

CANBERRA

Dylan rode a Norton too
but didn't look quite the same as you guys do
tearing down the Canberra circular highways
showing gleaming pride of city
in reinforcing order,
because if the state doesn't
it would be chaos.
And we can't have that.

There was art and it was a festival.
Biting cold, concrete bed,
numb hands, numb feet, numb butt,
cool hat.
Gotta like that.

Moving together across grass oval,
thick blue line,
measured steps and menacing.
Usual wait, usual charge.

We were the Dickie birds
Peter gone, Paul gone,
Sitting on the wall gone.
Brought low by belly punch –
had a hunch that was coming.
Never mind, wipe your face
slip through bush finding safe place
to watch as the movie unfolds.

Noting the vigour of each arrest
the structured efficiency of tie up and despatch
the following of protocol (or not)
the securing of pasture by parameter patrol.

Noting the warrior stance
the celebratory smiles
the preening for cameras.
Then the public thanks
from government
to the gainfully employed.

It might have been chaos
if we reached a street.
And we can't have that.

BRISBANE

We milled at the Tower, quiet mood of discontent
unease growing with the sunset.
A vigil not a march,
expecting an easier night but a late one.
Groups shift and grow
Listening for sounds and clues,
cues to unwrap
a preordained parcel of surprises.

But crowds such as this
are intensely aware
there
are always consequences.

Solemn and serious, not wild and unruly.
Vigil not march
Crowd not mob
Protest not riot
Song not shout
Peace not war
Love not fear
(By the way ... agitated not paid).
Freedom not segregation, betrayal, contempt.
Black rights not crazy mangling charge at touch of night.

Tense strong shoulder lines strung together
Impenetrable enforcers of whose truth.
Was football more important than a will to be free?
Than a Senator's plea, than Brady's prayer?
Apartheid so worthy of protection here?

Grass ground, tall treed, steamed heat
The line let go.
You guys were big,
big and badged with numbers removed,
Fierce not friendly.
And you charged us?

This collage of chaos
Running for life, stopping for friends,
looking across moving shadows and huddled shapes,
raised arms and muffled cries.
Don't go there.

Steep slopes, losing grip
emerge at edge and fall down wall
to lighted path and wider skies.
Not comprehending their anger
bewildered by their logic
stunned by their stupidity.

Black fella business
White fella madness.
Ghosts of long time past,
old park dreaming
rose that night.

But this violent protection of law and order
is woven into Queensland's perennial quest
for some holy sense of difference.

It was night, it is history;
the third witness.

PARLIAMENT HOUSE

No morning hangover at Parliament House
just stern and unrepentant purity.
Embracing citadel of truth logic
unflinching zeal,
immense appeal to popular taste
for unquestioning placidity.

Not to be
opposed by contradictory positions
shifted by subversive currents
disrupted by inconvenient others
challenged by society's left overs
changed at any cost.

This was to be carefully cultivated,
properly contextualised,
consolidated from the exalted streamline
of the Premier's greater good.
Accept the authority of those who know best.

But there had to be a witness statement
for the injured and arrested.
Some voice to protest protest's dismemberment.

Gathering outside the House
numbers swelling,
yelling because we were hurting.
Our show of force met
with horses ... of course.

First time I ever thought of horses as beasts.
Their hair so clearly defined in my mind
with black booted rider's kick.

Hard core push and shove
Squashed into iron fence
Screaming disbelief
Hard to breath
Fear in the air, take care
she's smaller than you are
and she's in trouble.
Falling, shaken, limping home.

Definitely football not cricket
team tasting blood and liking it.
Nuisance not tolerated,
pests to be swatted.
No flies on Joh.

TOOWOOMBA

Daring to challenge football sacred ground
Declaring territorial war.
Fenced off, framed out
Frosty air, frozen stares.
Watch your back,
tension crackling atmosphere,
daggers drawn.
Recipe for minced meat
Scones broken on Pumpkin Street

About boundaries but this wasn't a wicket
About power but this was an over display,
Over policed
Over vigilant
Over before anything too scarily serious started
– a sensible decision.

Except of course, for Will and Dan ... again
Look after the dog.

CODA

Shout for justice, shout for truth
Shout for the sins of systemic abuse.
Cry for Jimmy, Cry for Neil and Dan.
Cry for Carla, Chris, Barbie, Liz and Ann.
This aching
It was intensely personal.

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