



Source: Michael Oakey, 'Mummy's boy comes out of the coffin to show true face', *Telegraph, London*, AFP in *Sydney Morning Herald online*, 06/11/07.

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It's almost impossible to keep up with what's going on. Some of my generation, now mostly in front of screens in offices in the so-called West, share a collective memory of a New York pop artist who noted, 'In the future there will be so much going on that no one will be able to keep track of it'. My psychic need to merge electronic images suggests the pop artist performed a video duet with a globally-known cartoon avatar who mumbled, 'I used to be hip, until they changed what it was'. I am informed by an item in a section called 'In the News' on the Yahoo homepage that there was an 80s revival recently, but it is over now. I register that the current featured image of singer, Chris Brown whose new number one hit is entitled 'Hot, Hot' is honouring the sideways cap and big white plastic-rim shades of Flavor Flav from the 'politically charged' Public Enemy, circa 1991, but he seems more sinister (because he is more knowing and cheerful) and does not have gold-capped teeth. Somewhere else, right now, people are sending emails to a service I am still subscribed to (but never check) called Constant Swapping which allows for the free trading of old sofas for old kitchen appliances and so on. I have 111 new emails and will never open them because it takes too long—more than 5 minutes—to decide if I should swap anything I own for something once owned by someone else. In the meantime, I am reminded by a sponsored announcement on my phone that 'constant change demands constant update'. Rain punctures the dust outside. Air conditioning makes vertical plastic strips shake in an 'erotically charged' way. I use the landline to call the helpdesk and am told the support staff are busy. I'm advised to please hold. I am assured the support staff will be with me as soon as an officer is available. Rachmaninov, full orchestra. Pause. World of overlapping pauses, constant shifts in speaker position. A door opens. The yellow T shirt signifies we're in a 'consultative' phase of staff coercion. 'Uh, you're on the phone.' [Miming] 'Call you back.' Thumb and little finger across right ear, waggly gesture, eyebrows rising like fog in a valley. Sure. Martial drums and static. On hold until the queue mambos forward. Piano and French horn. Crescendo. Small grainy gap. Beautiful burst of static. Am now in conversation with Miles, an 'officer'. My visual field is taken up by an image of 6 'baby Harlequin bugs' with their spider-like legs tangled over a neatly snipped green shoot. When I switch my vision to manual 'eye-lid' setting I can see a big insect party. Orange and black thoraxes dancing. 'In the future everyone's house will be a total entertainment centre'. Miles asks, 'have you tried to download anything this morning?' I continue the conversation but am now spurred into thoughts of hunger which are bisected by

concern for women in southern Malawi who must walk 1 kilometre each morning for clean water. Through an on-line fund I am contributing monthly payments to a well for their village. After reading a (possibly inaccurate) Hollywood blog I have estimated the money spent on catering costs for the recent Andrew Dominik-directed, Brad Pitt-produced film, *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford* totals around \$300,000. This money could provide wells for 1000 villages in Malawi. I realise it is a banal comparison which I intend to forget because I'm seeing the film on Friday. I encourage Miles to have a nice weekend and we part as good friends with an option to catch up later on Facebook. From here on hunger really kicks in and I order some food from Satang Thai Takeaway which promises that none of its food has M.S.G. While waiting for the food I pull out a book which has been in my cupboard for around 20 years. A 'theorist' writes about a Calvin Klein commercial: 'In this 'twentysomething' generation, there is little to suggest an 'interiority'...Rather these blank screen faces, virtually interchangeable [are] subject to the 'absolute proximity, the total instantaneity of things'. I put the book away, brush the dust off my plants which include something called a Mother-In-Law's Tongue and then walk outside to pick up my food. On the way back to the office I eavesdrop on a group of five Korean teenagers who are debating the merits of a grey hatchback car. It rains some more and I enjoy the sensation of getting wet when the sun is still out. Cradling my food, I walk with a small group of children who enter my building by swiping their cards across a reflective strip of black plastic. I smile for no particular reason (other than I am still alive) and rub my left elbow which has lately produced some of the most exquisite pain I have experienced. When I get back to work I make some diary entries. I make a note to phone someone. Later I will enter some work in a competition. I will plan a break in Indonesia when the weather improves. I will read about the 'suppression of terror' raids and arrests in Ruatoki, Wellington and Auckland on the TV3 website. As the memories get stirred up, I recall the pop artist wore big pants, that we danced the same way that he did and we thought he was funny in a deadpan sort of way. I remember the mood of the times—they were supposed to be 'nihilistic'. Another line he sang (or actually spoke) filters back into my thoughts: 'In the future water will be expensive'. Barring the usual interruptions I promise to get ahead of schedule. I will stay in touch with as many people as I can. I make a small resolution to keep up, as far as possible, with the news.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Brent Clough.