



Source: Suzanne Goldenberg, 'Eager recruit goes on trial for refusing to fight', *Guardian in The Age*, 04/02/07.

Tags: [animals](#), [corporeality](#), [home](#), [plants](#)

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There is a tree outside my balcony. It stands close enough for me to touch its leaves, its branches and anything that nests in it. Its leaves are shaped like ox tongue. At night, during summer, bats come to eat and make noise and couple, fight and defecate on the tiled floor below. In the pool area to be exact, near the seat next to the barbeque to be even more exact.

At night, during summer I sweat a lot. I make noise, and couple, fight and defecate on the tiled floor below. I blame it on the party animals who live directly on the floor above me, and the drug addicts who live directly on the floor below me, and even on the care taker who lives directly high on the roof top, looking out ahead taking care of the building. I manage to evade him, whenever I feel stupid and do stupid things. He is always stumped as to where the shit comes from. But he doesn't mind. He likes to clean. He is paid to clean. I wonder if he's clean in his private life.

The caretaker cleans the property every day. The pool, the corridors, the laundry room, the elevator, the basement, the carpark, the gardens, the mailroom and even the outside area, before anyone can even enter the property. To enter, one walks in from the street where one is greeted by a bridge that hangs over a steep drop where the carpark lies. There, one comes before a grill door that is partnered with an intercom. A pad of buttons labelled with numbers, one with the letter 'C' and one with the image of a bell. To get into one of the apartments, one enters the number of the unit required and then presses the bell, and if one answers and buzzes you in, the door opens. So you enter, you walk towards your nominated cubicle where you may or may not be offered a glass of lemonade. Lemonade is sweet in the summer, even without the lemons.

To enter my unit, you enter the following number...No, I won't tell you the number of my unit, because that would be an invasion of privacy. And I like my private parts. I treat them well, and they are grateful for it. Leave me alone, while I watch television.

The building (or, as my partner likes to call it, 'a machine for living') is one of many designed by Harry Seidler, a famous architect of Sydney, although originally not from Sydney. He is now dead and is buried somewhere in the city. My apartment building is called, 'Aquarius', named after an entrepreneur whose star sign was Aquarius. It is placed on the street number of 50 Roslyn Gardens, in Elizabeth Bay situated in the eastern suburbs of Sydney. It has been placed here for a while, well at least since the

1960's. The tree is much, much older. Next to it, 'Aquarius' looks very unbecoming, like a modern jail built for the 70's soap serial, *Prisoner*. I have a fond memory of the 70's soap serial, *Prisoner*. My mother was quite fanatical about it. The tree looks very intentional, looks purposeful and stoic. The bats can see it, I can tell, that's why they make so much noise. The tree is not a machine. It is what it is though, it's very arrogant that way.

In my apartment, I live with my partner of four years (I'm very arrogant that way), and we share every inch of it. It is sometimes too small, and at other times, too wide. We can manage to fit our furniture in in many ways, sometimes it looks good, most of the time it looks awkward.

At six in the evening, the news comes on and so do the bats. They both bring stories of what's happened, what's happening and what is not happening that should be happening. They both know so much, that I sometimes find it hard to choose which one to listen to first. I mostly end up listening to the bats for fear that if I do not, they may attack me and inject me with an awful blood-borne virus. There was an article on the news about it last winter, when it was cold and they weren't there. I don't live in constant fear though. Because that would be paranoid.

Today is a Sunday. A day of rest, in my machine for living. I might write a letter, or go for a swim. Or meet one of the many strangers who lives next to this tree that stands outside my balcony—that stands outside all our balconies—the party animals, the drug addicts and even the caretaker who lives high on the top floor. I might buy some new clothes. I'm hearing loose, light fabrics is all the rage these days, it's very becoming for an aspirational person such as myself. I might let some hair grow this summer, in amongst the sweating and the sometime defecation over the balcony. I might collect mail, not even my mail, but the body corporate's.

There is a tree outside my balcony. It stands close enough for me to touch its leaves, its branches and anything that nests in it. Its leaves are shaped like ox tongue. It looks good for a tree house. It looks good for the beach. I hate the beach. I don't like sand. I do like the sea at sunset. It makes me think that all things are possible, that I can do anything, that to dream is not a pointless exercise, despite a boyhood of enforced family barbeques.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Brian Fuata.*