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'Show defiance' could have been the motto for the Australian football team as it faced off the Italian team in forty-degree German heat. Is it defiance to paint your face several colours and wear a frizzy wig? It was one of those rare moments when life is a play and you're in it—playing instead of working—the ultimate defiance! What made Paris in May '68 seem so radical was the call to defy routine, defy authority, read poetry instead of going to work.

Productivity is down while the World Cup is up. Our eyes are off the main game and fixated on a smallish ball. Juggling for space amongst the colours and leaping men, the ads for flat-screen TVs, cars and sports drinks—all now permanently camping in our heads—are niggling reminders that we have to act. Spectatorship has its virtues (is it the same as reading—a writer can't exist without a reader; Sport needs us). But while we loll in Pleasantville, moving sporadically into Excitement land, someone else is out there acting. On the world stage. Game fixing in Italy, trying it on to fix any institution with life in it. In Australia things are being quietly stitched up. Stitching up the numbers. Quietly locking doors and removing keys, quietly shutting down Senate Inquiries, closing down Question time, removing Speaker's rights.

I have some questions. To what greater or lesser degree are we individuals or connected beings? How do we stand outside the family or the culture we are a part of? Which thoughts or actions are our own? Where do our responsibilities begin and end?

Today I've been preoccupied with my friends' struggles. I've visited people and cooked them food. I've put my work aside to be with them. As I drive across Sydney I dream of arriving at the bottom of the long list that reels through my head, in and out of dreams, new items attaching themselves to the bottom without the least encouragement. Friends tell me that if you ever reach the end of the list your life might be over. I try to make friends with the list, to humour it, entice it through a doorway that leads nowhere, but it's a wily list, it's seen these moves before. It's having none of it. It reasserts its rightful place at the forefront of my mind. The list is the antithesis of play. It asks for responsible action; no daydreaming required. I seek out fun to defy its rule, but the list is waiting for me, longer than ever. At night, in the dark, the list is bolder, repetitive, urgently thrusting itself through hairline cracks it has prised open. The list takes up occupancy rights in new corners. But I've learnt a few tricks too. Reading poetry is defiance. Once I picked some violets growing around an abandoned set of steps on an autumn afternoon. On a winter's afternoon I sang old Beatles songs with my daughter's friends. I've reorganised my life to make each day a new one. I like it like that. I can leave now and watch the football at midnight. That'll keep the pesky list quiet in the Zombie hours before dawn. I'll add some items to the end of the list tomorrow as penance.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Cassi Plate.*