



Source: Tim Butcher, 'Jews and Muslims unite against gay rally', *Telegraph*, London, *New York Times* in Sydney *Morning Herald* online, 08/11/06.

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These three locations I will give you.

Location: New Street, Brisbane, a hotel. I prepare my room and have the camera set-up in front of the dying afternoon light. I can film my own bio-pic by using the hotel mirrors. In the distance, the city is made up of late-modern high-rise and I zoom into the LED clock that is the acme of the Suncorp Building and also tells the weather. It says 07.07.06 and it flashes 5.48PM and to complete the sequence: 18 degrees. It is turning to night and the bats are coming out and flying through the buildings.

Location: New Street, Hobart. I'm in my room and prepared to stay awake all night. I am on my knees, on the mattress, chin on the window sill and I'm prepared to wait however long it takes, with my eyes transfixed on the first neon billboard I have ever known. My window view is an enormous beer glass that fills up with yellow neon strips, crowned by pulsing white bulbs for bubbles, and once the bubbles burst and play for almost a minute, the whole neon beer drains by some cosmic force, in a compelling sequence of empty and full, empty and full. I watch it until the light burns holes in my eyes and I think I can see Jesus.

Location: New Street, London. I am in the room and preparing to join the city. The river hits the side of the building and I can hear a tidal hush-hush. Out my window, I can see the early morning sun reflected in the Gherkin, the proud glass tower of the East End; louder than St Paul's or any of the turrets from earlier centuries that mark the river's edge. I stand naked in the room and a goose flies straight down the middle of the Thames, at a touchable distance from the pane of glass.

Back to Hobart. I had come across the story of Joan of Arc at Primary School and her extra-auditory ability struck me as admirable, even better, as all-powerful. She was a figure I could truly believe was next to God and I wanted to be called to duty too, just as she had been. I wanted to inherit the same ferocity of justice she held to, the ability to hold fast and tell the truth no matter what the consequences were for me or her, I wanted to be spoken to by God. So I used the beer glass neon as my point of focus and I would irradiate my retina, staring at the light all night until a vague bearded figure might be seen, bathing in the froth of the beer glass, waving to me. I would sometimes be satisfied when I felt a presence—whom I wanted to be Jesus rather than God—for I had no image for God. I desired an epiphany, and not just once, but every night. The neon beer delivered this to me, night after night, filling up with light and emptying out.

The hotel in Brisbane was a place where my true middle-aged self was captured. The location, the time and date had a heavy certainty and the bright LED clock counted the beats. For the past few years I had described my life as one conducted in blindfolds. I was in Brisbane on an 'artists camp' and had experienced a manufactured

epiphany whilst walking through the bush with a bunch of nervous campers. All 20 of us had been blindfolded with black cotton sashes during a walk that was part of some sort of art training. At the end of a set of physical tasks we were asked to inscribe one word on a piece of paper. I wrote 'travel' and from here we were instructed to make our next piece of performance. I had very little notion of what to do, but wanted to return to my hotel room as soon as possible. What I did with this self instruction was to make a bio-pic with a haiku poem and a video camera. Well, it was not a strict haiku and it was also a shaky camera. I knew there was a spoof lurking behind my earnest composition and thought of a million middle-aged women, watching over cities from their hotel rooms.

IN A ROOM
IN A CITY
HIGHER THAN
A SATELITE...

OH YES!

UNPACK WOMAN
DRAG THIS BODY
INTO
NEW STREET

Finally in someone else's room in London was the place where I saw Joan of Arc again. The room was full of my suitcases and a few bits of tech stuff, books and someone else's worktable. It was early morning and I had only been in the city a few days, when I lent out the window and witnessed the miracle at the belly of the river. The Thames, so dense and brown, had a piece carved out of it at low tide, so I could see the muddy bottom, steeped in the debris of people; an old washing machine, pipes, tattslotto tickets, tyres and teeth. Everything is in this river. When I lent out the window, I looked upon an old neon that had ground up on the shore, striped, unlit of course, with burst and broken bulbs for froth and the armature holding all the pieces together like a crown. There was the neon beer sign, the one that had held me in a thrall and caused Joan and Jesus to dance at the back of my eyes in Hobart, submerged in the muddy banks of the Thames.

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Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Caitlin Newton-Broad.