaller cubes, offers it to the sailors to eat. The visitors look at him as if he is mad and they shake their heads in disgust, locking their hands over their mouths.

After resting they hunt two large lizards and six water birds, then fill up their water barrels. Speaking among themselves they turn to Dawn and Samantha and signal that they should accompany them on board.

Dawn and Samantha quickly pack their few possessions and board the long boat to transfer to the Portuguese ship.

The tired-looking captain of the ship points to the north and talks to them in Portuguese. All that Dawn can recognise is the word ‘Batavia.’

‘I believe that this ship will take us to Batavia,’ Dawn tells Samantha.

‘How long will it be?’

‘At least two weeks.’

As New Holland disappears they look upon the landscape for any sign of Klaproth. They see nothing.

‘Good luck,’ Dawn says and waves his right hand.

A recurring dream has been visiting Dawn as he sleeps with the swaying motion of the Portuguese ship. Even though his body has left that land, his mind seems to remain rich with the soil, the air, the smells and the sounds. Dawn sees *a strange, yet utterly beautiful country and among all this a hunting party is riding with horses, muskets and a black tracker, out into the hinterland. They are hunting this land's inhabitants, men who have been charged with killing a sheep farmer. They ride all night, through thick scrub. Men pick the ticks out from their horse's skin at night before sleeping. The next day the tracker says that they are close. He leans down and finds indented grass. He stands up and a spear cuts into his side. The men follow the line of its flight into some distant bushes and fill it with hot, flying lead pellets. They stop and listen to the sound of groaning and dismount, walking towards the dying black man. One places the barrel of the gun into his mouth and pushes it deep until he starts to choke, pulls the trigger. He uses green oily leaves to clean the man's blood from the hot barrel before it hardens. They depart back to the beautiful harbour.*

A roaring cheer breaks across the decks of the *Bachelor's Delight* and the *Lantern*. They are south of Ceylon where the water is warm and rich with sharks. The crew celebrates as they have sighted, trying to evade them, a Malaccan pilgrim ship. It's heading east to the Gulf of Aden, to enter the Red Sea and continue on to perform the Hajj in Mecca. All pilgrim ships carry gifts to present to the Sharif of Mecca – jewels, precious metals, fragrant oils, spices. After the lack of gold recovered in New Holland this new ship is like mutton and boiled potatoes to a starving man.

Joram addresses the crew, 'That ship over there is filled with riches and with

pilgrims making for the Holy Land. But they will not make it. We will overcome them and board their ship. We will cut open their bodies. These pilgrims need to know that now that they are in our sight they will never wrap one pure white and seamless sheet around their waist and another over their shoulder and undertake the Hajj.’

The crew cheers.

‘They will not be able to walk counter clockwise seven times around the Ka’aba. They will not be able to press their chafed lips against its cool and firm surface, to taste the lingering traces of thousands of years of pilgrims undertaking the same act.’

The crew cheers, now with less emphasis.

‘Some of them have waited their entire life to walk the paths of their sacred city. But they will not be able to run back and forth, seven times, between the hills of Af-Safa and Al-Marwah, just as Hagar did while trying to search for water for the child Ismael. But they will never spend a night in vigil on the plains of Mount Arafat. But they will never know the sweet water of the Zamzam well. But they will never stone the Devil at Jamret al-Aqabah.’

The crew seem lost.

‘Let’s kill them.’

They cheer again.

The two ships separate and begin to undertake a pincer movement.

‘Our slave galleys may become filled again with Oriental pilgrims,’ Joram says as he fastens his sword to his belt.

The sky is beautiful and clear.

PART FIVE

By the summer of 1702 Dawn and Samantha return to a plague-free London and have joined the crowds, thick as ham bone soup.

‘These streets are so clean. Where’s all the filth?’ Samantha asks as she walks while holding the hand of Sophia, their two-year old daughter.

Sophia’s was a difficult birth. Performed in the sweltering medical office of the Dutch East India Trading Company in Batavia. But she arrived and Dawn felt his feet lock to the ground as she was placed in his arms.

By the end of the year they were on a ship bound for the Indies; then a British East India Company ship, signing on with fake names. After an additional year in the Indies they secured passage home.

Sophia quickly becomes tired, so Dawn picks her up to lie on his shoulder. They continue through the throbbing mass; foreigners are everywhere. Slaves are chained one neck to the next as they are led to sale yards. Further up the hill the streets become encumbered by signboards: a cupid holding a torch, a cradle, an elephant, Adam and Eve, and a Jack-in-the-green. A faded poster advertises that John Locke has died. All these symbols move together to create a system and – as they approach the spot where he first met Joram wearing the plague doctor’s mask – Dawn understands that his task, now that he has been gifted with the experience of New Holland, is to create his own system or become enslaved by another’s.

As he looks overhead he sees that the thin layer of low hanging clouds are twirling into a pattern: two eyes and a long beak form the mask of Joram, glaring down at him, fascinated and obsessive. Dawn reads this morphing fresco, the beak growing until a small shot seems to cut its way through the cloud. He decides that this in none other than Ezekiel’s chariot with its centrifugal paths – creating wheels within

wheels.

Sophia starts to cry and Samantha leans in to comfort her. 'You're home, my beautiful child.'

'London,' Sophia says.

'Yes, we have made it.'

'We must get her out of here,' Dawn adds.

'Where will we go?' she says after kissing Sophia's cheek.

'Like you said. We will return to the farm and claim it as our own. There are townspeople who will remember me, recognise me even after all this time.'

'What if it doesn't work?'

'Then we find an old and abandoned plague farm and become squatters.'

'Dawn, I can't bear that thought.'

'We've been squatting for years.'

'Can our child make the journey? Her young legs cannot complete the walk.'

'We need, at least, a donkey.'

'And something to carry our goods.'

'I know a wealthy family that may help us.'

'You can't return to the archive. They will arrest you. And we need you, Dawn. I need you and your child needs you as well.'

'This old friend of mine. He will help us. He owes me. I saved his life.'

As they walk along the paved road Dawn feels that it is made with stones of fire. He rests his daughter's head on his shoulder, worried that if she walks on the road she will burn her small leather-wrapped feet.

A town crier down the end of the winding street, hidden from view, announces that it's nine o'clock as they arrive at the Kirchers' house in Knightsbridge. Dawn walks up the stairs and bangs on the heavy door. A maid opens it and scolds them to leave, slamming the door in their face. Dawn knocks again. 'I am an old friend of the Kirchers,' he yells through the wood.

A window above opens. Mrs Kircher emerges, 'Who's there?'

'Horatio Dawn presents himself with his family.'

'Horatio Dawn?'

'I am with my wife and daughter.'

'Dear Horatio!'

The maid opens the door and apologises, then steps aside so that they can enter.

'Dear Horatio Dawn,' says Mrs Kircher as she descends the stairs. Dawn deposits Sophia in her arms, 'This is my daughter, Sophia.'

Mrs Kircher leans down to kiss the little girl. 'She's beautiful. And this is your wife?'

'She is the child's mother.'

'I can tell. Sophia looks just like her.'

Samantha bows and kisses Mrs Kircher's hand.

'What a precious jewel you both have. My son told me, must have been years ago, that you went and sailed for the Antipodes?'

'We have been gone for over three years.'

‘So history repeats and Mr Dawn appears again on our doorstep destitute and half-starved.’

‘In this case, three times will be anything but a charm.’

Mrs Kircher laughs while leading them towards the bathroom. ‘Let’s prepare a hot soapy bath for you both.’

‘And for Sophia,’ Dawn adds.

‘Of course for her. But you especially Horatio Dawn. You smell.’

In new clothes and sparkling clean hair Dawn and Samantha join the Kirchers for supper. Samantha’s hair seem to be inhabited with light; the oils that Mrs Kircher gave her have given texture and volume making her hair curl up and push out. Beneath her flowing hair she wears a dark blue dress that hangs off her thin frame like washing suspended on a drying line. Dawn has combed his hair with a right parting and his clothes are loose. Sophia is wrapped in three thin blankets with dried flowers scattered between layers.

‘Mr Kircher, Horatio has made a child out of wedlock,’ Mrs Kircher announces to her husband.

Sophia lets out a gentle cry.

‘Dawn, you must marry this woman right away,’ Mr Kircher adds.

Samantha turns her head and stares right at Dawn. ‘Is there something you want to say to me, Dawn?’

‘Let’s get married!’

She bows her head, mutters out a short and silent prayer. The hosts applaud.

‘Dawn, do not waste another day. We can arrange it for tomorrow. I know a small chapel. Reverend Filmer he just drinks all day. For a bottle or two he will

perform the ceremony on the spot.’

‘Excellent.’

‘And my son will be glad to attend.’

‘Harvey? Where is he now?’

‘Harvey has made quite a name as an importer of goods.’

‘And you?’

‘I no longer practice law.’

‘We surely can’t take Sophia tomorrow morning.’

‘Leave her in the care of my wife. After all, Sophia’s presence may make Reverend Filmer suspicious.’

The soup arrives, and the starving couple drink as if they are quenching a fire in their stomachs. Once Dawn and Samantha have finished their host calls out, ‘Bring in more soup.’

While waiting for the second round Mr Kircher asks, ‘Tomorrow you will be married after breakfast and then we can install you in Harvey’s residence. You can stay with him until you start at the archives again. You must visit them. They’ve probably forgotten about you.’

‘Actually we were thinking of buying supplies and returning to my family’s farm. Perhaps work as a smith.’

‘You want to leave London now? Just as flames of knowledge are starting to burn.’

‘What knowledge?’

‘An Enlightened Age is underway.’

‘We must make for home.’

‘Home...Where’s that?’ he asks.

‘Eat up both of you,’ Mrs Kircher says. ‘After this you can sleep and tomorrow you will be married.’

A shoulder of roast pork is carried out and Mr Kircher cuts it into long slices and fills their plates.

‘Eat as much as you like. We are happy to have you back in London.’

Dawn steps out of the chapel in a borrowed woollen suit, holding Samantha’s hand. Reverend Filmer, with a red face and smelling of drink, is close behind. Samantha has placed a halo of yellow willows in her hair and wears a loose white dress. The son, Harvey Kircher, shuffles them into his carriage to transport them all back to his townhouse near the Monument to Fire. While cutting through the streets Harvey examines the marriage documents to ensure that Reverend Filmer, in spite of his soaked state, has correctly completed the paper work.

After lunch Samantha puts Sophia to bed, then sleeps herself.

Downstairs Dawn is sitting with Harvey.

‘Now I am married,’ he tells Harvey.

‘I suppose that tonight is not a traditional wedding night, after all, the child is already present,’ Harvey replies as he pours them a glass of wine.

They both laugh.

Harvey is quickly downing his wine.

‘What exactly did you see over there?’ Harvey asks as he pours another glass.

‘In New Holland?’

‘The edge of the world.’

‘I don’t know?’

‘Any details?’

‘The details are what I missed.’

‘So what do you remember?’

‘A general tone of horror and ghosts.’

‘Well, I too have something for you, Horatio. A business partner brought it back from China.’

‘As long as it isn’t a vague map.’

‘No. Well, it’s a map for the imagination, if you like. I have for us a clump of opium,’ and Harvey removes a box from his desk drawer.

‘Opium?’ Dawn says as his friend starts to pack the dry paste into a long pipe.

‘Indeed,’ Harvey says as he packs it tight and touches it with the candle’s flame until it starts to glow. They take it in turns puffing away. The opium tastes like a thick jungle. After they have smoked the whole bowl clean Harvey stops talking. He has heavy eyes, loose muscles and, as he closes his eyes, falls into a gentle sleep. Dawn is left alone with only his friend’s subtle snores for company.

Harvey’s desk is before him and spread across it is an ample supply of pens, ink and paper. Dawn sits at the chair, charges a pen with black ink and removes a dried skull paperweight from a pile of paper. He places a new blank sheet before him and titles it:

On The Civilisation of the Aboriginals of New Holland.

Axis Mundi – Roots – Spirituality – Relationship to Land – Totems – Elders –

Ancient Myths – Art – Similarities and Differences to the Greeks – Similarities and

Differences to The Israelites – Similarities and Differences to The Indians –

Similarities and Differences to The Chinese – Ecstasy Upon Encountering the Art – Hospitality – Joy of The People – The Laughter of The Children – All People Have Commerce With All Things – The Custodians...

In this state he loses himself in the rhythm of the pen. The words emerge as if they were falling down like manna from Heaven.

When he wakes it's early in the morning and the light is grey. Samantha is gently shaking his shoulder; opening his eyes he can see that his face has been pressed down into the work. Harvey is still snoring on the couch.

The Dawn family rests at Harvey's house. There are beds to lie upon, hot water in a tub to get clean, fresh bread daily, lights to read by at night and conversation with wine and ale. Late at night, when the rest of the house is sleeping, Dawn cannot shake the ghosts of New Holland from his mind; he can still feel the sharp shale cutting into the soles of his feet, the red sand between his toes, the incessant buzzing of insects, the madly screaming birds. The only thing, he finds, that can calm his mind is to pack the opium pipe and write beneath pungent clouds of smoke.

It takes him six long nights to complete his work.

On the Sabbath he clears away his notes and decides to get outside. Samantha joins him and they walk down to the shores of the Thames. After arriving they sling their shoes around their necks and enter the water until it reaches their knees, pausing to watch a group of young mud larks running, clashing, falling over each other.

The boys play fight by rolling tight mud balls and aiming for each other's heads. Some strip off their clothes so that they can wrestle more effectively.

'What are those boys doing?' Samantha asks.

Flotsam is drifting past. More join in the ruckus, jumping, throwing mud, driving each other's face into it.

'They're building,' Dawn responds.

'Building? They're just wrestling.'

'Look to the side.'

Away from the melee two younger boys are piling up pieces of coal and driftwood that they have found upon the muddy shores. They line a freshly dug hole with one of their shirts until clean water seeps through. They wash the coal pieces and place them into a single line. Unrolling a poster that advertises the reconstruction of Solomon's Temple they study it by holding it next to the space that they have cleaned. The tide brings them more rubbish: coal, drift wood, bones of slaughtered pigs, torn bonnets, an old boot, scraps of metal, cutlery, shards of thin planks, egg shells, broken cups and roof shingles.

'The mud larks, the wild boys, they are the ones that will build it,' Dawn says.

'Build what?'

Rising out of the mud and built from the city's refuse: Solomon's Temple.

The two boys arrange the five large chunks of coal and place them in a correct line to form a quincunx. The dimensions are precise; forming a perfectly aligned pattern.

Behind them an older boy picks up his friend and raises him up, higher, above his head. Then with a deep scream, drives his friend down into the mud. The victim lies twitching in the mud, winded and gasping for breath. The remaining mud larks

halt what they are doing and, seeing that he is maimed, begin to pile upon the injured boy. Beneath the mass of bodies, at the very bottom, he squirms like a severed worm.

The young boys have not joined in the pile but remain focused on their building. They are closely reading the poster and inspect each piece of coal. One takes a stick and marks out the dimensions in the mud. Using shards of the broken planks of wood, they build the outer walls. The other boy takes two large spoons, a knife and a fork and drives each one into a corner to create turrets. Next they wash all the fragments of lead that remained from when the Great Fire melted the Bell of St Paul's and, digging deep into the mud until they reach clay, scoop it up to use as putty across the tops of the wooden planks. Then they place the chunks of lead that, once it ran into the cool river, twisted into long cocoons, along the top of the wooden planks. The dim sun reflects off the metal: Solomon's Temple is sparkling. Comparing what they have created with the pictorial representation the boys are satisfied and shake hands, while nodding their heads excessively, imitating what they have seen sellers do in the market place. They walk over to the older boys who are lying around in the mud, exhausted with their fighting. The injured boy – from the very bottom of the pile – drags himself out. He has an angry, red, crying face.

'Get our clothes,' the younger boys are ordered.

The older boys wade into the river to wash themselves while the younger boys prepare their clothes. The younger ones hold up the dripping trousers and shirts and the older boys step into their wet uniforms. They gather as a gang to return. The eldest boy sees Solomon's Temple and runs over. He plucks off the twists of lead and gathers the cutlery. The walls silently fall in without the necessary support. The younger boys, seeing their construction torn down, try to suppress their tears.

The Thames is burgeoning out. High tide is setting in and the reach of the river slowly starts to lap at the foundations of Solomon's Temple. The foundations are becoming wet, weakening until the whole edifice is washed away: Solomon's Temple is gone.

Dawn, in a newly pressed suit, is standing outside the Monument to Fire – Kircher saw his pamphlet and alerted the Royal Society to his return.

'They will pay you,' Kircher told him, 'and you can use that to fund your return north.'

To provide for his family Dawn accepts. He also suspects that he wants to show them that he has survived, before he disappears forever.

Approaching the square – memories of breaking in with Dampier – when Dawn comes upon Dampier's face. He stops and walks closer; and reaching out he can touch the cold face of a cast iron statue of Captain William Dampier.

The statue stands erect, the neck jutting out like a rooster staring at the entrance to the Monument: melancholic facial expressions with a viewing glass extended in his right and *A New Voyage around the World* in his left. Carved into the face is his keen concentration. The metal has turned to a slight greenish colour as if it were covered with a fine layer of moss. Over the head and the shoulders bird shit has dripped down to harden like candle wax. Two birds are perched on each shoulder with another on the head. The statue seems to have its gaze fixed, and the body seems animated by a negative force that it does not understand, but gives focus to the stare and pushes the body forwards.

Donkeys bay with their eyes seemingly wild with anguish. Carriages rollick

past and the corresponding cloud of dust lightly coats the figure.

‘Captain Dampier, you have finally become the monument that you always wanted to be,’ Dawn says, concentrating on the statue’s shit covered face. A deep clang sounds out. The rock that one of the young mud rakers throws bounces across the ground.

Dawn picks up the same rock and launches it back at them. They duck and run away.

Dawn turns again to the statue. ‘I thought that you were a new type of man, free of the superstitions of the past.’ He reaches forward with a clenched fist and then raps upon it as if Dampier were a bell. ‘There is nothing about you that is enlightening. For all your stature, you are but an empty clanging statue. You saw nothing because you chose to see nothing.’

The austere face remains locked with its gaze upon the horizon.

The guard unlocks the door and welcomes Dawn inside the Monument to Fire. Entering nervously, he descends the stairs.

‘Do you know the way?’ he guard asks.

‘Yes, I’ve been here before.’

‘Really? When Master?’

Dawn pauses. ‘No, I don’t believe so.’ He quickly walks down the spiralling stairs. Entering the laboratory he is greeted by Sir Robert Hooke, Mr Pepys and ten additional gentlemen.

‘You have returned to us,’ Hooke proclaims when Dawn enters the room

‘As I said I would.’

The fellows start to applaud.

Mr Pepys puts his arm over Dawn's shoulder and leads him to the front. Above the podium is the display of the calcified skeleton taken from the cave in New Holland. Dawn pauses and his heart starts to palpitate; it seems so grossly out of place as it bows in supplication. The skeleton hangs upon a series of chains. Its arms stretched out akimbo and head bowed, tailbone raised, legs folded. But still it has kept its fine coat of calcified crystals. It is bowing towards the crowd. Dawn takes up his position directly below.

'What of Captain Dampier? What became of him? Mr Joram says that he did not witness the death?' Mr Pepys asks.

'You have spoken to Mr Joram?'

'I have.'

'Did he speak of me?'

'The last he saw of you, he says, you were skewered by a brute's spear.'

'I was not.'

'You seem to have scars.' Pepys motions towards Dawn's neck.

'I have had these scars all my life. Will Mr Joram be in attendance?'

'No, Mr Joram is not in London. No one has seen him for well over one year. The Royal Mint has been notified of your return. I trust that they will get word to him.'

Dawn is shown the podium.

'My apologies, fine gentlemen of the Royal Society. You have come to me to hear of the wonders of New Holland. But I saw nothing.'

The fellows look perplexed.

Sir Robert Hooke asks, 'All that way. And nothing. But what of Atlantis? Did your gaze meet with Atlantis?'

‘It did not.’

‘What of the civilisation of New Holland,’ Mr Pepys asks.

‘I could not see it, could not see anything. I suspect that it is, indeed, there. But its outlines and dimensions, the nature especially of the details I can’t exactly say.

‘Did you see cities?’

‘I did not?’

‘Gold.’

‘No, none at all.’

‘What of inhabitants?’

‘I could barely see them. Just like the land.’

‘Any commerce?’

‘We gave them the plague, of that I am sure.’

‘Well, this alone makes for excellent work, Mr Dawn. Just as expected,’ Mr Pepys says.

‘To the natives of that land, and to all of New Holland, our arrival is nothing but an arrival of plague.’

‘You are trying to tell us that you were not aware of your own steps?’

‘I wish I could speak with the necessary eloquence. But a shroud continues to dampen my mind.’

‘How did Captain Dampier die?’ Sir Robert asks.

‘He lost his mind, started a great fire and was burned alive.’

‘Impossible. How can this man of reason come to lose his mind?’

‘The nature of reason when grafted onto the landscape of New Holland was what broke him. He was buried a lunatic.’

‘Mr Dawn, you speak below a treasure extracted from New Holland.’

Dawn looks up at the suspended skeleton, 'Yes.'

'Can you understand it?'

'Understand this?' he points up.

'Yes, where is it from?'

'I choose not to understand it.'

'Why? But we are scientists. This is a temple to science. Understanding is what we are constantly and unceasingly striving for.'

'Because I don't have to understand it.'

'Can you not at least recognise its exceptional beauty?'

'I do. But I will not take the next step and understand it. I don't know if words are even designed for such a purpose.'

'Mr Dawn, you are here to offer us a counterpoint. You are here to justify the death of Captain Dampier.'

'How can I justify a man that attempted to incinerate the very things that he was seeking? I buried him as a bedlamite.'

'It pains me to tell you this but a much larger fleet is making for New Holland now.'

'What?'

'The plague should have, by now, spread. Making that land ripe for colonisation.'

'I assure you, the land is parched and not worth colonising. It's just a large empty space of red chalky sand.'

'The spreading of plague was the right thing to do, Mr Dawn, for that we thank you. The King thanks you.'

Mr Pepys addresses the crowd. ‘This meeting is at a close gentlemen. New Holland, it seems, is still waiting to be overwhelmed.’

In the evening Dawn swallows a small cube of opium. He lies down on Kircher’s couch: on the desk waits pen and paper. His dream is not of London, but the *east coast of New Holland, where the new inhabitants are settling. With dirt roads, rum houses and a coherent organisation being grafted over the soil – and the original inhabitants wander, some sick with disease, some starving and others resembling slaughtered pilgrims.*

Then ancient Daedalus descends down to the Antipodes and he plans a grand labyrinth to hide this primal and foundational crime. He designs a civic space to be grafted over the crime scene – and the people of New Holland – no, let’s be specific – the citizens of Sydney build their homes within this grand labyrinth. They live and sleep in fear of the Minotaur that roams their city. Sydney learned from its early days that it must make regular sacrifices to satiate the Minotaur’s appetite. So what is the sacrifice? It’s the people’s own propensity to violence that they inflict upon others and upon their selves. A manic civic space will be built and its citizens will move about in anger, constantly lashing out at each other in hate and black bile (without quite knowing why) – and the city of Sydney grows before his eyes and becomes a city of exquisite beauty and yet its people seem to hate each other and they also hate themselves, ripping into each other with incredible violence in the hope that they will get beaten in return. And every night they cower in their beds, lost in the labyrinth of Sydney, and hiding from the Minotaur.

At night, in the surrounding bushland, a great fire is slowly consuming the land; the bright flames dancing and licking the sky.

Dawn feels alive. Unlike his work at the archive he is now staring down at a work of pure imagination. By creating his own world he feels God-like and now he can sit back and pare his finger nails at his own creation.

He shows his mad raving pamphlet to Harvey Kircher, who, in fact, likes what he reads. His friend gives Dawn money to pay for a print run of two hundred copies. Dawn departs immediately for a print shop near Whitehall.

With another loan from Harvey, Dawn and Samantha purchase a new bed, blankets, tools for gardening, seeds, grains and pickled vegetables. Dawn acquires a stove with a detachable hand bellows so that he can create a furnace hot enough to melt metal. Also they can bake bread or fry meat and eggs on top. Finally Harvey pays for a horse and wagon, with a driver, to transport it all to the farm. The wagon is packed and Dawn walks, alone, down to the printers to gather the entire print run. But when he arrives there has been a delay and only two are dry enough to carry. He gathers these, thanks the printers and departs, telling them he will return tomorrow morning for the remaining copies.

He is walking to the end of the street when a wagon, filled with soldiers, races past him. He stops, watches them halt outside the print shop, dismounting to rush inside. Dawn lingers among the gathering crowd. They drag out the printers with hands fastened behind their backs. All of the material that has been used to create *On the Civilisation of the Aborigines of New Holland* is being piled before them.

‘Who is Horatio Dawn?’ they ask the printers while reading the first page.

‘We don’t know.’

‘Did he leave a delivery address?’

‘No.’

‘This pamphlet is seditious,’ the soldier says, holding it up.

‘So burn them all. We are businessman, Christians. We love our King.’

Dawn turns and runs.

Samantha and Sophia, with the packed wagon, depart for the refuge of the north. They have one copy of the pamphlet with them tucked away in the centre of their roll of blankets. Waving out a farewell, Dawn waits with Harvey on the front steps.

‘Are you sure you don’t want to flee now?’ Harvey asks.

‘I’m sure. I will join them soon enough.’

‘Dawn, can you see that.’ He points to the wagon. ‘That’s your woman and your child. That’s your future rolling away from you.’

‘Those two are everything to me.’

‘And yet you stand here and watch her go.’

Dawn turns to face him and removes the last copy of his pamphlet. ‘If I retreat and live out my days on a small farm in the north then my trip will be for nothing. I want to make amends. But I know that there is nothing real that I can do. However, if I can get my pamphlet into the archive, then perhaps it can break open the minds of its readers. This is my true testament. My own mustard seed. I don’t know if there is anything else that I can do.’

‘That woman and that child need you. You saved me once. I’m telling you this to save you now. What does this pamphlet matter? You said yourself that the details

of that land barely registered and your previous readings were like a fog that clouded your judgement.’

‘This pamphlet is different. It comes not from the Dawn that eats breakfast, delivers failed talks at the Royal Society. Dawn the terrible father and a worse husband. These are all the superficial Dawns. These Dawns matter not. This pamphlet emerges from another Dawn. No, not emerges. This pamphlet was secreted in solitude and with its emergence I was surprised at what was presented before me. I am just as perplexed by it as anyone else. For it has come to me via intuition. For what is Dawn? Dawn is the sum of what he can write, and what will become of the writing must also become of Dawn.’

‘But this pamphlet is of New Holland.’

‘It is not. This pamphlet is of an indistinct music and I could only hear it clearly as the words formed on the page.’

‘Dawn, what will you do with this pamphlet?’

‘I will bury it in the archive.’

‘As soon as it is there then you must flee London and you must never return.’

‘Once I am liberated of this cursed thing I will run to them with freedom carrying me like a swift breeze.’

As night falls Dawn makes for the archive of the East India Trading Company. He is carrying the remaining copy of his seditious pamphlet to lose in the stacks. He also means to take Joram’s map of New Holland and burn it. He hopes that his pamphlet will linger in the archives to be discovered in the future so that when that land is approached again it will be with reverential steps. This pamphlet will be a worthy contribution to the growing darkness coming out of Britain, reaching to choke the

known world. The map, on the other hand, due to its recording of the location of profitable minerals, must be destroyed. It is a small act that he will make to try and atone for the crimes that he has committed in that land, against the people and against the soil.

He enters near the loading dock and, using a hammer, breaks a window. Cleaning out all shards of glass he climbs through; landing where the tiger was released into the archive. Climbing up the stairs he passes his old desk and pauses before beginning his ascent. The skin of the tiger that had once terrorised London is now stretched above the stairs. The beast's face is locked in a rage with agape mouth showing polished white teeth. It seems placed there to guard over the door. He passes beneath the tiger and continues up the stairs, into the stack. Piles of words, useless to this demented world; incapable of comprehending the far richer reality that waits – shimmering – beyond these coloured scratches on paper. Past the rows of neatly stacked documents; the words are piled up in mounds of confusion; each pressing down to muffle the voices caught in the graphic marks; caught on the pages stacked below: thousands of pages all the way to the foot of the pile.

The Southern Hemisphere section has remained empty. A single rolled document fills the space. Dawn unrolls it in the dim light and sees that it's the map he is looking for. He rolls it tight then places it beneath his right arm. In its place Dawn gently puts down his pamphlet.

Walking down the stairs he enters Mr Harm's old office and jumps with alarm as he sees the plague doctor's mask hovering above the desk.

'Joram?' he asks as his eyes adjust to the darkness.

The mask offers no response. It's hanging on the wall. Dawn lets out a sigh and walks into the room. He sits down at the desk and, lighting a candle, unfurls the

map. A bottle of wine is resting in the corner, with two overturned glasses in front. He flips one over and then fills it and drinks while looking over all that remains of their great voyage.

Taking his finger he runs it along the vein of metals that Samantha dictated to him. He lovingly feels the grainy texture, wishing that he could tear through this and feel that rich red soil once again. In New Holland he felt so alive. He constantly dreams of the place, both while asleep and awake. It would be wonderful to settle there. And if not for Samantha he would have gladly perished and been buried in the soil there, just like Dampier.

The front door of the archive crashes open. Dawn hears the clump of soldiers' boots, rushing into the archive to arrest the intruder. Realising that he must quickly destroy the map he reaches for the candle and spills the wine, the splash landing on the flame, extinguishing it with a contracting hiss. And so without any further recourse he picks up the map, tears it to small pieces, puts the pieces in his mouth, chews and swallows.

Two soldiers rush past the door, not noticing him. Dawn quickly eats the rest. Forcing it down as a large rolled up chunk, he gags loudly and the soldiers make for the noise. The front soldier moves through the door and drives the butt of his musket into Dawn's jaw. Dawn falls to the ground. They secure him with chains and drag him outside.

The prisoner is on display in Piccadilly Circus. With both legs and arms fastened in stocks Dawn remains exposed to the elements for two days.

A placard has been nailed about his forehead: *Horatio Dawn found guilty of attempting to pass himself off as a prophet, the same being a blasphemous lie, and of printing and uttering divers statements, which he alleges were dictated and revealed to him by the spirit of God, with intent to spread alarm among the King's subjects.*

Dawn drifts in and out of consciousness.

On the third day he wakes in the grey dawn. Joram is standing opposite him, wearing a large hat with the purple plumage of peacock feathers. The guards have left. Joram approaches staring intently and kneels down so that they can speak face to face.

‘I am told that you ate my map?’

Dawn does not answer.

‘I do admire your fortitude, Horatio Dawn. You have returned to London alive. Captain Dampier could have done this, but you? A sickly scribe? You’re not one to survive.’

Dawn’s head rolls like a wind gauge.

‘Did you really attempt to burn down the archive?’

‘Yes,’ Dawn forces out his proud reply.

‘Why? Do you mean to hide that land?’

‘Fire is the greatest purifier there is.’

‘We had such great plans for you. We will need visionaries for the coming age. But you...you were so obsessed with the reality of that land. We just wanted you to help us find it, mark out its dimensions then allow for settlement to begin.’

‘You abandoned us.’

‘Captain Dampier was already lost when we arrived.’

‘Samantha.’

‘What became of her?’

‘She died.’ He swallows, ‘What will become of my body?’

‘I will burn it.’

‘Not by fire you won’t.’

‘Why?’

‘Because I am fire.’

Joram is taken aback.

Dawn continues, ‘Because of you a whole continent will be ravaged. That continent is the greatest temple in the world but now your precious map is gone and its metals must remain hidden below its surface.’

‘A ship has already departed.’

‘I already know my fate. If only I were a simple thief. Barabbas was released because what harm can a thief do to the Pilates of the world. But Jesus and John the Baptist, they must be killed.’

‘You have guessed your fate well.’ Joram removes a knife and places his left arm on Dawn’s right shoulder. ‘The plague of New Holland begins in haste.’ He plunges the knife into Dawn’s heart, turning it around twice.

‘They will resist you forever,’ Dawn says as a small trail of blood falls from his mouth.

‘All that I am, God gave the same into my heart,’ Joram responds.

Dawn struggles to breathe as Joram dissolves into pure light. The knife drops onto the hard-burning street stones.

Samantha and Sophia follow the directions to Dawn's old farm. They find it empty and patiently wait for Dawn to join them.

After two months Samantha carves out a Celtic cross and buries a sack filled with leaves out near the copse.

The winters are long. Often she has to work late and Sophia remains with her, keeping warm by the fire. Samantha has taught her to read and she positions the book so that the light of the fire illuminates its pages.

Sophia is now thirteen with thick black hair, warm brown eyes and smooth skin free of the pockmarks of plague that defined both her parents. Samantha's plague marks have also diminished. There are only two occasions that people visit. The first is clients visiting after they have heard of Samantha's exquisite metal working skills. Her speciality is knives with finely ornate handles; swirling patterns that seem like she has frozen a tempest and rendered it into the metal. The first knife that she made was so small and thin that it could be strapped under her wrist. If a client ever thinks

that the lack of a man is any reason to approach her, then the knife drops out and, more than once, she has raised it to the client's throat. They still pay the full price and she never sees them again.

The other social occasion is when members of an outlawed sect meet, late at night, inside the farmhouse. Sophia reads to them from her father's pamphlet. They desire to purchase a boat and hire sailors to take them to New Holland. Samantha refuses to go. They ask if they can take Sophia. Samantha refuses to release her daughter. In a future meeting they bring blank paper and pens and Sophia copies out the pamphlet. Those copies are copied: the pamphlet spreads as ideas are, after all, just another type of plague.

Five years later a ship filled with fifteen families, predominantly followers of Jacob Boehme, sets sail for New Holland.

EPILOGUE

From the grave of William Dampier, two furry hands, with sharp claws, emerge from the sand; shaking; fumbling around by the light of a full moon; reaching further out; grasping the cool sand; elbows emerge; lock into the sand: the Monster pulls itself out:

MOON

O

O

O

Fresh breeze.

Looks around – the half buried cross, picks it up, throws it down again.

Walks to the ocean,

Cold; can't swim,

Looks away from the ocean.

Starts to walk.

Comes across a dead bearded man; holding onto a
length of cord, attached to the throat of a dead monkey. The monkey is also dead.

Trees thin out. Desert begins.

Searing sun.

Hot upon the Monster's brain.

The Monster feels its long face and snout, sharp teeth and furry body. Yet the Monster knows that it is invested with Reason; understands reason; embodies reason: it sees all.

Suns appear: replaced by moons – it repeats hundreds upon thousands of times.

The Monster in a desert that seems to never end.

Small salty scrub.

Flat grassy plains.

A broad river – the Monster crawls in, soaking its fur, water upon its whiskers.

Onwards.

Blue mountains appear ascending through the thick bush.

Descending down the blue mountains, into a flat basin.

The Monster hears English words whisper through the
thick bush like a curse.

The Monster roars in response.

Is running

Fanatical

Panting.

The Monster, after decades of solitude, now has contact with humans – other humans – but it is no longer quite human. But here are a group of laughing men. Why do they laugh? Because they are dancing ecstatically. Two different tribes: the colonisers and the colonised – nay the black and the white – have taken hands. They are dancing. They are laughing. They are interested and curious. They can touch each other. They can laugh. They are swinging as a group:

Dancing.

Ecstasy.

Spinning.

Laughing.

Revelry.

Dancing

The Monster starts to laugh. It stays back, gazing upon this scene, until it can contain itself no more: leaps into the air – dancing, dancing, dancing...



Part Three:

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“Horatio Dawn” and “Invisibly Somewhere Between the Two Clauses”

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Volume Two: Exegesis

“Invisibly Somewhere Between the Two Clauses”

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PART ONE

1. Abstract

“Horatio Dawn” is a novel set in the late seventeenth century and draws on the figure of the pirate, scientist and explorer William Dampier and his “discovery” of Australia. This imaginary work examines the meeting of British people in the Enlightenment period with Aboriginal people and, in doing so, dramatises the complexities of first contact and its after-effects in modern Australia. The direct influence of Dampier on Australian colonisation was real. Adrian Mitchell notes that Dampier’s view of Australia as a land of lack (as a place that needed to be invested with labour, farmed, built upon and changed) “influenced the attitudes of Joseph Banks, Matthew Flinders and the early European settlers a century later; and over the years [Dampier’s] reservations found their way into school texts and informed the attitudes of generations [in Australia]” (ix). This view of the Australian land as needing to be developed resulted in both violence towards Aboriginal people and, as Henry Reynolds argues, denial of that violence around the end of the nineteenth century, as Australia moved towards federation (60). By 1962 this had, according to Stanner, become a “cult of forgetfulness practiced on a national scale” (189).

“Horatio Dawn” starts with a pirate named Cutstone washing up on the shore of the protagonist Horatio Dawn’s farm. Cutstone, while recovering, shares stories about exotic places and mentions the great Captain William Dampier. After Cutstone departs, Dawn becomes sick with plague and subsequently experiences visions. He starts to lose his mind as he drifts from his family’s farm in the north of England towards London. He undergoes various picaresque adventures on the road. In London he meets a strange man named Joram who wears a plague doctor’s mask. Eventually Dawn finds work as a clerk at the archives of the East India Trading Company. The Company organises for Dampier’s release from jail in order to lead a voyage to New Holland. Once they depart for the new land, the narrative fragments. They capture a second ship that Joram decides to captain. Dampier slowly goes insane as he comes to

identify with Jeronimus, the psychopathic murderer who led the brutal *Batavia* mutiny. During a wild storm, lightning strikes Dampier and he becomes incoherent. The crew is planning a mutiny when land appears and Dampier, Dawn and Samantha are put ashore. When his ship arrives, Joram starts to hunt all three. Dampier dies while starting a large bush fire. Eventually they make it back to London for a fateful return to the Royal Society's headquarters and the archive. Dawn is captured, given a mock trial and executed. A final fragmented section presents the monster of William Dampier as he emerges from the grave and travels across the continent to arrive at Sydney and witness the foundation of the settlement.

The accompanying exegesis starts with a general introduction to William Dampier, featuring major events in his life. I examine traditional Dampier scholarship and biographies to see how he is consistently presented in the heroic mode as an enlightened man of reason. I consider his effect on history and critique his first book, *A New Voyage Round the World* (1697). In this work, Natural Law philosophy can be seen as forcing Dampier to distance himself from Indigenous people in order to appear "untainted" by other races. An examination of earlier drafts shows how these references have consciously been edited out. In his next book, *A Voyage to New Holland*, Dampier again removed references to violence; this was to assist him in beating a court-martial for excessive cruelty. It should be noted that during this voyage he killed Indigenous Australians. Following this, I look at Dampier's effect on English literature, including the works of John Locke, Jonathan Swift and Daniel Defoe. Locke's writings about private property certainly influenced Dampier's views of Australia and, I argue, Locke's idea of a *tabula rasa* was transferred onto the landscape of Australia: meaning that the *tabula rasa* of Australia remains empty until a man such as William Dampier can arrive and begin filling it with his writing. Making Dampier's task to write Australia into existence. After this, I examine the absorption of these ideas by Joseph Banks and Matthew Flinders and their influence on successive generations of Australians.

To locate this knowledge in the field of historical fiction, I undertake a critical reading of three historical novels that feature William Dampier as the main character: *Recognition* by Dijon Deverell; *Brother Captain* and *The Cygnet Adventure*, both by Alan Chester. To aid with this critique, I utilise Borges's figure of Pierre Menard and acts of literature that aim for "total identification" with past historical periods (Borges

65). All three of these historical novels present Dampier in the heroic mode and, therefore, are compromised by their uncritical representation of Dampier as an enlightened man of reason. The modality of historical fiction has always been a contentious issue in Australia. By examining historical novels that feature Dampier, we can understand just how complex the question of legitimate historiography is. After this examination I undertake a Sebaldian reading of these novels by incorporating a reading of Horkheimer and Adorno (along with Coetzee). Building on this I then fuse these ideas with Michel Foucault's idea of a counterhistory in order to chart how a new historiography has emerged that seeks to reveal what has been formerly ignored or wilfully misrepresented by traditional historiography. I examine how Don DeLillo reformulates Foucault's idea of a counterhistory in his novels *Libra* and *Underworld* and puts back into his American historical novels what has been purposefully hidden. I also incorporate Christina Brooke-Rose's idea of a historical novel as palimpsest history that aims less to accurately capture the past than to use the past as a platform with which to expand that novel's reader's perceptions. Finally, to situate these ideas in an Australian context, I examine Rohan Wilson's *The Roving Party* as a case study. In this Australian historical novel, Wilson presents his work as a supplement to the historical record that undertakes a crucial task (outside of the scope of traditional historiography) of presenting the human experience of the past.

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I acknowledge the support I have received for my research through the provision of an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship. I also acknowledge the support that came from an Adelaide University Divisional Scholarship.

3. Declaration of Originality

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree. I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968. I also give permission for the digital version of my thesis to be made available on the web, via the University's digital research repository, the Library Search and also through web search engines, unless permission has been granted by the University to restrict access for a period of time.

PART TWO:

“INVISIBLY SOMEWHERE BETWEEN THE TWO CLAUSES”¹

1. Introduction – Why a Novel about William Dampier?

After Dampier the Southland became, to British sensibility, a place of daunting fact at the same time as it was paradoxically a site for hopeful acts. (Gibson, *The Diminishing Paradise* 11)

Don DeLillo has publicly stated that calling his first novel *Americana* “was no accident . . . [but] a private declaration of independence, a statement of my intention to use the whole picture, the whole culture” (*Conversations with Don DeLillo* 88). To begin a discussion relating to the requirements for an exegesis of “Horatio Dawn”, it’s important to start with this need: to formulate an aesthetic statement that the resulting novel aims to engage, fictionally, with “the whole culture”. But the length and breadth of Australia (including Aboriginal history) makes this engagement difficult to contain in a single work. Instead, one key figure needs to be selected, preferably from around the colonial years, or, even better, a historical figure that was present at early encounters between Europeans and Aboriginal people.²

This leads to a popular biography titled *A Pirate of Exquisite Mind, the Life of William Dampier* by Diana and Michael Preston (2004).³ In this work, William Dampier emerges as a figure of the Enlightenment *par excellence* who was so blinded by his own belief in science and reason that he reduced the complexity and

¹ This title is a quote from: Mitchell, Adrian. *Dampier’s Monkey: The South Sea Voyages of William Dampier including William Dampier’s Unpublished Journal*. Wakefield Press, 2011, p. 60.

² I acknowledge the complexity of this term. This exegesis will use ‘Aboriginal people’ when discussing overall experiences of Australia’s first people (including Torres Strait Islanders).

³ The biographical details that populate Part Two are drawn from: Adrian Mitchell, *Dampier’s Monkey*; Preston, Diana and Michael Preston. *A Pirate of Exquisite Mind. The Life of William Dampier: Explorer, Pirate and Buccaneer*. Doubleday, 2004.

uniqueness of Aboriginal people to simplistic and racist tropes. Here is the biography of a single historical figure whose life is represented as the “whole picture” of Australia’s origins, and whose life went on to influence explorers and officials in the colony. So the subject has been located, but there is a level of inescapable irony involved as the biography reveals its subject as a flawed and deeply violent man. Thus the selection of Dampier as a subject successfully contains the origins of a long history of violence towards Aboriginal people. This is especially pertinent as Dampier was one of the instigators of the violence.

What are the details of William Dampier’s life that make him such a rich subject for a novelist? He was born in East Coker, England in 1651. While he was still young, his father died in mysterious circumstances and soon afterwards his mother died from the plague. As an orphan, he apprenticed himself to a shipmaster and started a life at sea. He later sailed to Jamaica and America to work in various industries. In 1673, at the age of 22, he joined the Royal Navy. All the while, Dampier was continually honing his nautical skills and his ‘hobby’ of cataloguing nature. In 1679, he successfully completed his first circumnavigation of the world. Some years later, typical of a man in this line of work, he fell into pirating and by 1683 was a part of large raiding parties in the Caribbean under the leadership of John Cooke. Just what specific actions and what level of violence he engaged in is hard to tell as precise records were never kept, at least not of the violence. Diana and Michael Preston note that “while deep in these worthy scientific observations, [Dampier’s] companions were otherwise engaged in plotting to seize a better ship for the piratical voyage” (1). But Dampier was also engaged.

In 1687, Dampier joined a new raiding party on board the *Cygnets* and eventually reached the west coast of what is now Australia. While there, he began his cataloguing of flora and fauna. He also wrote about and murdered Aboriginal people. Dampier was later marooned – by choice – and did not return to London until 1691. When he did arrive, all he had were his journals and a slave named Jeoly from the Pacific Islands who was covered in the most exquisite tattoos. Desperate for money, he started to exhibit Jeoly and turned his journals into the travel book *A New Voyage Round the World*. This was successfully published in 1697.

The transition from pirate to author gained Dampier respectability and access to London’s higher circles. The fellows of the Royal Society took notice of his work,

valuing his detailed observations of the natural world, and Samuel Pepys, the famous diarist and naval administrator, invited him to dinner (Preston and Preston 22). In 1699, Dampier was given the captaincy of the HMS *Roebuck* and returned to Australia. It was a difficult voyage (as will be examined later) and Dampier had a strained relationship with his lieutenant, a man named George Fisher. After months of simmering tension, Dampier finally cracked. He beat Fisher violently with a copper rod and later abandoned him in a Brazilian jail. By 1701, the *Roebuck's* hull had been eaten out by worms and the crew abandoned it near Ascension Island. A few months later, the crew made it back to England and by 1702 Dampier was officially court-martialled for excessive cruelty to Lieutenant Fisher and for losing the *Roebuck*. Destitute, Dampier decided to pen a second book.

Dampier's second travel book *A Voyage to New Holland*, was published in 1703 and its reception would go on to have a large influence on subsequent early accounts of Australia. (A detailed analysis of this book will be undertaken later.) In the same year, Dampier's climbing of the class-based ladder reached its zenith when, as reported in the *London Gazette*, "by command of the Queen he was presented to her, kissed her hand, and had the honour of relating his adventures to her" (qtd. in Mitchell 24). In 1703, at age 52, Dampier was to fight in the War of the Spanish Succession and was given the *St George* (with 120 men) with a mission to raid and destroy Spanish ships in South America. On board was a young Scottish man named Alexander Selkirk. After some violent raids around modern day Panama, the crew's takings were meagre and Dampier was accused of incompetence. In 1704, Selkirk demanded to be marooned on the Juan Fernandez Islands and Dampier happily obliged. Very little booty was procured over the next few years. The voyage was a failure and the ship returned to London in 1707.

In 1708, under the command of the famous Captain Woodes Rogers, Dampier was appointed to the position of pilot for the ships the *Duke* and *Duchess* (although he seems to have spent more time on the former ship) (Rogers 270). This expedition departed for the Pacific Ocean to raid ships, towns and forts. In 1709, under Dampier's guidance, both ships anchored at Juan Fernandez Islands and Selkirk was rescued, four months and four years after he was marooned. He would later be the model for Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. This party later attacked Guayaquil in Ecuador and by the end of the year they had seized a rich Manila galleon. In 1711, they were back in London. But Dampier, again, ended up with only meagre takings

from the voyage. Dampier mostly disappears from the record after this. It is known that in his later years he lived in penury. He died during the first few months of 1715, aged sixty-three. His burial place is unknown.

2. William Dampier as Author: *A New Voyage Round the World* and *A Voyage to New Holland*

In 1697, Dampier published his first work *A New Voyage Round the World*. Importantly, it was the first account of Australia and Aboriginal people presented in the English language:

New Holland is a very large Tract of Land. It is not yet determined whether it is an island or a main Continent; but I am certain that it joins neither to Asia, Africa, nor America. This part of it that we saw is all low even land, with sandy banks against the sea, only the points are rocky, and so are some of the islands in this bay. (312)

Soon afterwards, Aboriginal people make their first appearance in the English language:

The Inhabitants of this Country are the miserablest people in the world. The Hodmadods of Monomatapa, though a nasty people, yet for wealth are gentlemen to these; who have no houses and skin garments, sheep, poultry, and fruits of the earth, ostrich eggs, etc., as the Hodmadods have: and setting aside their Human shape, they differ but little from Brutes. (312)

In his comparative ethnography *Travel: A Literary History* (2011), Peter Whitfield reads Dampier's writing as "a lively narrative [that] combines maritime adventure with a form of bluff rationalism about the people and places of the world" (121-122). In his first book, Dampier makes a concerted effort to clean his violent piratical past by dissociating himself from all that is brutish, cruel and violent, hence his objectification (as differentiation and distancing) of Aboriginal peoples. Anna Neill argues that Dampier wished to draw from Natural Law philosophy to present himself as an English gentlemen and "a man of reason and reflection" (168). Natural Law philosophy is the belief that societies are "shaped by a uniform divine plan whose sole agent is human reason" (Neill 168). Dampier wanted to portray himself as this very agent: a mastery of reason would cement his place in Western civilisation. This was a

rhetorical device to distance himself from being “corrupted” by the “barbaric civilisation” that he encountered. Neill believes that this focus “transformed [him] from an outlaw into a civilised subject” as “savage people are objects of scientific knowledge before they are friends or enemies, guides or captors” (168). Dampier presented his encounters with Aboriginal people as bereft of any positive interaction and focused on them as objects of study, like a scientist looking at an experiment. To now return to polite society and clean himself of any contact with “savage people”, Dampier had to remake himself. The writing and publication of *A New Voyage Round the World* was just such an act, giving Dampier a new status of legitimacy. The style of the prose was as important as the contents – it needed to register in a cold and affectless mode, thereby removing him from any interaction with what he was describing. Such scientific distance was crucial as it marked him as a man of reason. Neill writes that “[w]hile buccaneers live ‘beyond the line’ in the sense of their self-imposed exile from the civilized world and the laws of nations, they also inhabit a cultural borderland wherein they render themselves perilously vulnerable to the flux of contact” (172). Dampier was safe from the contamination of the “barbarian” and the evidence that he was not infected is the prevalence of reason that, supposedly, infuses his writings. Neill believes that the sign of his mastery of reason is “the accuracy of his descriptions of plants, animals, climate, and peoples in the places that he visits”. In doing so, “Dampier reinvent[s] himself as an English subject and a man of science” (Neill 172).

This change can be followed in the evolution of the various stages of the manuscript for a *New Voyage Round the World*. Neill reads this evolution to show that, with subsequent drafts, Dampier inserted this necessary distance:

What begin as accounts of alliances made with certain tribes or incidents of cultural and commercial exchange between buccaneer explorers and their indigenous guides develop into an ethnographic study of the manners of remote, “barbaric” peoples. (172)

The gap that emerges during the transition from manuscript to book is a crucial influence on the novel “Horatio Dawn”.

A specific example of Dampier’s editing focuses on his experiences in Central America in 1681 while crossing the Isthmus of Darien (now Panama). He was there as

part of a raiding party. Their aim was to sack the city of Panama and raid the surrounding Spanish gold mines (Dampier, *A New Voyage Round the World* 114). Dampier was loaded down with a rifle, pistol, shot, powder and his cutlass. Slung over his back was a piece of waterproof bamboo sealed at both ends, where he kept his pens and paper to make notes and sketch plants, animals and flowers. Dampier the man of reason was inside that bamboo case. Dampier the marauder was in the cutlass and pistols on his belt. The attack was a failure. The Spanish knew of their approach, were well prepared and fought off the invaders. Dampier retreated with his surrounding men. They were lost, hungry, exhausted and in alien territory. They ran back to their Mosquito and Cuna guides and relied on them for safe passage back across the strait. Yet the resulting account that Dampier offers of this event focused on his observations of botanical, geographic and ethnographic descriptions. There is no idea that they were lost and subsequently saved by these so-called barbaric people. For portraying the guides as saving the Europeans' lives would result in an act of identification, implying communication, perhaps even complicity. In the published book, Dampier, operating under the influence of Natural Law Philosophy, needed to ensure that Indigenous people were portrayed as objects of scientific examination. The manuscript for *A New Voyage Round the World* is included in Adrian Mitchell's scholarly biography *Dampier's Monkey* (Wakefield Press, 2011). In the early manuscript, Dampier originally writes:

The natives in general are well limbed People
and strong Bodys and very Ingenious in building
both their houses and Canoas
Their Canoas or Prows are built with narrow
Planck[s?] and built in shape like the flyeing Prows
of the Coast of Java and Sumatra (fol. 186 verso Mitchell 472-73)

In the published book, this respect for their building skills has been edited out. Instead, we are swamped with details:

The natives of this island are strong-bodied, large-limbed, and well-shaped. They are copper-coloured like other Indians: their hair is black and long, their eyes meanly proportional; they have pretty high noses; their lips are pretty full

and their teeth indifferent white. They are long-visaged and stern of Countenance; yet we found them to be affable and courteous. They are many of them troubled with a kind of leprosy. (Dampier, *A New Voyage Round the World* 206)

The abundance of detail functions as a wall of language that Dampier is building between himself and the local people. For, after all, how can a man of reason possibly befriend these people? Neill concludes:

In the printed journal . . . Dampier highlights the cultural distance between Indian and Europeans not only through the wealth of descriptive detail about Indian ways of life, but also by suggesting that the objects of his study had not yet achieved that degree of civilized sophistication which would make them capable of independent sovereignty. (175)

In addition to this editing, Dampier is not actually drawing from his own experience, for in the journal he directly copies in material written by the surgeon. During the editing process, he must have decided that the surgeon did it better and so removes the copied material:

I shall not give a relation
or a description of the Country nor
the manners and Customes of the natives but
refer it to Mr. De La Wafer our Chirurgion who
by his Longer abode in the Country is better able
to doe it than any man that I know. (fol. 13 recto – fol. 13 verso Mitchell 238)

And this becomes further problematised as the movement from the journal to the book involves multiple unnamed people. Following Mitchell's reading of the journal

we can see the copyist accidentally writing in Dampier's speech ('I say') when he corrects a phrase, as though his scribe were writing from dictation . . . Dampier set to work to correct and enlarge the whole with an elaborate machinery of insertions and marginal notes, and it is in the margins,

appropriately, that he starts to let slip some of the colourful details, mostly by way of his disapproval of his shipmates' behaviour. (Mitchell xi)

The history of the composition of *A New Voyage Round the World* undermines its own assertion of being an accurate portrayal of what actually occurred. Dampier's need to portray himself as filled with reason and distance himself as the observer from the observed, ultimately, skewered his gaze. The writings of William Dampier are tainted texts and, if read uncritically, incorrect and unhelpful in presenting the specifics of what occurred. In the printed version, no idea of friendship – and no respect for – the Indigenous people of Central America remains. All the reader is shown is cold, rational and affectless observations. As Neill observes, “Dampier's published text positions him as a compiler and analyst of plausible data” (177). Nothing more.

But Dampier was not as successful as he thought he was in regard to removing explicit references to violence within his text – the trace still lingers. Dampier had previously stated in *A New Voyage Round the World* that Aboriginal people have terrible eyesight (312). Ironically, it was Dampier who was having trouble seeing. In an early encounter, he thought that he would fire his gun over their heads to frighten them with an assertive display of his power. In *A Voyage to New Holland* Dampier makes it clear that “I discharged my gun to scare them but avoided shooting any of them” (101). But his actions did not produce the intended result and so he decided to raise the stakes and “thought it high time to charge again and shoot one of them, which I did” (102). The tone of the sentence fools the reader into thinking that it is innocent enough. However, Dampier is employing a narrative strategy that allows him to avoid any culpability or guilt (this passivity almost brings to mind the phrase “collateral damage”). Adrian Mitchell – Dampier's most astute reader – has analysed this sentence and comes to the conclusion that Dampier “thinks it is time to shoot one of them, and then he reports that that is what he did; but the actual shooting has taken place invisibly somewhere between the two clauses” (60). It should be noted that charging means recharging his gun to shoot them again from a safe distance, not running forwards. So the violence is present without a presence within the sentence. It haunts the text. It taints the text.

Let me briefly digress to connect Dampier with larger issues at play within Australian society. Henry Reynolds argues that the denial of the violence towards

Aboriginal people that soaks the history of colonisation in Australia grew out of a nascent nationalism and movement towards federation around the end of the nineteenth century (*Why Weren't We Told?* 92). And therefore “during the first half of the twentieth century the Aborigines were written out of Australian history” (Reynolds, *Forgotten War* 16). W. E. H. Stanner, anthropologist and originator of the phrase “cult of forgetfulness,” stated in his 1968 Boyer Lecture “After the Dreaming” that this had become

a structural matter, a view from a window which has been carefully placed to exclude a whole quadrant of the landscape. What may well have begun as a simple forgetting of other possible views turned into habit and over time into something like a cult of forgetfulness practised on a national scale. We have been able for so long to disremember the Aborigines that we are now hard put to keep them in mind even when we most want to do so. (189)

William Dampier’s texts, the very first writings on Australia to be published in English, over time contribute to what becomes a symptomatic “cult of forgetfulness”. In this sense Dampier can be considered one of the instigators of this process. And this situation shows no signs of abating. If the Dampier example is the seed, then it subsequently becomes an obnoxious weed that stretches through Australian history.

With this in mind, I return to an analysis of that specific murder. The ship’s master, a man named Jacob Hughes, did keep a detailed log of the incident. Adrian Mitchell includes the relevant extracts in *Dampier’s Monkey*. Hughes talked to the other witnesses and recorded what he heard. On the 1st of September 1699, he stated that this violent encounter started with a sailor named Alexander Beale who was told to capture the local Aboriginal people. After a spear was thrown at Beale, he cleaved “one part of the head the Blacks running to the others assistance our Capt. Being by shott at one of them so that he fell down, that dashing them very much; then parted” (Hughes qtd. in Mitchell 60). “Dashing them” would refer to a bloody slashing of their bodies. Cleaved “one part of the head” is fairly self-explanatory. After witnessing one of their kin being torn apart with a sword, Hughes mentions that they “then parted”. Parted indeed – the Aboriginal people were running from imminent slaughter!

Perhaps the most horrific and hidden act of violence within Dampier's tainted text occurs on board a ship named the *Bachelor's Delight*. In 1683 – during his earlier buccaneering days – Dampier had arrived in Chesapeake Bay (site of modern day Baltimore). After drinking his way through all his savings he joined Captain John Cook as a buccaneer. The ship departed, hoping to seize a larger and stronger ship with heavier guns, ultimately to use as a weapon to capture a much larger and more lucrative Manila galleon. They came upon and overran a Dutch slaver's ship, with a “freight” stored below of sixty female slaves (Preston and Preston 101). The pirates saw the large bounty of women slaves chained in darkness, reeking of their own excrement and cowering in fear. With this knowledge, they decided to rename the ship the *Bachelor's Delight*. Now with a new ship (armed with thirty-six guns) they continued searching for larger ships to take. Preston and Preston suggest that the “fate of the slaves was never mentioned but was presumably a sad one. At best, the buccaneers may have sold the women to a slave trader on the coast” (101). Indeed, it was much worse than that. No record of the women's fate is made in Dampier's book. For all his posturing of accuracy, Dampier purposely ignores their story as irrelevant to the general designs of his book. It turns out that

[b]y February 1684 they were rounding the Cape [Horn]. A terrible storm struck, forcing them further and further South until they were below sixty degrees South Latitude. The extreme cold killed the young women, one by one until they were all dead while the men discovered that by drinking three quarts of brandy a day they could stay warm and alive. (Ritchie 161)

The men were drunk while the dying moans (sixty women slowly freezing to death) rose up from the lower decks. The brandy would have warmed the men's bodies, but it would not have blocked out the cries of the women, followed by the death rattles and then deathly silence. Later, once they were out of the storm, the bodies would start to fester. All this happened below decks of the horribly named *Bachelor's Delight*. Dampier's account is missing these horrific and crucial details.

Dampier's next book *A Voyage to New Holland* was published in 1703. As he was preparing it for publication, First Lieutenant George Fisher was constructing his legal case against Dampier for excessive cruelty. Furthermore, the Admiralty was trying to recuperate costs after the loss of the HMS *Roebuck*.

The HMS *Roebuck* had departed four years before the publication date, on the 14th of January 1699. Due to the cold, Dampier decided to avoid going around Cape Horn and across the Pacific to get to the east coast of New Holland. Instead, they sailed down the west coast of Africa and then east across the Indian Ocean to New Holland. A brief respite in Tenerife was a sign of the tension that was slowly building (Preston and Preston 257). On solid land, Dampier took the opportunity to explore and catalogue various wildlife, as he frequently did. Meanwhile, the officers were drinking spirits in the harbour taverns. When Dampier returned, an argument broke out between Dampier and Fisher. In the Prestons' biography, it is revealed that Fisher "bade [Dampier] to kiss his arse and said he did not care a turd for him" (256). Meanwhile, the *Roebuck's* gunner, Philip Paire, testified that he heard the lieutenant "tell the Capt[ain] he did not care a F[ar]t for him, and saw him lift up his hand towards him" (qtd. in Mitchell 95). Another account states that Fisher "bent his fist and held it to his nose and said he did not care a fart for him" (qtd. in Mitchell 95). Fisher subsequently apologised and an uneasy truce began. But Dampier was left to stew over the insult to his rank. To the crew, as sailors in the Royal Navy, Dampier was a despicable pirate (the very people they were supposed to fight) and he had not completed any officer training. He was an upstart who, because of his celebrity, had shifted into the top position on board.

Later, Fisher allowed a keg of beer to be tapped and shared among the thirsty crew without Dampier's permission. This was highly unusual. Dampier summoned Fisher and they began to speak. Dampier suddenly started to beat him with a copper cane then had his legs put in irons. Fisher was later put in jail in the Brazilian port of Bahia, where he remained for weeks. After being released, he caught a Portuguese ship back to Lisbon and eventually made it to London. All that time he was preparing his legal case against Dampier (Preston and Preston 287).

To understand the rapid intensification of the argument between Dampier and Fisher, it is important to think about how space functioned on board a ship, especially one that has sailed below the equator. Dampier's outburst involved the politics of space in the deeply hierarchical Royal Navy ship. How does one's physical position in just such a space signify social standing? The hyper-paranoia and sensitivity of Captain Dampier was a result of constant undermining by Lieutenant Fisher (Mitchell 89). Greg Dening's work (1992) on the mutiny on the *Bounty* can yield fruitful results when applied to this similar situation. Dening undertakes a close reading of the

language employed by the participants within the ship's deck as a theatrical space. Mitchell, using Denning, believes:

Dampier confronted a comparable dynamic [to Bligh's mutineers] – he was in a different sense *déclassé*, his authority challenged on the inviolable space of his own quarterdeck, verbally abused in public by a subordinate who would not recognise himself as in any way his captain's inferior. (94)

Fisher continually kept his hat on his head in Dampier's presence (Mitchell 92). Fisher only took off his hat when leaving the captain's cabin, signalling that no gentleman was to be found inside that space. In the seventeenth century, pirates were sometimes called "hatmen" (Mitchell 93). Fisher was challenging Dampier on the quarterdeck, exactly where he should be in complete control. This hardened his anger down into a pearl. Now, after Fisher's constant subtle insults had worn Dampier down, releasing the beer without his consent had "opened a sluice gate into an altogether serious challenge to Dampier's right to command the quarterdeck" (Mitchell 98).

With Fisher safely in jail, it seemed as if Dampier's authority was again safe. Now the *Roebuck* crossed the Cape of Good Hope and sailed across the Indian Ocean to New Holland. During the return voyage to England, on 22nd of February 1701 near Ascension Island, Dampier's ship started to leak. Around 11pm, the carpenter John Norwood told Dampier it was "impossible to save the ship" (Preston and Preston 285). They abandoned ship and rowed long boats to the shore. By high tide only the ship's masts were visible.

It took Dampier eight months to return to London. He kept the majority of his notes and when he delivered them to the Admiralty, they thanked him then informed him of the outstanding court-martial for excessive cruelty to Fisher and a further investigation into the loss of the ship. The court found Dampier guilty of "very hard and cruel usage" of Fisher, and found Dampier "not a fit person to command a navy vessel" (Preston and Preston 292). He escaped jail time but the court requisitioned all three years' worth of wages still owed to him.

And so Dampier sat down to write his second book, *A Voyage to New Holland*. It is a book that contains no account of the beating of Fisher and the sinking of the ship is only cryptically alluded to. Dampier writes that the *Roebuck* "foundered

through perfect age near the island of Ascension. I suffered extremely in my reputation by that misfortune” (ixv). Later he tells the reader that he is innocent and that it is always the fate of “those who have no true relish and value for scientific discoveries and observations” to have “prejudice against the person by whom the discoveries were made” (ixvii). Dampier, with his account of the *Roebuck’s* voyage to New Holland, tried to rebuild his damaged reputation. So began a new cataloguing of all discernible details.

Dampier’s prose portrayed Aboriginal people as barely humans. There is no space for communication between the Europeans and these “blinking creatures with the same black skin and hair frizzled, tall and thin . . . They had the most unpleasant looks and the worst features of any people that ever I saw” (*A Voyage to New Holland* 103). Dampier focused even more energy on degrading Aboriginal people. By showing them as barely animals, he is forcing the reader to see them as decrepit while he, the observer, is civilised and possessed with reason. Dampier, again, is writing his way to legitimacy. This leads to a tainted historical record as it does not accurately show what actually occurred.

For all his gestures toward an accurate cataloguing of nature, Dampier sometimes writes in a way that makes the object opaque to the reader (Mitchell 159). One time he attempts to describe the size of a strange tropical fruit. The best he can do is say that it is as “big as a penny loaf, when wheat is at five shillings the bushel” (*A New Voyage Round the World* 205). The solidity of the object is undermined by fluctuation of the market’s supply of wheat: a most unsolid description indeed. At another time, he is caught in a storm and does not think that he will ever live to write about it. Suddenly the details seem not to matter and an introspective and confessional mode begins:

But here I had a lingering view of approaching death, and little or no hopes of escaping it; and I must confess that my courage, which I had hitherto kept up, failed me here; and I made very sad reflections on my former life, and looked back with horror and detestation on actions which before I disliked, but now I trembled at the remembrance of. I had long before this repented me of that roving course of life, but never with such concern as now. (*A New Voyage Round the World* 332-333)

When Dampier seems upon the verge of death, the affectless prose turns on him. He turns ponderous and homiletic. He wonders about the acts that this roving life has forced him to perform. The 'I' is becoming awash with guilt. In a later book of Dampier's, *Voyages and Discoveries*, his prose turns animistic:

Sea-breezes do blow in the day and rest in the night; so on the contrary these land breezes do blow in the night and rest in the day, and so they do alternately succeed each other. For when the sea-breezes have performed their offices of the day, by breathing on their respective coasts, they in the evening do either withdraw from the coast, or lie down to rest: Then the land-winds, whose office is to breathe in the night, moved by the same order of divine impulses, do rouse out of their private recesses, and gently fan the air till the next morning; and then their task ends, and they leave the stage. (244-245)

Mitchell highlights this point in Dampier's prose as a "precursor to an animist view of nature, more than an affectation of literary effect" (151). Others have interpreted Dampier's growing awareness that all matter in this world is alive as hylozoistic (P. Edwards 38), giving his work a quality of searching for the animist. What can be known for sure is that Dampier was aware of a larger force at work as he noted the currents and the howling winds. Mitchell believes that Dampier, "despairing upon the abyss. . .comes close to something like ecstasy" (152).

3. William Dampier and English Literature.

Due to the rapid expansion of exploration and trade, readers in the seventeenth century were fascinated by what may be found beyond the edges of all known maps. For some, Dampier's importance was primarily as a travel writer whose influence was crucial for establishing the tradition of travel writing in the seventeenth century. James Kelly argues that "Dampier's narrative . . . engendered competition, imitation, and invention on such a scale that within two decades voyages peaked as one of the most sought-after forms of polite literature in Britain" (158). Whitfield sees Dampier's book as a "kaleidoscopic flow of information that tends to daze the reader of today, although it appealed strongly to the early-eighteenth-century public" (122). But just what was the influence of William Dampier on English literature?

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's praise of Dampier's prose and "exquisite mind" (168) perfectly summarises the attraction of Dampier for readers at that time: it was as much his mastery of reason (the style) as the exotic world (the content) that his work offered them. Jonathan Swift read and mined Dampier's writing for details. The preface to *Gulliver's Travels* (taking the form of a letter from Gulliver to his cousin) states that what follows is "a very loose and uncorrect Account of my Travels; with Directions to hire some young Gentleman of either University to put them in Order, and correct the Style, as my cousin Dampier did by my Advice in his Book called *A Voyage Round the World*" (xxi). Who is this other "Gentleman" who puts the "incorrect" into some kind of order? *Gulliver's Travels* is presented as a draft to be "cleaned up" by the unnamed gentleman. By name-dropping Dampier, Swift aims to give *Gulliver's Travels* legitimacy due to its alleged factual nature. But this is a legitimacy that Swift will, of course, go on to undermine by filling it with fanciful details. Smollett was also a careful reader of Dampier (Whitfield 122). It has been noted that Dampier's writing played an influence on Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (H. Edwards 9); this is especially true for the character Ben Gunn's connection to Alexander Selkirk. Herman Melville briefly mentions Dampier in chapter 45, "The Affidavit" of *Moby Dick*: "In that up and down manly book of old-fashioned adventure, so full, too, of honest wonders – the voyage of [the surgeon] Lionel Wafer, one of ancient Dampier's old chums . . . (295). It seems that Dampier was such a fixture in the Western literary imagination that to write a prose work that stretched out

to unknown adventures in strange lands, the figure and the works of Dampier became a kind of touchstone for a wide variety of writers. Indeed, it is easy to establish a narrative of influence from Dampier to writers of popular adventure novels of the Victorian period, such as G. A. Henty, R. M. Ballantyne and H. Rider Haggard. In them we can see the continuation of the Dampier example of the adventurous man pushing to edges of the unknown (Griffiths 565).

A more complex relationship is the one between Dampier and Daniel Defoe. Defoe drew heavily from Dampier. Defoe's book *The Life, Adventures and Piracies of Famous Captain Singleton* also relied on Dampier's books and his life (Bonner 326). Both Dampier and Defoe have similar ideas of epistemology – generally aligning with those of John Locke (Watt 62). At their simplest, these ideas suggest that if something can be observed and subsequently recorded in language, then it constitutes knowledge. This is Locke's famous *tabula rasa*, or the empty mind. The blank chalkboard before the teacher enters the classroom becomes, with Dampier, the blank page before the man of reason arrives in the new land. John Locke believed that what has occurred – any trace of a people's history or culture – is of no interest. In his *Second Treatise of Government* Locke assures his reader that "history gives us but a very little account of men that lived together in the state of nature . . . Government is everywhere antecedent to records, and letters seldom come in amongst a people till a long continuation of civil society" (352). First there is the historical event, subsequently there may, or may not, be a written record of it, and if there is not then that historical event (or that entire culture) essentially does not exist. No text, no culture, no knowledge – no importance. For Locke a society that is pre-writing cannot construct an archive – cannot catalogue its knowledge – and therefore is, by definition, without history. Following this, a land without an archive is a land without history. The *tabula rasa* of Australia remains empty until a man such as William Dampier can arrive and begin cataloguing the details. Dampier's task, according to Lockean epistemology, is to write Australia into existence.

This legacy of viewing the land through a Lockean epistemology remains a strong strain throughout the twentieth century. From a Lockean view, Aboriginal people had no conception of private property as the land was not invested with their labour. (This is an idea recently and resolutely rejected by two authors. The first is Bill Gammage who argues in his book *The Biggest Estate on Earth* that in the pre-settlement era Aboriginal people practiced systematic and effective land management.

The second is Bruce Pascoe, a Bunurong man who, in his prize-winning book *Dark Emu*, also argues that Aboriginal people did indeed cultivate the land.) For Locke, a people's possession of country should involve work:

Subduing or cultivating the earth, and having dominion, we see are joined together. The one gave title to the other. So that God, by commanding to subdue, gave Authority so far to appropriate: and the condition of human life, which required labour and materials to work on, necessarily introduces private possessions. (*Second Treatise of Government* 310)

Just like Dampier's view of the Australian land as a "lack" was passed down through the generations, so too were Locke's ideas on the Australian land requiring to be invested with labour. And that this was a sacred task. In 1926, Prime Minister Billy Hughes accepted this sacred task that the Australian land required cultivation and used it to justify the Commonwealth's acquisition of the Northern Territory. That land was required to resettle veterans from World War One. For Hughes the rightness of this was self-evident as, "God has never intended us to retain the Territory unless we were able to use it. We must either settle the country . . . or allow someone else to do so" (Hughes qtd. in Schaffer 198). By the end of the twentieth century intellectuals like Ross Gibson were linking this idea of nature as a thing that must be tamed – that must be overwhelmed – to Australian identity:

The idea of the intractability of Australian nature has been an essential part of the national ethos. It is a notion with its genesis in the ancient legends of the "hellish antipodes"; a notion promoted by the First Fleet annalists who detailed the anguish of a harrowed and perverse society struggling to understand and subsist in a seemingly bizarre habitat. (*South of the West* 66-67)

I return to Dampier's influence on Daniel Defoe. Defoe agreed that by reading Dampier, one was able to absorb the data of the reality that existed beyond the very edges of the map. In *The Complete English Gentleman*, Defoe advises his readers that any English gentleman may sit by a warm hearth and

make a tour of the world in books, he may make himself master of the geography of the universe in maps, atlases and measurements of our mathematicians. He may travel by land with historians, by sea with navigators. He may be round the globe with Dampier and Rogers, and know a thousand times more in doing it than all those illiterate sailors. (225)

Indeed, in this case the English gentleman's experience of foreign lands – gained from reading safely before the fire – trumps the primary experience of illiterate sailors. What does an English gentleman have? Legitimacy. Why? Because he is a man who is filled with reason. Where is the evidence of reason? In the writing of prose that meticulously catalogues all the various details. Within this modality of writing, it seems that nothing is confusing and all details are comprehended by undergoing a comparison to something else (effectively creating a hierarchy). Also, the observer is clearly separated from the observed. This display of reason effectively legitimises a piece of writing in the late seventeenth century and early eighteenth century.

How does the world unfold in Dampier's work? Dampier believes (following Locke) that the visual impression that he is able to record is turned into data – and as data it becomes invested with the truth. If this process can occur, then that thing exists and the account becomes true. Dampier writes to give his readers sense-impressions of what it's like to witness exotic lands. One can believe that Dampier would gladly accept Defoe's reading of him. Indeed, Defoe's English gentleman constitutes an ideal reader of Dampier. Yet the irony is that at times Dampier, as narrator, seems (like Gulliver), perplexed and unsure of himself as a detached observer. In a note written in an early draft, Dampier expressed his concern:

I fear that I am too prolix in this Discourse. I am only to answer for myself and if I have not given a description of those places to the satisfaction of my friends I must beg pardon and desire them to blame the defects they find in these my writings on the meanness of my information and not in me who has been faithful as to what is written of my own knowledge or in getting the best information I could. (qtd. in Preston and Preston 244)

There is a tension in Dampier's writings between being interesting as a writer and being faithful to the facts. Shapiro has shown that "Honesty in the factual genre

required unadorned prose” (72). Shapiro then goes on to show how in the seventeenth century rhetorical language was generally utilised when the speaker wished to manipulate the reader as “rhetorical fluency and highly ornamental and figurative language had connotations of deception and flattery” (72). The eighteenth century reader may have suspected that the prose is rather ostentatious and “putting on airs”. Similarly to Swift’s opening, Dampier’s introduction to *A Voyage to New Holland*, takes issue with those who have questioned the accuracy of his work:

It has been objected against me by some, that my Accounts and Description of Things are dry and jejune, both filled with variety of pleasant Matter, to divert and gratify the Curious Reader. How far this is true, I leave to the world to judge. But if I have been exactly and strictly careful to give only True relations and Description of Things (as I am sure I have) and if my Descriptions by such as may be of use not only to myself (which I have already in good measure experienced) but also to others in future voyages; and likewise to such Readers at home as are more desirous of a Plain and just Account of the true Nature and State of Things, described, than of a Polite and Rhetorical narrative: I hope all the Defects in my Stile, will meet with a ready pardon. (ixvii-ixviii)

Defoe eventually becomes tired of Dampier’s endless cataloguing as an act of epistemology. In 1724, Defoe wrote a parody of Dampier and called it *A New Voyage Round the World, by a Course Never Sailed Before* (mimicking the title of Dampier’s famous work) to express his exasperation with the tedious cataloguing and creation of lists undertaken by Dampier. For Defoe, the ex-sailor authors like Dampier, for all their presentation of the data of foreign lands, leave their readers trying to discern “how affairs stand in those remote parts of the world” (34). It is novelists like Defoe that begin to answer these needs. They write to fill the gaps left by non-fiction writers such as William Dampier, but more on that later in the exegesis.

The direct influence of William Dampier on early British explorers and colonists to Australia is real and tinged with irony. But the irony only registers after arriving in country. Joseph Banks, after an earlier infatuation, came to reject the writings of Dampier. For Banks, Dampier’s “original view” of Australia was so influential that he worried that he could not “see” Aboriginal people without reference to Dampier’s

work. After first viewing Aboriginal people, Banks wrote a telling entry in the *Endeavour Journal*:

We stood in with the land near enough to discern five people who appeared through our glasses to be enormously black: so far did the prejudices which we had built upon Dampier's account influence us that we fancied we could see their colour when we could scarce distinguish whether or not they were men. (Banks 22 Apr. 1770)

Matthew Flinders was an especially keen reader of Dampier. But he also – after arriving in Australia – became frustrated with his precursor's example. Flinders was disappointed at the lack of purchase Dampier's prose had on Australia. Mitchell points to Dampier's flawed description of a stumpy-tailed lizard (40). Flinders caught it and held it in his hand to examine the details closely and saw little connection between the actual animal and the one he had previously read about in Dampier's book. Dampier had described the lizard as

a sort of guano, but differing from others in three remarkable particulars: for these had a larger and uglier head, and had no tail: and at the rump, instead of the tail there, they had a stump of a tail, which appeared like another head; but not really such, being without mouth or eyes. Yet this creature seemed, by this means, to have a head at each end. (*A Voyage to New Holland* 85-86)

For all his gesturing towards factual accuracy, Dampier had performed a poor job with his descriptions. Flinders came to realise “the animal is certainly of a singular form but it is scarcely necessary to say, that the merit of Dampier's description does not consist in being strictly accurate” (Flinders, book 1, ch. 3).

Adrian Mitchell notes that Dampier's lack of enthusiasm for what he saw “influenced the attitudes of Joseph Banks, Matthew Flinders and the early European settlers a century later; and over the years [Dampier's] reservations found their way into school texts and informed the attitudes of generations [in Australia]” (ix). And for Ross Gibson, “Dampier contributed to, at the same time as he is influenced by, the image of the diminishing paradise” (*Diminishing Paradise* 11). These quotes demonstrate Dampier's pernicious influence on how a whole culture viewed the land

that it was living, and also how it viewed its place within that land.

4. A Survey and Analysis of Novels about William Dampier

Having problematized both the content and the reception of Dampier's two travel books, this exegesis will now situate that problematic knowledge within the three pre-existing novels about William Dampier and assess how they might be built upon for a new creative work, "Horatio Dawn".

The first historical novel that featured William Dampier was *Recognition* by Dijon Deverell, published in 1960. The author introduces her topic with a telling first sentence: "if there is such a thing as reincarnation . . . then, in one of my past lives, I must have been associated with Captain Dampier" (3). Such an opening is both playful and telling. For the author is asserting that her writing gains currency by bypassing the sources and feeds directly – through reincarnation – to a previous version of herself. For Deverell it is important to re-enter history so as to correct a fault in the historical record. The author wants recognition for William Dampier as the "true" discoverer of Australia, as opposed to James Cook. But the identification of Deverell with Dampier becomes murkier as Dijon Deverell herself does not actually exist. Besides a single interview in *The Age* newspaper, no trace can be found. The USA's Library of Congress website lists an additional contributor to *Recognition* as an Evangeline Deverell. Very little trace remains of Evangeline Deverell's career. As an author of young adult fiction and as a woman, she may have chosen the name Dijon to replace Evangeline and so gain currency as a writer of traditionally masculine adventure fiction. *Eve Stanley of New Zealand* (1909), written when she was quite young, had previously been reviewed in the *Evening Post*:

[W]e must regretfully confess that in this immature production we can find neither achievement nor promise. The best and the kindest advice that can be offered is to leave fiction alone, for, whatever her vocation may be, it is not literature. Her story is inchoate and absolutely destitute of colour; the characters, old and young, are devoid of intelligence, and incredibly ill-bred.
(15)

Fifty years later, in *The Age* newspaper on 27th January 1960, an interview with the renamed Dijon Deverell occurs with the release of *Recognition*. The article

ends with the assertion that the purpose of *Recognition* is that “Miss Deverell aims to correct the historical record and provide recognition for her subject” (9). After all, as she tells her readers, “it is incorrect that Captain Cook discovered Australia when it was in fact William Dampier” (9).

Returning to *Recognition*'s prologue, we learn that as a young student, Deverell was exposed to the conspiracy to remove Dampier from the historical record. She writes:

One day the headmaster of a public school I attended, Edmund Webbler, Esq. M.A. (Oxford), in the midst of a geography lesson told the class of Captain Dampier and the contemptible way he was treated by the British Admiralty; he was the discoverer of Australia, not Captain Cook, as the Admiralty and educators would have us believe. (3)

Later, “while in Australia I studied her early, authentic history” (3). Further fact-finding missions around Australia led Deverell to an almost Pierre Menard moment. In this act of literature Deverell, like Borges's Menard, is so absorbed in the context of Dampier that she is able to reproduce a version of his experience that supersedes the original texts. According to Deverell's aesthetics, she is inadvertently supplanting Dampier. Deverell is claiming possession of the “reality” of Dampier in a bid to achieve “total identification” (Borges 65). Deverell does not write about Dampier: she repeats the writing of Dampier. Deverell's prologue ends with this realisation:

Then one day, while engaged in this work, it suddenly dawned on me that without knowing it, I had been unconsciously following on and off in Dampier's footsteps for a number of years. With it came the thought – was I associated in some past life with the great navigator, or have I been guided by him at times, from another world.

I cannot say. I do not know. (5)

Neither do I. This was a peculiar motivation for choosing Dampier as a subject. In *Recognition*, Dampier is introduced in the following way:

He was a tall, dark, dapper young man in his twenty-eighth year, with deep, vivid blue eyes, and a florid complexion. His brown, silky hair parted in the middle, fell in ringlets to his shoulders. He was vain of his appearance. No one ever saw him untidy. No matter where, or in whatever circumstance, Dampier was always well dressed and carried himself with an unconscious air of distinction. (8)

This description of Dampier does not align with the one image we have of him: Murray's portrait (which, strangely, is mentioned in *Recognition's* prologue) has him looking rather shabby. In a particularly apt visual reading, Adrian Mitchell sees "a silver cravat . . . in need of a wash and a bit of bleach . . . Dampier is well short of dapper. He looks uncomfortable" (19). Far from a dapper gentleman, it seems like William Dampier was in want of money. Deverell's image of Dampier is that of a brooding Victorian rather than a late seventeenth century scientist, a Heathcliff who has gone to sea in search of adventure:

Morgan, Swan, Cowley, Bancroft and Harris were names that sparked fear throughout the Caribbean. Their crews were regarded as England's worst cutthroats. But the most dreaded of all was Captain William Dampier. Nevertheless, because of his good looks and aristocratic presence, he was regarded by wealthy Spanish ladies as a matrimonial catch, but Dampier always kept aloof, being shy and ill at ease in feminine company. (10)

Dampier is next seen walking through the streets of London and a situation arises that shows him to be a gentleman who is possessed of reason (it is strangely similar to the opening of *Brother Captain*, the next Dampier novel that will be examined):

[A] wizened man was striking furiously at a nondescript dog, who kept raising his right paw as if to ward off the blows.

With a yell, Dampier seized the man and flung him against the fence. 'How dare you strike a poor defenseless animal!' he cried angrily. (11)

Dampier's gregarious nature is confirmed when he adopts the dog as his own. He takes the dog to an inn and shares his roast beef and yorkshire pudding with the

animal. While there, Dampier meets his nemesis Lieutenant Fisher. The novel cuts to a rant from Fisher, who reveals that himself and Dampier were both boarders at a public school and used to fight in the dormitories. Then Dampier recounts a dream that he had in his youth where he

didn't like the poverty he saw everywhere, ragged children, cold and wet, playing around the wharves, the wet, muddy streets, the half-starved looking men and women, or people begging. It moved him. Then suddenly he got the idea in his head that there was a country a long way out in the ocean where people could go to live and never be hungry if they were willing to work; where it would never be cold, and no one would stand on street corners and beg. (16)

Deverell is constructing Australia as a land of utopian impulses. She then breaks from the fictional tone to insert quotes from Dampier's work, adding to the notion that Dampier has purely scientific concerns:

Dampier spent a month in Bahia, and was much impressed with the beauty, wealth, and resources of Brazil. He gives a graphic description in his second volume of *Voyages Around the World* of what he saw and encountered – fish, fruit, fowls, animals, and serpents. He tells of the anaconda snake.

This water snake is said to be nearly thirty feet long. They live wholly in the water, either in large rivers or lakes, and prey upon any creature that comes within their reach, be it man or beast. They draw their prey to them with their tails, for when they see anything on the banks of the river or lake where they lurk, they swing about their tails ten or twelve feet over the bank, and whatever stands within their sweep, is snatched with great violence into the river or lake and drowned by them. It is reported very credibly, that is they see only a shadow of an animal on the water, they will flourish their tails and bring in the man or beast whose shadow they see, and are often too successful in it.

Dampier and his men made many friends while in Bahia. The night before they were to sail for Terra Australis, the governor gave a ball at the Government House in their honour. (97)

The plot of the novel gains fuel from the growing arguments between Lieutenant Fisher and Captain Dampier. In the novel, Fisher is put in a Brazilian jail. After this, there is a mutiny and Dampier is put ashore on a deserted island. The crew later realise their incompetence and send a boat to rescue their captain. Dampier accepts their apology and asks them for one more week of faith so that he can make it to *Terra Australis*. They agree. They arrive within the allotted timeframe. Their ship is leaking and a full charting of *Terra Australis* becomes impossible:

Had fate been kind, and the navigator had followed the course he was taking for about eight more days, Dampier would have reached the Gulf of Carpentaria, and shortly afterwards the east coast of Australia, where he would have found a more hospitable country.

But so far he had accomplished nothing. Disappointed and sick at heart, he told his officers of his failure . . . Dampier sighed wearily. “But I haven’t discovered what it is . . . It is certainly not an island, nor a series of islands. It could be a continent – All I ask,” he added wearily, “is to leave something behind regarding this place that better qualified persons who shall come after me may know, and avoid, some of the mistakes I have made.”

“Thanks to your map they will,” the officer replied bitterly. (112)

Dampier returns home with his notes, successfully beats the unjust court-martial and then retires. *Recognition* then jumps forward to 1788 and the Port Jackson settlement. La Perouse arrives too late to claim it for France and so he decides to give Captain Philip a lesson on the history of that land. La Perouse informs the British settlers thus:

The first Englishman to land on this island continent was Captain William Dampier. He laid this country, which is now yours, at the feet of England *without the shedding of blood* (emphasis added), paved the way for a happier and better life, not only for all assembled here, but maybe for countless thousands in the years that lie ahead.

Did Captain Dampier receive recognition, the gratitude of his country? He did not . . . Australia will do well to honor the memory of a great sailor like Captain Dampier. He lived not for glory, but by his courage, fortitude, sacrifice, service

to his country, to his fellow man, he achieved glory – and God did not forsake him. (229)

The issue of Dampier's bloodless arrival in Australia directly contradicts his own account. This portrayal of Dampier by the author is a continuation of the denial of the violence that came with Dampier's arrival in Australia. For all of Deverell's claims to be able to travel back through society, she does not seem to progress far beyond the Victorian period. *Recognition* presents Captain William Dampier anachronistically, as a Victorian gentleman of honour. The presence of an anachronistic William Dampier is not so much of concern as Deverell's denial that that is in fact what she is doing. She claims that she has access to facts and is somehow beyond the historical record, severing this historical novel from all traces of the record, as left by Dampier, and pushing *Recognition* into fantasy. To return to Pierre Menard, Jorge Luis Borges once believed that "to discover or to invent – both words mean the same thing" (qtd. in Burgin 79). Deverell thinks that she has discovered Dampier, but she has in fact invented him. Borges writes:

[Pierre Menard] did not want to compose *another* Quixote, which is easy – but *the Quixote itself*. Needless to say, he never contemplated a mechanical transcription of the original; he did not propose to copy it. His admirable intention was to produce a few pages which would coincide – word for word and line for line – with those of Miguel de Cervantes. (65-66)

Deverell claims to bypass, or wilfully forget, British imperial history and remember the world of Dampier as if she were one of his companions. "Initially Menard's method was to be relatively simple: learn Spanish, return to Catholicism, fight against the Moor or Turk, forget the history of Europe from 1602 to 1918, be Miguel De Cervantes" (Borges 66). And so Deverell desires to be Dampier, meaning that in *Recognition* there is no Dampier, there is only Deverell.

Alan Chester wrote the next two historical novels about William Dampier. *Brother Captain* (1964) focuses on the HMS *Roebuck's* voyage of 1698; *The Cygnet Adventure* (1985) on the *Cygnet* voyage of 1686.

Brother Captain charts similar ground to *Recognition*. Its full title is *Brother Captain: A Novel, Reconstructing HMS Roebuck's voyage to the South Seas in 1698/1701 under the Command of William Dampier, Formerly One of the Buccaneers Brethren of the Coast*. It situates Dampier as the hero who is stabbed in the back by his Lieutenant Fisher. But Chester charts new territory from Deverell at the point of first contact between Dampier and Aboriginal people. A fight quickly breaks out and one of Dampier's sailors, the bellicose Barnaby, needs rescuing. And so Dampier "reluctantly decided that there was no other course but to shoot one of the blacks and aimed the musket carefully at one of Barnaby's assailants, so as to wound without killing" (*Brother Captain* 148). The affectless language continues – focusing on the events, as opposed to the players – somehow occurring with no guilt being prescribed to the individuals present at the time. "The shot was followed instantly by the collapse of one of the blacks on to the sand, crying and clutching at his thigh to stop the stream of blood" (148). The entire character of the engagement had been changed by the shot. Chester explains that "Dampier was always saddened when he had to use force against a people who did not understand the meaning of firearms and had no defence against these weapons" (149).

The desolate landscape drives William Dampier into a deep melancholy. He does not know what to do with his time and expresses regret that the violence occurred. But these "blacks" have nothing to trade with him and Dampier soon loses interest. A landscape that we see as sublimely beautiful, he sees as a blank space:

[Dampier] paused, reading over what he has written, gripped by a sudden sense of tremendous depression, as if all the great efforts of the last months had gone for nothing. What had been achieved? Compared with his expectations, very little . . . he had intended to observe more closely the inhabitants of this land and to try to win them over. (152)

First Dampier wants to observe Aboriginal people, then he wants to enslave them and make them reveal the watering holes and hunt for meat. And yet still Chester presents Dampier in the heroic mode. At this point I will insert a notion given to us by Reynolds. By now it has become clear that both Deverell and Chester were enthralled by the discourse of the "cult of forgetfulness". As when it came to

questions of violence towards Aboriginal people they were both responding to, and perpetuating the

suppression of these questions by nationalist historians writing between 1900 and 1960, who were more interested in telling heroic tales than in confronting the legal and ethical problems underlying the process of colonisation. (Reynolds, *Why Weren't We Told?* 164.)

Chester's second go at a Dampier novel is *The Cygnet Adventure*. As it was published in 1984, this version has much more violence than *Brother Captain*, accurately reflecting a shift in Australian historical epistemology. The crew is portrayed as much more piratical than previously. At one point, while storming and aiming to sack a village, it is Dampier that is the lone voice of reason:

Dampier rushed up from the beach, slogging hard through the sand. 'No!' he cried, and appealed to Read. 'To fire the village would be an outrage. We started this!'

Read hesitated. 'We did?' he echoed, surprised.

'We attacked their women and that started it. Besides, there's already been too much slaughter for Christmas Day,' he added, artfully. (141)

Dampier's awareness of the slaughter brings a sense of self-loathing. In *The Cygnet Adventure*, Dampier ponders:

He didn't know what was wrong with him, but he could not understand why he was doing this. But his temper had raged up and he was trembling, suddenly caught by a cloudy, confused, reckless anger, touched off perhaps by a fill of stupid killing. He glared at the master. He was sick of Teat, sick of his bombast, sick of his sadism, sick of his arrogance. And sick, also, of his own frustration. (141)

Dampier becomes the man of reason with a strong ethical conscience, a man who will do his duty to what is right, who will stop the senseless slaughter. He decides that killing Teat, the man who is slaughtering the villagers, would be too extreme and so

decides to wound his right arm, so that he can no longer swing his cutlass: “The exact opening came for Dampier to thrust his sword through the muscle of the arm, withdrawing with a savage jerk and twist” (143). Dampier the pirate with a conscience stops the slaughter, directly and without regards for consequences. After the melee, the captain of the *Cygnets* asks Dampier, ““At least you didn’t kill [Teat] – and I’m still wondering why?”” Ever the man in control of his passions and possessed with reason, Dampier responds, ““[b]ecause I didn’t choose to kill him.”” (145). This conversation ends with Dampier storming off the deck, “simmering with anger the more dangerous because he controlled it so well” (147).

Dampier is appointed to replace Teat and navigates the *Cygnets* to Australia. He takes a small team ashore. As soon as he lands he leaps over and sees that “the ground was clothed in small trees, scrub, and visually insignificant but unusual plants the like of which he had not previously seen. Noting them mentally, he decided to collect specimens later” (150).

They aimlessly search for water. Seeing distant fires they know that they are not alone, but they do not know how to make contact. Now, when Dampier sees Aboriginal people, Chester displays a level of begrudging respect that was absent from his previous Dampier novel:

Rarely had Dampier seen two such extraordinary human beings. They were muscular, but thin enough for him to count the ribs. The upper part of their bodies was daubed with red and white. Their bearded faces were ugly to him. They were quite naked, evidently being a people without cloth of any kind, a primitive and ancient people indeed. (152)

A gap has clearly emerged that shows a growing but bitter acceptance (but not admiration) for Aboriginal people. When Dampier returns on board, he talks to the captain: ““It would be interesting to make contact with the people, I’ve never seen their like. *It could be that they are the oldest race in the world*”” (emphasis added) (154). Dampier returns ashore and tries to offer the Aboriginal people gifts of beads, but they display no interest. The ship leaves New Holland, dejected and with nothing to show. Dampier has many more adventures and then returns home to his wife Judith. The novel has an afterword. It imagines that if only Dampier could have returned to Australia

less than three hundred years later, he must have been proud of his prescience. Just off Dampier Archipelago, he would have seen the port of Dampier named in his honour, and Port Hedland 150 kilometres north, where giant ore carriers up to 120 000 tonnes gulped brick-red iron ore into cavernous holds. Out to sea, he would have seen the rigs and platforms of the largest natural gas discovery in the world; and if a kindly air pilot had flown him inland from his original landfall at King Sound, he would have seen thousands of cattle, Lake Argyle, the Ord River Dam, sugar crops, and the site of one of the biggest diamond deposits on earth discovered so far. A pity he could never know, but possibly just as well; because then he would have also experienced the supreme irony of knowing that another great navigator, not born until thirteen years after his own death, a Captain James Cook, was officially credited with ‘discovering’ Australia. (263-264)

Again, in Chester’s *The Cygnet Adventure*, Dampier is cold-shouldered by Australia for the fairer beauty of Captain James Cook.

He Sailed with Dampier by Philip Rush is also about William Dampier, but it is a slight affair with a recommendation to be shelved in the Young Adult fiction area of libraries. It is similar to the previous three books and so will not be analysed in this exegesis. A more recent (but truncated) version of the Dampier novel does exist. In 2011, an American author named Sabina Murray published a short story collection called *Tales of the New World*. The story “He Sailed Thrice” is about William Dampier. Murray introduces Dampier, again in the heroic mode – but this time anointed by God:

I would like to say there is a sense of destiny about [Dampier]; that the finger of God extends downward and then, one, two, three, pokes a rubbery staccato upon his stinking hair, this one, this one, this one. And the history writers flock and scribble. But it is not greatness, more a displaced refinement of intellect: a cunning. (164)

When Murray's narrative arrives at Dampier's landing in Australia there seems to be no change in the representation of Aboriginal people. (Indeed Chester seems to be more respectful.) She makes the unsettling aesthetic decision to make the Aboriginal men speak to each other using English words and, furthermore, make a cultural comparison between the English and the Dutch. Murray is treating her Aboriginal characters as if they harboured European prejudices: "'These English,' . . . 'they're worse than the Dutch!'" (172). Later a character "acknowledges Dampier's right to the rest of the world" (166). The story's portrayal of Aboriginal people is deeply unsettling and her representation of Dampier in the heroic mode connects her work, although she is writing well into the twenty first century, with the "cult of forgetting". "He Sailed Thrice" can be conceptualised as another Dampier fiction that must be written against.

The three historical novels (*Recognition* by Dijon Deverell, *Brother Captain* and *The Cygnet Adventure* by Alan Chester) and one story ("He Sailed Thrice" by Sabina Murray) all claim to be fiction that is based on the historical record, and therefore all make claims to arriving at something resembling historical truth. But now that this exegesis has shown how tainted the record is, these must be a suspect claims. In their influential and popular book *Is History Fiction?* Curthoys and Docker acknowledge the paradox of "the necessity for and difficulty of finding truth in history" (5). If this paradox is thought of as a gap in knowledge, "Horatio Dawn" bridges that gap. "Horatio Dawn" is aware of the difficulty of presenting the facts pertaining to Dampier's arrival in Australia, but still accepts the necessity of the search. It rejects the notion of fully ascertaining the truth, but grasps for it nonetheless.

I return to our analysis of Deverell and Chester. Of all the misrepresentations that have emerged in the works of Deverell and Chester, the most alarming is the silence that remains around Dampier's violence towards Aboriginal people. The result is that all previous fictional representations of William Dampier are, in the words of W. G. Sebald, "compromised" (qtd. in Schwartz 83). Noting the example of Thomas Bernhard, Sebald claims that Bernhard is a writer to be admired because his work "wasn't compromised in any sense" (qtd. in Schwartz 83). Sebald expands upon this notion to explain how Bernhard, as a model, was different from "much of German prose fiction writing, of the Fifties certainly, but of the Sixties and Seventies, also, [which] is severely compromised, morally compromised, and because of that

aesthetically frequently insufficient” (qtd. in Schwartz 83). All three prevailing Dampier novels, like the examples that Bernhard, and subsequently Sebald, wrote against are morally compromised and also aesthetically insufficient. What is needed is a fictional presentation of William Dampier that is *moral* (it includes the violence) and *aesthetic* (it incorporates a new approach to prose writing). A moral novel about William Dampier will reinsert the missing violence and follow Coetzee’s critique of Enlightenment ideas as:

conduct[ing] a searching interrogation of reason – the reason of the Enlightenment – as the basis for a good society, and in particular of the good faith of reason (does reason not have its own covert agenda, as much to do with an itch for power as with a disinterested quest after truth and justice?). (140)

The thrust of these moral needs draws directly upon the critique of the Enlightenment provided by Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno in their book *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. In this seminal work, they have revealed an ironic endpoint to the grander narrative of the Enlightenment. Instead of a belief in reason slowly liberating societies, the Enlightenment and its version of rationality arguably led to some of the worst horrors of the twentieth century, including fascism and the Holocaust. Horkheimer and Adorno argued that “Enlightenment is totalitarian” (6). With this critical interjection, it becomes impossible to accept any kind of blind belief in the reason of the Enlightenment and a moral failing to write any kind of historical novel that is enthralled with this myopia. Portraying Dampier as a man of reason or a figure of the Enlightenment who works for the betterment of humanity must be revealed as the delusion that it is. Instead, what Dampier will bring to Australia is horror. As a result of the work of Horkheimer and Adorno, the task of a historical novelist is to write books that go against this optimistic grain and to show that a belief in the reason of the Enlightenment has indeed led to horrific circumstances, such as the butchering of Aboriginal people and the subsequent covering up of that horrific act.

5. Counterhistory in Michel Foucault's *Society Must Be Defended*

If the character, manuscripts, influence and biographies of William Dampier are so tainted, where does that leave an author who wants to write a historical novel about him?

Michel Foucault, forever wanting to see what lies hidden beneath grand institutions, traditions and discourses, has interesting insights into the writing of a history that engages with tainted sources. In a 1976 lecture at the College de France, Foucault outlined his idea of a counterhistory. The seeds of counterhistory emerged around the end of the seventeenth century, spurred by the sudden clashing of races that came with the expansion of European empires. Foucault saw this development as an attempt to break with this discourse:

The history of the revolutionary project and of revolutionary practice is, I think, indissociable from the counterhistory that broke with the Indo-European form of historical practice, which were bound up with the exercise of sovereignty; it is indissociable from the appearance of a counterhistory of races and of the role played in the West by clashes between races. (79)

At this time historians were using history to reinforce the sovereignty of the white races by denying other races a position within the historical narrative. Counterhistory, as discourse, opposes this trend. Counterhistory goes beyond collating the sources that remain. It is directed in its search by what is missing. That makes it objectively critical of the attempts of historians to remove other non-white races from the historical narrative. Counterhistory is aware that part of the history of every military victory comes with an equally powerful history of defeat and subjection: “What looks like right, law or obligation from the point of view of power looks like the abuse of power, violence, and exaction when it is seen from the viewpoint of the new discourse” (Foucault 70). This new discourse is written to challenge the Enlightenment’s habit of portraying Europeans as holders of the light through their mastery of reason, and the Other as outside of the light (brutish, simple and backward people). For counterhistory is “a new form of history that is a direct challenge to the history of sovereignty and kings – the Roman history – and that we see a new history

that is articulated around the great biblical form of prophecy” (Foucault 71). Previous history (Roman history) functioned to continue the unbroken links of historical memory. Nothing can be forgotten. Military victories and emperors must be perpetuated through the work of historians. Counterhistory, on the other hand, is written to undermine Roman history and Roman state legitimacy. Its primary act is to

disinter something that has been hidden, and which has been hidden not only because it has been neglected, but because it has been carefully, deliberately, and wickedly misrepresented. Basically what the new history is trying to show is that power, the mighty, the kings, and the laws have concealed the fact that they were born of the contingency and injustice of battles. (Foucault 72)

A conqueror does not want to be remembered by their victories resting upon another people’s defeat – because that would recognise the trauma that a society is built upon. And so those people are delegitimised and no monuments will be erected to show their resistance. Anzac cenotaphs will be proudly displayed in main streets of small country towns. But the idea of a memorial to Aboriginal people who died resisting the colonisation of Australia is anathema to most Australians. Dampier’s tainted texts require a counterhistorical reading to produce meaning. A counterhistory is the gathering of all these gaps within the record and creating a narrative that – drawing from historical knowledge – fills the lingering gaps through an imaginative leap of the writer (be they a historian or a novelist). An act of writing a counterhistory – by Foucault, or Don DeLillo (expanded upon next) –

will be to show that laws deceive, that kings wear masks, that power creates illusions, and that historians tell lies. This will not, then, be a history of continuity, but a history of deciphering, the detection of the secret, of the outwitting of the ruse, and of the reappropriation of a knowledge that has been distorted or buried. It will decipher a truth that has been sealed. (Foucault 72)

When the lie has been revealed, then the record must be rectified. But if the historical records are so misleading (just like Dampier’s tainted texts), how can history ever be accurately ascertained? The result is that a true and factually correct history can never be achieved. This opens ground for a historical novelist to write a novel in the

counterhistorical mode. A counterhistory starts with the records but, as has been shown with Dampier's sterilisation of his own work, the secret (meaning what actually occurred with Dampier's arrival in Australia) has been wilfully hidden. In "Horatio Dawn" this secret – the thing that has been lost – is the violence brought upon Aboriginal people. And there is still denial today as to the level of violence and who should be held responsible (Windschuttle). In Australia today there is still an ongoing need for, and rejection of, reconciliation.⁴ This denial of the violence that occurred with the arrival of Dampier in Australia has serious repercussions as it is denying the role of trauma in the formation of Australian history, and even in Australian identity. This trauma exists in Australian history but it is not fully recognised by the Australian people. This exegesis has charted the trauma that started with William Dampier's arrival in Australia, that continued to be ignored up until recently. Indeed, the three novels about William Dampier seem to perpetuate the idea that Dampier was a man of the Enlightenment but they do not ask the question about what it means to be a man of the Enlightenment, and how Enlightenment epistemology might lead to just such violence. The novels of Deverell and Chester cannot be viewed as counterhistory. For *Recognition*, *Brother Captain* and *The Cygnet Adventure* continue to portray Dampier in the heroic mode. They are not interested in disinterring the violence that has been hidden. "Horatio Dawn", as counterhistory, creates a space for trauma to be displayed. "Horatio Dawn" breaks from the historical novels of Deverell and Chester as it refuses to be distracted by the fictional edifice of the heroic myth of Dampier. Deverell and Chester are so enthralled by the figure of Dampier that they are oblivious to the deep violence that lingers within his tainted texts. This means that Dampier's arrival in Australia is celebrated – when it should be critiqued. That William Dampier as subject for a novel can contain the existential history of Australian trauma is lost to Deverell and Chester. "Horatio Dawn" finds it again.

⁴ The Reconciliation movement aims to forge a sense of trust between the general Australian community and Aboriginal peoples.

6. Counterhistorical Fiction: *Libra* and *Underworld* by Don DeLillo

The example of DeLillo can be posited against those of Deverell and Chester. Indeed, DeLillo seems to have drawn on Foucault's formulation of counterhistory. In a review of *Libra*, DeLillo was praised as "the chief shaman of the paranoid school of fiction" (Towers 6). But DeLillo has countered this assertion by recasting his own work as being composed not of paranoia but "counterhistory". Paranoia is seeing things that are not there. Counterhistory is imaginatively projecting historical knowledge. For Geoff Dyer, one of the main pleasures of reading DeLillo is "seeing history hand-tinted by DeLillo's unique imaginative intelligence" (34).

On the 7th of September 1997, to coincide with the release of the novel *Underworld*, DeLillo published an article in *The New York Times* called "The Power of History". With a subheading of "counterhistory" (keeping Foucault's unhyphenated spelling) DeLillo wrote that *Underworld* is about the parts of American history that remain clouded and hidden from view. This is an aspect of American history that needs to "escape its own brutal confinements" (DeLillo "Power of History"). Paranoia sees patterns where there are none – invents patterns. Counterhistory releases history along with the discovery of a new type of language – forming an imaginative testimony to what is missing. And this new language must not follow the central tenet of Realism with its aim to perfectly capture history as it has already occurred – as traditional historiography dictates. Counterhistory – as a new discourse – circles around the gaps in historical knowledge like water around an open drain. DeLillo writes: "Language can be a form of counterhistory. The writer wants to construct a language that will be the book's life-giving force . . . Let language shape the world. Let it break the faith of conventional re-creation" ("The Power of History").

Underworld is not DeLillo's first counterhistory. Stepping back nine years from *Underworld* to *Libra*, we see how DeLillo encodes the ideas of counterhistory by creating Nicholas Branch, a "counterhistorian", who has been commissioned to write the secret history of the assassination of John F. Kennedy for the CIA:

Nicholas Branch sits in the book-filled room, the room of documents, the room of theories and dreams. He is in the fifteenth year of his labour and sometimes wonders if he is becoming bodiless. He knows he is getting old. There are times

when he can't concentrate on the facts at hand and has to come back again and again to the page, the line, the fine-grained detail of a particular afternoon. (13)

Branch's work is written in secret, for a small and very select audience, and the record that is available explains nothing. Indeed, the more Branch researches the assassinations, the more confused he becomes. Following this logic, we can see that in writing *Libra*, DeLillo was more interested in what was missing from the Warren Commission Report than the wealth of data that it was providing. For DeLillo, history lingers in the silences and in what is missing. For a counterhistorical reading is an informed reading back from the present (with an awareness of contemporary concerns) in an attempt to trace out the roots of trauma. In doing so, the writer infuses his consciousness with the texture of a historical period so that he can go beyond the historian's role as an interpreter of the past and imaginatively penetrate into that past. DeLillo does not interpret the sources so much as reinsert them back into the ecosystem from which they came. This rich environment includes sexuality, culture, politics, race, epistemologies, aesthetics, nuclear weapons, a baseball and the lost footage of the assassination of a president. In *Underworld*, the reader meets J. Edgar Hoover – the neurotic germaphobe – at a baseball game. He is relaxing and enjoying the festive atmosphere when a crumpled up piece of paper is dropped from the seats above and slowly drifts down to land on his face. He unfolds it to reveal a reproduction of “a sixteenth century work done by a Flemish master, Pieter Bruegel . . . called *The Triumph of Death*” (50). Within this festive atmosphere, DeLillo's Hoover discovers an orgy of death. Skeletons torment the living. A dog nibbles on a baby, still alive in its dead mother's arms. Dogs everywhere, dogs with tumours, their skin falling off from disease and mites. The landscape seems like a vast wound, a tear allowing Hell to leak out. Yet Hoover is not repulsed. He is strangely drawn to it. Hoover “has an air-filtration system in his house to vaporize specks of dust – he finds a fascination in cankers, lesions and rotting bodies so long as his connection to the source is strictly pictorial” (50). Deep down Bruegel speaks to something pathological and buried deep within Hoover. Something is hinted at in the record that Hoover has left behind, but it takes a writer working in the counterhistorical mode to establish the connection and bring it forth in DeLillo's Hoover in *Underworld*, as opposed to the historical figure. The narrator addresses Hoover directly: “Edgar, Jedgar. Admit it – you love it. It causes a bristling of his body hair. Skeletons with wispy dicks. The

dead beating kettle drums. The sackcloth dead slitting a pilgrim's throat" (50). The counterhistorical mode reveals Hoover's willingness to perpetuate the war in Vietnam, his psychopathology towards mass slaughter, his blasé approach to nuclear war: his paranoia that there are forces out to get him and one vast tear in the landscape with Hell leaking out – all this is strangely comforting to him. All of these details are far removed from the tenets of what can be ascertained through a more traditional approach to history. (Leopold von Ranke's belief in the historian as scientific recorder of history has clearly been rejected here.) The landscape of Bruegel infuses the inner mindscape of this key historical player. As DeLillo puts it in his essay, by using the discourse of counterhistory to write a novel, the author

has escaped the established narratives of the past and allowed a new narrative to emerge . . . [a] version of the past that escapes the coils of established history and biography and that finds a language, scented, dripping, detailed, for such routine realities as sex, weather and food, for the ravel of a red thread on a woman's velvet sleeve. ("The Power of History")

After Hoover's meditation on Bruegel, DeLillo makes a jump from this scene of Thanatos to America's national anxiety about the potential threat of the USSR's nuclear arsenal. Still at the game, Hoover

thinks of a lonely tower standing on the Kazak Test Site, the tower armed with the bomb, and he can almost hear the wind blowing across the Central Asian steppes, out where the enemy lives in long coats and fur caps, speaking that old weighted language of theirs, liturgical and grave. What secret history are they writing? (*Underworld* 50)

Hoover is obsessed with what is being wilfully hidden from him, from the historical record. DeLillo is similarly obsessed with locating the lacuna of history and diligently filling these gaps. In *Underworld* the lacuna ultimately comes to provide the structure: Bobby Thomson's homerun ball. In an interview with a French magazine DeLillo once stated that:

The baseball, the real baseball from the real ballgame, was never recovered; and if anyone ever turned up with it, and claimed that this was the Bobby Thomson homerun ball, their claim would not be accepted, there would be no way to prove it, presumably. So, this ball just floated into a kind of cyberspace. Would the novel have been possible otherwise? If the ball had been recovered, if baseball fans knew who the owner of the ball was, would I ever have written this novel? I don't think so. See, I had to have the opportunity to make a fiction out of it, and I don't think I could've done this otherwise. (DeLillo qtd. in Chénétier 105)

Moreover, this aesthetics which affects the structure of the novel also filters down to sentence level. This is especially true when DeLillo is dealing with historical trauma and so must “open up the sentence . . . loosen the screws of punctuation and syntax (“The Power of History”).

In *Libra*, the trauma of Kennedy's assassination arrives as

FLASH
SSSSSSSSSS
BLOOD STAINEZAAC
KENNEDY SERIOSTY WOUNDED
SSSSSSSSSS
MAKE THAT PERHAPS PERHAPS
SERIOUSLY WOUNDED. (402)

Libra – as counterhistory – is free to portray trauma in just such a way. Why not show the violence of history through an act of violence to the language? After the Kennedy assassination, unanswered questions lingered and evidence was amassed that, in theory, would satisfy these questions. The Warren Commission collated all accounts and issued their report. And immediately the conspiracy theories multiplied. DeLillo reads the Warren Commission report as no more than “a confusion of data” (*Conversations with Don DeLillo* 52). Branch confirms that the Warren Commission Report is insufficient to explain the assassination. It's more “the megaton novel James Joyce would have written if he'd moved to Iowa City and lived to be a hundred” (181). The Warren Report is so saturated with details that it leads the reader to no

conclusions as to what actually happened on that day (similar to Defoe's reading of Dampier). But if it does not answer the crucial question of who committed this crime, then the counterhistorian must start to ask what has been left out. The final result of the report, DeLillo tell us, is a lingering "sense that history has been secretly manipulated" (56).

Victims of trauma will often incessantly retell the tale of their trauma. With time, language itself becomes stubborn in its capturing of the trauma. This stubbornness comes from language being manipulated, for political purposes, to hide the event. The discourse of counterhistory tries to elicit some meaning out of the confusion. But for Branch, this confusion only frustrates him as he does not know how he can possibly attain a true understanding of what exactly occurred. And so "[t]he curator sends a special FBI report that includes detailed descriptions of the *dreams* of eyewitnesses following the assassination of Kennedy and the murder of Oswald" (*Libra* 441). The sources are not enough to reveal sufficient details to break into the minds of the people who are involved in the assassination (if Branch does in fact know who those people are). So the curator of the C. I. A. archive

begins to send fiction, twenty-five years of novels and plays about the assassination. He sends feature films and documentaries. He sends transcripts of panel discussions and radio debates. Branch has no choice but to study this material. There are important things he has yet to learn. There are lives he must examine. It is essential to master the data. (442)

Nicholas Branch has an epiphany at the end. He will never master the data of the assassination. It will come to swamp him, "[b]ut he persists, he works on, he jots his notes. He knows he can't get out. The case will haunt him to the end. Of course they've known it all along. That's why they built this room for him, the room of growing old, the room of history and dream" (445). A similar epiphany occurred to DeLillo – what his interviewer calls a "breakthrough" – in his composition of *Libra*. Many conspiracies remain as to who killed Kennedy (*Conversations with Don DeLillo* 63). Ironically, there is now so much data that the "true" history of Kennedy's assassination will probably never be known. DeLillo, sticking to his idea of inventing a language with which to release history, chose a different entry into this tainted record. This new path was by creating a vessel with which to enter the record and that

vessel can be understood as being the voice of Oswald (DeLillo and Oswald grew up together in a similar part of the Bronx, therefore DeLillo could do this convincingly). This became a keystone for the rest of the novel as

once I found Oswald's voice – and by voice I mean not just the way he spoke to people but his inner structure, his consciousness, the sound of his thinking – I began to feel that I was nearly home free. It's interesting that once you find the right rhythm for your sentences, you may be well on your way to finding the character himself . . . So the prose itself began to suggest not the path the novel would take but the deepest motivation of the characters. (*Conversations with Don DeLillo* 63)

Once DeLillo is able to write in the voice of Oswald, then the new counterhistory, the nascent discourse, of *Libra* begins. The language of Oswald becomes crucial to successfully engage with the remaining sources of the JFK assassination. For the bedrock of all experience, to DeLillo, is language: “Before history and politics, there's language” (*Conversations with Don DeLillo* 107). The representation of Oswald's consciousness, a zone normally outside of the concerns to historians, takes centre stage. This shift from historiography to language has enabled DeLillo to “fill in the gaps. The Kennedy assassination was an event in which there were missing perceptions . . . What I did was provide the missing narrative” (*Conversations with Don DeLillo* 162). DeLillo carefully read around the lacunae and then filled the vacuum – a historiographical vortex – with his language. And this is a language that is at times broken, at times melancholic and at times hysterical. At times he adopted the grammar of cinema and at times the still lines of portraiture or the microscopic detail of the Flemish masters.

Related to DeLillo's formulation of counterhistory and, following Foucault, is Christina Brooke-Rose's idea of the novel as palimpsest history. Brooke-Rose's ideas can be used to build upon those of DeLillo in order to understand what ultimate gains that counterhistory gives to its readers. Brooke-Rose also focuses on the writer's task in constructing a language that is rich with history. For Brooke-Rose, the novel's end point is beyond the domain of sources and interpretation:

The novel took its roots in historical documents and has always had an intimate link with history. But the novel's task, unlike that of history, is to *stretch our intellectual, spiritual and imaginative horizons to breaking point* (emphasis added). Because palimpsest histories do precisely that, mingling realism with the supernatural and history with spiritual and philosophical reinterpretation, they could be said to float half-way between the sacred books of our various heritages, which survive on the strengths of the faiths that they have created . . . and the endless exegesis and commentaries that these sacred books create, which do not usually survive one another, each supplanting its predecessor according to the *Zeitgeist*. (137)

As DeLillo found the record of Kennedy's assassination unhelpful to ascertain what exactly did occur on that traumatic day, he then invented a language with which to plug the gaps and build the narrative. But it's crucial that the starting point was the historical record. Palimpsest histories start with the sources but then use an invigorated language to stretch their reader's *horizons to breaking point*. Indeed, all palimpsests are reliant on an original text, even if in their writing that original text has become lost. Just like Dampier erasing the traces of violence in his text, just like the conspiracies surrounding the JFK assassination, the truth of what occurred has been hidden, but the trace of its removal lingers in the language and, here, within language, it can be played with, guessed at, exposed and made to exist within the reader's mind. The palimpsest history argues against a fixed reading of the past. Instead there are multiple and polyphonic readings. But always the writer keeps their eye on the prize: a surgical rupture of their reader's horizons.

7. A Case Study of the Australian Counterhistorical Novel: *The Roving Party* by Rohan Wilson

Using Foucault, DeLillo and Brooke-Rose, I will now perform a counterhistory and palimpsest history reading of Rohan Wilson's *The Roving Party*. This is an Australian historical novel that was published with much acclaim as the winning entry in the 2011 Australian/Vogel Literary Award. A review in *Wet Ink* focuses on how Wilson's "reconstructive imagination . . . reminds us of a dark and shameful moment in our history that is important not to forget" (Warrell 55). Geordie Williamson proclaims *The Roving Party* as "powerful in its prose and utterly original in its use of historic material" ("Riveting Tasmania Saga Continues"). In another article on Wilson, Williamson singles out

the language with which the author relates events that arrests the reader most. It is self-consciously archaic, comma-wary, a combination of fragments and rolling sentences that combine gruesome verisimilitude with hallucinatory flights . . . The style is renewed by the fresh world it is obliged to describe, and in doing so furnishes passages of graven elegance. ("Fearless on the Frontier")

An extract from *The Roving Party* shows this:

Further down the hill the Dharugs lead them upon a fire pit strewn about with possum bones and wood spirals where spears had been carved and hardened in the flames and rounds of breadroot had been cooked. The men sniffed at the leavings then ate timidly, picking over the bones for meat skerricks. In the trodden soil around the fire Black Bill read the tracks of children pressed in perfect detail of toe and arch, his gentle fingers feeling over the imprints. Then John Batman hounded them on by waving his weathered hat and they followed the black men where they led. (203)

For Williamson, "[w]hat grounds this lofty register is Wilson's command of the historical texture" and we can see how *The Roving Party* becomes a counterhistory as a "concoction of imagination and reality" ("Fearless on the Frontier"). "The roving

party is led by a man named John Batman, a real settler in the district who took part in some of the cruellest acts of frontier dispossession before using his wealth to found a settlement called ‘Batmania’ and we call ‘Melbourne’” (“Fearless on the Frontier”).

Wilson succeeds where Deverell and Chester fail in his portrayal of Aboriginal people. For Williamson, “at its best *The Roving Party* lends agency, dignity, even a tragic nobility to its Aboriginal protagonists. To see the European lust for possession – of land, of wealth, of men and women – reflected in their eyes is a humbling experience” (“Fearless on the Frontier”). Wilson’s capturing of this “lust for possession” gives his novel moral gravitas. It takes the reader far from the postmodern games of most contemporary fiction and sees, with historic certainty, the historical player’s moral failings. Wilson does not seek to rectify this mistake – only to show the festering psychic wounds of Australia.

Wilson has spoken of the difficulty of writing a historical novel about John Batman. After his initial draft of *The Roving Party*, he found that Batman was not to be the narrator of his nascent novel:

What the initial draft of *The Roving Party* has taught me was this: Batman was a tedious, banal, self-serving killer in the mould of a low-level *Einsatzgruppen* officer, or an Ottoman of the *Teskilat-I Mahsusa*. He was motivated by racial hate, and by ambition to become a great landholder, a great man. He was not the character I needed to guide me through the Tasmanian genocide. (“Winning the Vogel Can Change Your Life”)

In a similar vein, earlier drafts of “Horatio Dawn” showed the need to create a new narrator to guide the reader. To write a novel in the voice of William Dampier would mean to mimic his own tainted texts about Australia. Instead, a new character is required: the visionary Horatio Dawn. Wilson’s guide was the Aboriginal man, raised as a white man, named Black Bill, who

offered something more. Here was an Aborigine alienated from his birth culture, raised in the ways of hatred so common among frontier whites. An outsider, but a participant nonetheless. He had an ambiguity that was immediately compelling. (“Winning the Vogel Can Change Your Life”)

But what is the aesthetic and structural advantage of making a novel about the historical figure of John Batman without making him the narrator? Black Bill did exist but almost nothing is known about him; the slate is clean, or to use the ideas of DeLillo, counterhistory will be required to release him. *The Roving Party* is not so much *about* John Batman, as it is about another character's *experience* of John Batman. The historical figure of John Batman remains in history books, but Black Bill's experience of John Batman is to be found within *The Roving Party*. Wilson believes that "fiction is less about the past and more about the human experience of the past," and that experience is always fixed in language (qtd. in Dalley 138). This means that *The Roving Party* does not supplant or replace the various history books about John Batman. It provides knowledge, but this knowledge is of a different register – a different discourse, counterhistory and palimpsest – to that of history. For Wilson:

One simple truth is that the understanding of the past you get through fiction belongs to a different order of knowledge than the understanding you get through historiography. I find fiction useful because it allows room to *reimagine lost experiences* (emphasis added), even if those experiences are necessarily flawed, limited, and fictional. (qtd. in Dalley 138)

The space that his work opens up allows the reader to reimagine experiences. These are historical experiences that were never recorded and so have now been lost. Like DeLillo, Wilson is not ignoring the sources – he is reading around them to see what gaps are emerging, then filling in the blanks with his imagination and his language (although by now these two things have become fused together into a single entity). He does not strive for any tenets of realism. The language of *The Roving Party* is filled with archaic words and syntactical structures. It often recalls the mythic and biblical rhythms of Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian*. These manipulations of language signal to the reader that this is not a transposition of reality but, ironically, a revealing of how things "truly" were. Wilson believes that "the moment we believe fiction to be nothing more than a window into the past is the moment that we are at our most mystified" (qtd. in Dalley 139).

Wilson mentions the influence of Coetzee's little known and hard to find essay "The Novel Today" upon his own work. In this essay, Coetzee asserts that the

historian will subscribe to a certain methodology of historiography (a history of class, of sexuality, of cinema, of fashion, et cetera) and this decision will guide their writing. The theories that they accept, and those that they reject, will, in turn, dictate what they see and write about and what they dismiss as not important. Coetzee writes that:

[A] story is not a message with a covering, a rhetorical or aesthetic covering . . . They are not made up of one thing plus another thing, message plus vehicle, substructure plus superstructure. . . . Storytelling is not a way of making messages more – as they say – ‘effective’. Storytelling is another, an other mode of thinking. It is more venerable than history, as ancient as the cockroach. (“The Novel Today” 4)

The writing of *The Roving Party* starts with the few pithy traces of history remaining in the archives. But the material of John Batman is not what is most intriguing in the novel. It’s Black Bill who comes to the foreground within the story. (Similarly, the initial idea for a novel about William Dampier ended up being about Horatio Dawn. The character of William Dampier seemed resistant, if not just downright boring.) Wilson is adamant that the Black Bill that resides in his novel is his own creation. Wilson says “It seems probable that he actually existed, that he joined the roving party at Batman’s invitation, that he lived nearby to Batman, and that he married an Aboriginal woman named Catherine” (qtd. in Dalley 143). But that is indeed enough, if it’s not, indeed, preferable (just like DeLillo’s disappeared baseball). After all, Batman comes with pre-existing baggage. And a historian can take issue with what is inserted into the record. But a writer like Wilson can work with the thin details of Black Bill. The story of Black Bill is not an affront to previous histories of John Batman but an altogether different discourse. Coetzee makes the point

that history is not reality; that history is a kind of discourse; that a novel is a kind of discourse too, but a different kind of discourse; that, inevitably, in our culture, history will, with varying degrees of forcefulness, try to claim primacy, claim to be a master-form of discourse, just as, inevitably, people like myself will defend themselves by saying that a history is nothing but a certain kind of story that people agree to tell each other – that, as Don Quixote argued so

persuasively but in the end so vainly, the authority of history lies simply in the consensus it commands. (“The Novel Today” 4)

The novel appears to sit alongside history. To supplement history, without supplanting it, the novel will avoid the impulse to totalize control of the past. It is but one of many discourses that humans can construct that aim towards the past. But Coetzee’s quote begs the question of why an author should write stories set in the past at all? The discourse of the story or the novel does not aim to either prove a point or to present facts (this is another point where “Horatio Dawn” differs from the previous Dampier novels). Wilson tells us that the attraction of *The Roving Party* is that it aims to answer nothing and it makes no apologies for this lack:

Fiction has a built-in defence against the overreach of the historical method. That is, it cannot be made to mean one thing and one thing only, the way historiography must. It always refuses a final reading, a final closure. We read in contexts that authors can never anticipate and in ways that they can never foresee. We read allegorically, ironically, and subjectively. We knock holes in authority that authors have worked so hard to build. Their stories cannot stand up to the scrutiny that we apply. No story can ever stand up to this type of scrutiny because stories are not vehicles for historiographic accuracy, they are vehicles for human experience. (qtd in Dalley 141)

The answer that *The Roving Party* gives is outside of any assertion, argument, point or thesis. The answer lies in the aesthetic experience of the language and what occurs when this language embeds itself in the reader’s consciousness – releasing the hidden history. If *The Roving Party* does have a task, then it is one that begins with history – but it does not end there. It ends in the reader’s consciousness and provides some kind of rupture to allow a new historical experience to emerge.

Before finishing I'd like to return to the novel "Horatio Dawn" and connect it to the ideas explored in this exegesis. For this novel never set out to present on the experiences of William Dampier who, as this exegesis has shown, is a rather limited historical figure. "Horatio Dawn" starts in a mode that echoes Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, a Young Adult novel about Dawn as a young adult. And from here the novel slowly eases into different modes. The placement of Horatio Dawn as the main character (as well as other characters, especially Samantha) is, indeed, a conscious strategy to open up the narrative to other voices, enabling multiplicities. The transition to a picaresque/bildungsroman narrative further reinforces differing points of view with phantasmagoria via Dawn's visions enabling a refrain with Rimbaudian verve. To successfully transition to New Holland the novel switches into a mode of formal experimentation with prose poems. In these poems I sample various examples of archaic poetry. This radical shift to a new register is to avoid the tedious rendering of a long 17th century voyage from England to Australia. And here the disruptive layout and fragmented, elliptical utterances signals that the characters are entering a space that is about to rupture their very notions of reality. In New Holland Dampier, the supposed man of reason, loses his mind. But Dawn the visionary, and Samantha the forger, are able to respond to their immediate environment. Ultimately this is not a historical novel *per se* but a counterhistorical novel that seeks to include within its narrative what previous novels about William Dampier have wilfully ignored. To return to the DeLillo quote from this exegesis' opening paragraph "Horatio Dawn" and the novel's various theoretical underpinnings aim to connect to DeLillo's idea of writing towards "the whole picture, the whole culture" (*Conversations with Don DeLillo* 88). "Horatio Dawn" is an innovative and unique approach that has created a new kind of knowledge about historical fiction and First Contact.

8. Conclusion

This exegesis has examined the historiographical, theoretical and literary influences on the novel “Horatio Dawn”. It has argued that previous Dampier novels are lacking and shows how “Horatio Dawn” hopes to offer a new model of Australian historical fiction.

William Dampier is a fascinating figure whose life intersects with seventeenth century science, exploration and piracy. His two books that contain his impressions of Australia, *A New Voyage Round the World* and *A Voyage to New Holland*, influenced early understandings of Australia so much that it is a pity that those impressions were so skewed. For William Dampier was a violent man. He removed references to the violence in order to sterilise his texts and present himself as both an enlightened English gentleman, and also to hinder a court-martial against him. The influence of Natural Law Philosophy led him to downplay his contact with non-European people. Gaps in his tainted texts point to Dampier’s guilt in shooting Aboriginal people in a confrontation on the west coast of Australia. Further accounts have come to light of Dampier allowing sixty African slaves to freeze to death during a storm (Ritchie 161). I have shown his influence on English prose in the examples of Jonathan Swift and Daniel Defoe. As the first English subject to write about Aboriginal people, his influence stretched to the early colonists and beyond. Even so, as the HMS *Guardian* approached the east coast of Australia, Joseph Banks wondered if his gaze may indeed be blinkered by Dampier’s writings.

In the twentieth century, the life of William Dampier has provided rich material for several works of fiction. In 1960, Dijon Deverell published her novel *Recognition* and portrayed Dampier in the heroic mode as a man of the Enlightenment *par excellence*. Alan Chester followed by publishing *Brother Captain* in 1964 and, much later, *The Cygnet Adventure* in 1985. Both closely stuck to the model of *Recognition* although Chester, in his later work, displays a begrudging respect for the ancientness of Aboriginal civilisation. All three novels reveal a somewhat hagiographic relationship as Captain Dampier is portrayed as an enlightened man of reason, science and a true British gentleman. All three, when read today, come across as what Sebald would call “compromised”: both in a moral sense (they avoid a portrayal of the violence of Dampier) and an aesthetic sense (neither was doing

anything new with the novel form). What is needed now, in terms of writing about figures of the Enlightenment, is an inbuilt critique of that intellectual movement as Horkheimer and Adorno, Coetzee and others have done.

Michel Foucault's influence helps us to see how a counterhistorical approach to the sources reveals things that were purposefully hidden. Counterhistory allows us to expose the overriding violence in Dampier's life which was previously hidden away from public knowledge. By showing Dampier in this light, the idea of him as a "figure of the Enlightenment" slips away (or, indeed, the very idea of what it means to be enlightened is questioned). DeLillo seems to have adopted Foucault's idea of a counterhistory and used it for the writing of his own American historical novels. In *Libra*, the secret history of the Kennedy assassination is exhumed; in *Underworld*, the secret history of paranoia and nuclear weapons during the Cold War is revealed. DeLillo builds on Foucault by adapting his ideas around counterhistory and applying them to the American situation. He does this by identifying gaps in the American historical record and then filling those gaps with prose. So all the sensual and rich details will re-order the reader's perceptions of what has occurred in the past: the taste of food, ideas that are influencing people's actions, ideas that are making people blind, fucking, pissing, shitting, dancing and laughing. An Australian historical novel that achieves something similar is Rohan Wilson's *The Roving Party*. Drawing on Coetzee, Wilson does not see the two different disciplines of novel and history trying to usurp each other. They rely on and supplement each other as two different forms of knowledge. *The Roving Party* supplements history by providing primary experience of a historic period. History aims to factually capture the past and present it in all its details. A counterhistory palimpsest novel, however, has a different outcome: to "stretch our intellectual, spiritual and imaginative horizons to breaking point" (Brooke-Rose 137).

PART THREE: BIBLIOGRAPHY

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