



Source: Paul McGeough, 'Leave it all behind and you'll live', *Sydney Morning Herald online*, 16/12/06.

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Writer/s: [Tim Wright](#)

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When I was a kid I loved it when, perhaps because someone was moving rooms or for some other reason, a nice big mirror was lying around the house, propped up against a wall or a doorway, unattached to a wall or a chest of drawers, bevelled decoratively at the edges or cut at sharp right-angles, usually rectangular, and I would pick it up and lay it down on the carpet and lean over it, making instantly a pool which I might languorously slide into, a silver hole in the lounge room floor I could escape through, the floor into the ceiling.

An elderly man and woman are talking in Greek on the platform. I understand them completely and not at all. They are catching up; they could be sister and brother from the way he doesn't look at her but instead off into the distance, and she looks at him devotedly as he swings a line of beads on a string around one finger until the string comes to the end, pauses for a few moments, then swings them back in the opposite direction. Their language is like all the bits of sound that an English tongue doesn't pay attention to, all the offcuts, the middle sounds, the ends made into beginnings and the beginnings made into ends.

Another woman on the train must be in her eighties. Her shoes are the colour of a television the moment after it is turned off, her legs are like thin stakes driven into the floor, black stockings and a green and black striped skirt, cross-hatched so sections of stripes go off in different directions, a prize op shop find. A few tissues are folded up in one hand, a handbag and a shopping bag sit next to her. She has a gossamer, apple green scarf wrapped around her throat, a broad-brimmed hat, and plastic-rimmed sunglasses with over-sized circular frames.

When I get off the train the first thing I notice is the sweet smell of a clove cigarette; I turn back to see a man

covertly holding one behind his back. Inside a café a woman carefully pours a glass of water. I turn a corner and enter the suburbs, where the nature strips are plump rectangles of buffalo grass, and the front lawns jungles of tomato vines, lettuces and carrots, and there is no one on the streets and the distant sound of lawnmowers, the distant sound of lawnmowers.

I turn onto the next main road and out of the maze of suburban streets and there is a burnt-out laundromat and a hand-painted sign titled MAN SEEKING WORK and two giant billboards big enough to be taken in in a second by eyes in fast moving cars and posters wheatpasted to the wooden boards put up around a construction site, the same poster repeated over and over, posters glued over other posters until a hard papier mache husk is formed, sedimentary layers of recent history. Squarely over the centre of these posters for upcoming albums and tours and Hollywood movies are white rectangles obscuring everything except for a small frame of the poster beneath. Blank canvasses. I wonder who did this, then realise that as much as I like the idea of a renegade group with no message other than the 'clearing' of information, the pruning back of the overgrown visual environment in the city, it doesn't much matter who did it.

What is tilted at ninety-degrees to the ground becomes contested space, and what's turned outwards to the flows of pedestrians and drivers with quick roving eyes gets crammed with huge letters and images so to walk through it is like walking through a theme park. On a brick wall in a back lane as the train stops, the scraps of coloured spraypaint are like hearing another language.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Tim Wright.*