

DIASPORIC LITERATURE

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On His Departure

Sep 4, 2009 06:10AM

You were departing, leaving me. As you walked away a sharp awareness came upon me. The world around me was merely a stage. I headed for the coffee shop in order to settle my feelings by doing something deliberate. Surrounded by people bustling with trays and animated chatter brought an everyday ordinariness to grasp.

I drank the coffee feeling a strong sense of aloneness. A familiar struggle started within me, one where I tell myself I must cope with being alone, alone I must be, alone from all these people surrounding me, a huge void that I must conquer and I summon all my strength.

At quarter to seven I hurried to the observation deck. You were in that odd looking capsule ahead of me. Mankind had set against me with metal and engines; they had made the power to separate you from me, pluck my soul and leave me spent and empty.

I watched the plane fly out. It was a rare, fine morning, the hills clearly defined against the blue sky, the air was fresh; a perfect day. A childhood chord pulled in me, a reflection of my first recollections of the splendour of early mornings.

I wondered how you felt, and hoped you weren't too tired to enjoy the excitement of flying. I wanted you to be free and happy, although I was lost. I tried to think of the exultation I would feel on your return, but I couldn't lose my empty feeling.

After so little rest before your departure, I returned home. I tried to sleep the afternoon away, but as I lay deep in my pillow I was saturated in thoughts of you. It was a hot day, one I would normally attack with zest. The birds were chirping and cicadas screamed in high pitched unison outside my window, all conspiring to keep me awake and hurting in my loss of you. I wanted sleep to overtake me, but my mind was as alert as a cat. I was revelling in picturing you, reliving every detail of our last night together and the few weeks we had known each other. I thought of the way you have of understanding me, relieving me of my nervousness with your calm reassurances, the manner in which you held my hand, guided me, and made me aware of my womanhood, of where I belong, of who I am.

The blue dress hangs there; I will always think of it as your dress, the dress my heart sang in.

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H.W. - A Lonely Man

Aug 23, 2009 06:44AM

I watch your intense gaze mirroring your emotions,
Feel a sorrow that life cannot always answer our deepest desires.

Wasted hours seem to flee us when our souls are yearning,
unfulfilled,

But days pass, and new consciousness arrives.

Aloneness can be treasured, not misused.

We are what time has made us,

What is present and past is now.

Something deep in me is casting my destiny,

And I am following alone.

Sometimes I glimpse fulfilment, overpowering in unerring joy,

I cannot help but follow without compromise

To find the essence of all truth - my God.

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Spirit of Old

Aug 23, 2009 06:35AM

Today is a giant before me,
Insurmountable, it seems,
With perils of hunger,
Visions of ingratitude,
Friends become foes,
And even the trees and nature unseen.
Where before they nurtured the soul,
Made each day a recall into splendour,
Of life ever changing. Now today my blood has run thin,
And cold is the wind of time.

But rising within a spirit of old,

Sensing past days,

Although in youth and strength before,

Now a determination of mind,

Summoning all the powers of intellect

Moulded by life's chiselled hand,

A sculpture placed before me,

A structure of the day itself

Already cast by me,

For I modelled this day with my own

Visions and labours,

So this is me, this day,

And this is where my challenge lies.

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George - A happening on an Australian beach

Aug 20, 2009 11:25AM

It was Sunday. People stood outside the church doors, passively chatting, smiling and generally exuding their clean, well-groomed ordered appearance; too well clothed, for the day shone hot, laying bare the cream brick building and the strip of green grass.

Dominique and Lisbeth searched the faces in the crowd of church goers. Jim was not among them. Lisbeth had hoped she might see him there. It was hard for her to accept that he had said they must part. She wanted to speak to him again.

They drove away from the church, passing gardens with sprinklers sparkling on fresh smelling lawns and lazy people, listless in the sun with no motive for movement.

They stopped the car outside Jim's house. He had been there, now a stillness remained like a life lived and finished. Yet, the eye perceived serene order and new life pulsed slowly on, unrelenting in the sureness of itself. Jim had been all to Lisbeth, now he had left her and she couldn't resist the impulse to be close to where she had known him.

To distract her, Dominique suggested they should drive on down to the sea. They arrived at the car park conscious of the heat, cars, and people with bare bodies walking in the sand, all stunned with the same purpose, to descend the cliff to the sea.

There were too many cars, then someone calling. Dominique turned to see a man gesticulating to her to take the car space next to his. She parked where he indicated. He came over to them, words tumbling out from a pure tongue and flawless body, light brown and fair under the crowning sun; light laughter in his voice and a plea too much to ignore. He needed them; as though they were part of the structure of the day itself; an element of nature which could no more be ignored than the sting of heat on the tan arm.

Dominique and Lisbeth left him and walked to the beach feeling their clothes hot on their bodies. They were grateful to change and feel the freedom of their swimsuits as they lay on their towels in the sand.

"Hullo, can I sit with you?" It was the young man from the car park.

"Yes, please do, join us." Dominique accepted his presence as though it had been predestined from the moment she first saw him.

"My name is George," he offered.

"I'm Dominique and my friend here is Lisbeth."

Lisbeth smiled briefly and retreated into her book. Jim had given it to her. It was the nearest thing to bring her to a presence of her lost love. Even though he had left her he was still deeply entrenched in her soul. She escaped to him in her thoughts.

Dominique concentrated her attention on George. He was young and beautiful in his perfection. He seemed happy just to be with her. He lay on his stomach with his head buried in his arms, looking up occasionally to smile and make sure that sudden comfort he had found was still there, solid and real, not a dream to disappear from his consciousness to leave him more sorely without. Then he would sink back happily assured.

After a time he ran into the sea with Dominique, not touching her, but staying near, always turning back to see if she was there. Then he dived his head under water and come up with his face gleaming, the sun shining on his wet skin. He looked at her like a child who wanted approval of his deed. She met his spirit and loved him as a beautiful pure thing, as with the sea and sky around him.

Later, they lay on the sand to dry, the sun soaking into their bodies while they sang to the radio music beside them.

Then he told Dominique that he was originally born in Egypt and that his mother was French and his father Greek. He said he spoke five languages and had left Greece to come to Australia accompanied by his childhood girlfriend and her parents. He loved that girl, she had been happiness to him. Every moment he had lived for her, she was his very breath of life; every street he walked was for her and his laughter came through her. He had been going to marry her; now she was gone. As surely as she had been there breathing and loving him, she had left him.

He related his story to Dominique with passion, the words wrung from his heart. Then he buried his head in his arms. She didn't speak. In the moment, she felt his burden heavily upon her. She stared at his fair hair and wanted to comfort him and share his agony, yet she had only just met him; did she have the right?

He stayed still for what seemed to her an age. Then as naturally as the flow of the tide she reached out and stroked his head.

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dive his head under water and come up with his face gleaming, the sun shining on his wet skin, and he would look at her like a child who wanted approval of his deed. She met his spirit and loved him as a beautiful pure thing, as with the sea and sky around him.

They lay on the sand to dry, the sun soaking into their bodies, and they sang to the radio music beside them.

They talked a little. He was from Egypt. His mother was French, his father Greek, and he spoke five languages. It was three years since he left Greece accompanied by his childhood girlfriend and her parents. He told Dominique, he loved that girl, she had been happiness to him. Every moment he lived for her, she was his very breath of life; every street he walked was for her and his laughter came through her. He was going to marry her; now she was gone. Surely, as she had been there breathing and loving him, she had left him.

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He stayed still for what seemed to her an age. She reached out and stroked his head as she watched the steady flow of the tide.

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A Visit to Mykonos

Aug 13, 2009 11:15AM

The last remnant from the bottle of complimentary shampoo from Hotel Acrogialli slid through my hair, the final tangible link to the mythical Greek Island of Mykonos. My heart ached to return to that Aegean diamond in the sun, where dazzling white buildings clustered around the rocky shores.

There can be nothing quite like the experience of sitting in the new light of day beside the beach on an Aegean Isle eating freshly baked Greek bread with crispy bacon and coffee. There is a certain kind of magic in the atmosphere. It could be the light, or the fishing boats moored at the jetty, or the white, white buildings jutting up from the headlands, gleaming in the sun against the blue sea and sky. Or perhaps it is the mixture of the Greek language, the smiling waiters, and the abundance of delicious food which promotes a sense of bliss to those first beset by the charm of Mykonos.



A ten minute bus ride from the hotel to the main shopping area took me past flat roofed houses with blue painted doors and shuttered windows. They differed little apart from having distinctive sculptured chimneys and earthenware pots that graced their stone terraces.

The shops were mostly converted houses in a maze of laneways, each bringing endless fascination. It was easy to think I was lost, but all paths led somewhere, and eventually I always found my bearings. There were many jewellery shops, boutiques, art galleries, Greek craft and religious icons as well as outdoor restaurants and fruit stalls. Shopping was a delight to the eye along these white laneways where residents appeared to live at ease among the throngs of tourists. Amidst it all a man was leading his donkey which carried four big baskets on its back laden with vegetables and bright colourful flowers. As the donkey quietly clip clopped up the hill the flowers looked lovely contrasted against the backdrop of white stone walls. Everyone seemed relaxed and at one with the beauty around them.

The town pelican posed graciously to have his photo taken when perchance I met him coming around a corner.

Trees with vermilion and deep pink flowered branches overhung the doorways of smart boutiques, the intensity of colour once again striking against the white walls. An old lady sat peacefully on her patio framed by bright red climbing roses, as she watched the passing crowd. Greek Orthodox priests added interest to the flow as they strode purposefully by wearing black gowns, high hats and large crosses which hung to their waist.

The island is reputed to have 365 chapels. They are used for daily prayer. Candles are constantly alight in these chapels. Perhaps a deep spiritual awareness moulds the temperament of the Greek people whom I found to be friendly and affable, bound in their cultural traditions.

Greek salads of lettuce and the sweetest tomatoes imaginable, cucumber, olives and feta cheese served with fresh crusty bread and white wine became my luncheon ritual.

Newly caught squid hung out to dry outside the seafood restaurant on the forefront waiting to be turned into the most tender calamari dishes imaginable.

"Shirley Valentine" was filmed on the island of Mykonos. George, the Manager of the hotel where some of the scenes were filmed, appeared in the movie and was only too pleased to be photographed with me. Shirley, the protagonist in the movie, was

a bored English housewife, taken for granted by her husband and daughter, until one day she left for a holiday in Greece leaving only a note on the refrigerator door, saying "Gone to Greece." It changed her life as indeed it has added a new dimension to mine.

Greek history became alive after I took the half hour ferry trip across to the Island of Delos where Cleopatra herself had had a holiday home. Here I saw the ruins of a once splendid city where trade and wealth had flourished in the 6th century before Christ. It was an overwhelming experience to actually see buildings with the original terrazzo floors and columns still standing and walk the steps up to the amphitheatre where the dramas of the day had been played out. .

I will return to the Greek Islands one day to explore with ravenous interest the historical sites and again feel the magic of the Aegean and like most of the populace hire a moped to take me around.

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MUSING ABOUT ART

Aug 11, 2009 09:29AM

MUSING ABOUT ART

At Federation Square a new centre for the Arts opened in the City of Melbourne, Australia. The population watched the progress of this uniquely designed complex being built, the structure looking rather like a child's meccano set with assorted triangle shapes slotting into place. Most of the public were horrified as it continued to grow. Comments abounded like, "How awful, it does nothing for the area, so grey looking, and imagine building something like that opposite the lovely old St. Paul's Church building." However, now the building is completed and people are adjusting to the change they cannot help but be impressed by the innovative architecture. The interior is ideal for the painting, photographic galleries and the Moving Image Centre it houses.

I visited Federation Square and strolled through the gallery dedicated to early Australian Art. I was made very conscious of the importance of the artist as I looked at work after work which had been diligently painted so that I now had the benefit of viewing it over a hundred years later. I was very moved by these paintings which depicted scenes around Melbourne which gave me a glimpse of the era of my great grandparents and made me conscious of my Australian Heritage.

Among the paintings was a full length study of a woman. She wore gloves and stood very erect in a fashionable long dress; a good looking woman whose strong character was reflected in her face. She looked very correct. It was a superb portrait and I wasn't surprised to see the artist who painted it was Tom Roberts, one of Australia's greatest artists. It was painted in

1887 and was a study of "Madame Pfund" whom I learned was the Headmistress of Oberwyl Ladies College.

I was elated to find I was standing in front of the very lady who would have known my own grandmother as she had attended Oberwyl College. I was suddenly getting insight into my grandmother's world. She would have known this woman in the painting before me.

Later, when I returned home, I thought about the possibilities. Did the artist, Tom Roberts, have an association with the school? A friend or lover of Madame Pfund perhaps? Or was Tom Roberts just commissioned for the painting? Or did he teach art at the school? Maybe he taught my grandmother!

These questions crossed my mind as I have two very special paintings which were painted by my grandmother when she attended Oberwyl when she was seventeen years of age. They were painted in 1899. One is a portrait of an Indian Princess and the other a portrait of an old salt with a pipe in his mouth. Both paintings are exceptionally good works of art even though my grandmother was only seventeen when she painted them. She didn't continue painting as she married young and brought up a family as women did in those days. I am sure had she continued she would be famous today.

The sight of "Madame Pfund" had such a dramatic effect on me, it sparked off an intense desire to further my genealogical pursuits. As I pursue dates and places, internet sites and engage in conversations with older family members, I weave a pattern of events which take me into an intriguing world of my ancestors.

Now, when people tell me they don't like the look of the exterior of the Federation Square Arts Complex, I tell them, "Don't worry, you will be amazed, there is magic inside."

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THE PIANIST

Jul 28, 2009 06:03AM

I came from the outside world,
Entered your world, for one brief moment
Felt the impact of your glance, your smile;
Knew for that moment in time there was you and me only,
Acceptance was felt, two souls reaching.
I went away, thought of you in the dark hours of the night,
Wondered why you engaged my curiosity,
And why I was compelled to return to your side.
The night was warm, the atmosphere inviting,
The red velvet lounge, elegant grand, and you.
Yes, you.
You sat with fingers flowing over the white keyboard,
Harmony of motion, one with life, you felt the ebb and flow.

**Shyness overcame me, I dare not trespass on your ground
For fear you may reject me,
Was I just one more face, or was it real with you?
My being would not cease to call you,
I tried to ignore your presence;**

Then you stopped playing and came over to me.
My soul rejoiced to find you were more than I had hoped,
So close to me, to recognise your soul in those few words,
Existing, being for my soul to meet.
I did not want to question worldly states, your wife,
Your life, your wage,

There was only now, a glimpse of life's fulfilment felt.

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PUSSY WILLOW TREE

Jul 22, 2009 03:36AM

For months I have watched you,
Leafless, with winter upon you,
Yet, you indestructibly stood there,
Giving me hope with each new leaf
Appearing under the spring sun.
You became a force in my life,
Your aged branches overhanging my door,
You spoke of a past age when you were planted
In the large grounds of a white mansion.
You grew strong and watched a generation go by.
Then they built a wall by your side;
The lawn you had graced was too valuable now.
But you grew to the side,
And spread your branches to my door.
Your companions - the birds,
Found their home in your boughs,
Bringing music and life in their call.
Now you have proven your strength of survival,
And cast your beauty for me to behold,
A stern reminder of nature the essence,
You must fall.

I will remember when you stood tall,
Overhanging my door.

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