

# Feel Free to Look Around\*

## The Secret Life of the Street

Susan Murphy<sup>1</sup>



Because the study of the way is like this, walls, tiles and pebbles are mind.... At this time a wall crumbling away allows you to study the ten directions.

- Dogen Kigen, *Body-and-Mind Study of the Way*

Dragons see water as a palace, or a pavilion... Now when dragons and fish see water as a palace, it is just like human beings seeing a palace. They do not think it flows. If an outsider tells them, "What you see as a palace is running water," the dragons and fish will be astonished, just as we are when we hear the words, "Mountains flow". Nevertheless, there may be some

dragons and fish who understand that the columns and pillars of palaces and pavilions are flowing water.

- Dogen Kigen, *Mountains and Rivers Sutra*

As for towns and cities - they are (to those who can see) old tree trunks, riverbed gravels, oil seeps, landslide scrapes, blowdowns and burns, the leavings after floods, coral colonies, paper-wasp nests, beehives, rotting logs, watercourses, rock-cleavage lines, guano heaps, feeding frenzies, courting and strutting bowers, look-out rocks, and ground-squirrel apartments. And for a few people, they are also palaces...

- Gary Snyder, *The Practice of the Wild*

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The eternal consoles us through the local genius of place and everything ordinary has its own spell. We endure because of this spell.

- John Tarrant, *The Light Inside the Dark*

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In Zen retreats, participants are cautioned with the initially strange words: 'No looking about'. They seemed perverse until I saw that they were an invitation, instead, to look deeply, and a welcome release from monitoring the social space between us and having our attention caught there. But this 'no looking about' frees us to *look about* in quite another way, a way that might glimpse the sacred face of the ordinary. Hundreds of sesshin poems give testimony to how it rushes in through the momentary lifting of half-veiled sesshin eyes and never-closed ears. The boundary-less world opens to us, opens us up, right in the midst of 'no looking about'.

Zen literature is replete with exquisite imagery of the natural world - both because of the kind of barely urban world in which Chan and Zen and Taoism arose, and because of the kinds of places in which monasteries, temples and hermitages tend to be built. Mountains, rivers, rocks, trees, grasses, clouds, blossoms and moon richly elaborate and differentiate our original face — more readily, maybe, than the world of streets and fire hydrants and electricity sub-stations.

The flower in the grass may point the way with humble ease. But what about wall rubble and discarded plastic toys and a broken tile in the weeds? That too is where we live; it is a fragment of our regular world of human trouble and riches, and we have to meet it. I suggest we have to love it as well, tend it with our open attention, redeem it with our full imagination. To fail to truly attend to it is to lay waste the place right where we are, where we live our lives, where practice begins. It is to agree to live with indifference.

Is indifference so bad? Well, terrorism may be thought of as the extreme expression of contemptuous indifference for the human world - and I include the terrorism of the nuclear arsenal that is prepared to evaporate life and blow to smithereens the things of the human and natural world, or the neutron bomb, which keeps the goods and just takes away the owners.

Eco-philosopher Freya Mathews<sup>2</sup> suggests that the only truly dangerous places in our human world are the only truly unloved ones. The concrete canyon of a freeway, the dark, fluoro-lit intestines of a grease-stained underground carparking station, the urine-desecrated stairwell... And part of the danger is that we can't be truly happy there. When we recognise a place, or an aspect of a place, when we bless it with our inner recognition, then we know it to be part of us, and something can begin to live there. A home is made, a haven, in the most unlikely place. Until then, we dump there everything that we don't like about ourselves, and it will seep back into our dreams like toxic waste.

So you can wander across a piece of abandoned land and begin to discover the suggestive fragments and relics of human life preserved in it, partly breaking the

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<sup>2</sup> F. Mathews (1998), "Becoming Native to the City", *Blind Donkey: Journal of the Diamond Sangha* 18 (1), pp. 12-17.

surface, moulded into ephemeral sculpture; or an improbable cluster of objects strange to one another but embedded together in strange kinship and richly art-directed by time; you can become an aficionado of outback goldfield rubbish tips, where gadgets grown extraordinary and unintelligible by time have become welded and melded by rust into things both beautiful and so far gone they can never be explained; many of the beauties you see when you feel free to look around, are related to a secret love of ruins, and fascination with the sea-change of time; and others come shamelessly close to the sheen of nostalgia - but in its perverse mode, unconcerned with sentimental or 'heritage' values.

A flattened tin can, as blood-red in its rust as the red dust that the heart so loves out there among the olive-grey saltbushes, can be a treasure to take home with you and send to your Zen teacher just in case he's forgotten the important parts of being Australian.

One word for anti-terrorism is 'soul'; the word may have grown, like 'peace', a little shop-worn, but soul itself has not. It is something like a pearl. The grit of the world washes in to the tender open oyster of the embodied self and leaves its residue — a kind of suffering. The painful grit itself suffers a slow sea-change in the depths of psyche and the abrasions of the world become gradually pearlescent, many-layered, spun around the hidden injury to make it no longer alien but tolerable, included, and strangely beautiful over time. Soul-work is accepting the pain of openness in a human body, and turning that way. It is a storehouse of treasures opening of its own accord inside your self. Each treasure starts with a sense of the world as distinct and penetrating, a little piece of the world's grit trapped in the soft wet open eye.

Soul is then the negotiation of spirit with body, of embodied spirit with world, a kind of other body, a dream body, gradually grown by this fantastically harsh, intimate and finally beautiful abrasion with the nature of the world. This other body is a treasury of images, dreams, memories, traces and reflections, engraved in the actual body as our way of being this unrepeatable human being. And so, soul is the 'fortunate and ongoing disaster' of our fall into flesh. And what is 'ensouling' the world? Just letting it in is part of it. The rest is the willingness to play. That is the fantastic, uncalled-for, inspired movement back towards the suffering. That's the real meeting. 'Soul', for me, is like soul music, agreeing to suffering, and yet still insisting on play, even in the sombre face of mortality.

Such a sense of soul is a true antidote to terrorism and its mortal fear of life, its aloofness from the complexity and duration of suffering, and its literally deadly disrespect for the comical and lovely human effort of making a world. I want to call our common comical, lovely, ugly human world 'the street', the shared social space we build and add to and desecrate together. And I want to ask, what happens if we agree to fully live in the glorious mixed feast of the street? What secret dimension of play, what unexpected home-coming, may that open up in us?

There is a kind of attentiveness that can be cultivated and deeply relished, and with it the whole secret life of the street it brings to light. It gives to the human-made world almost the same kind of delight that the lover of the natural world (and

I am also one of those) might take in lizard-eggs, bird-colonies, droppings, rocks and lichens. It does not oppose the wild and the made worlds but conjoins them, finds their overlap and resonance, sees the wild in the made, pays to the rust stains on an old corrugated iron wall the same receptivity it give to dewdrops delicately strung in a spider's web. It includes but goes beyond spotting and classifying attention.

Just as you might dream your way into the inner life of a honeysucker hatchling by exploring by finger the downy walls of a tiny abandoned nest, to freely look around in the street demands that you find its imaginative resonance, that you dream and play your way in. To take up the street with your imagination and follow its back-ways into time is to allow the overlooked and overgrown and half-ruined faces of the street to become the topography of our most intimate being. You can step through that dreaming openness into the region, the enchanted region, where everything belonging there returns to that in which it rests.

For some years - a particularly slow-growing pearl, it seems - I have been collecting photos, field-notes, sketches, thoughts and dreams toward a difficult-to-classify book, titled **Feel Free to Look Around**. In old-fashioned stores, still sometimes to be found in Australian country towns, you could once see a sign in the window that reassured you: 'Feel Free to Look Around. No Obligation to Buy'. An era that obviously still respected dreaming forms of awareness; still respected people; in fact, had not yet invented 'consumers'.

I pay homage to that old vanishing courtesy by taking its invitation much further, out of the shop and into the street, as far as I possibly can... I offer you a glimpse into the coming book in the hope that it may draw you not only into the secret play, but also tempt you into recognising and bringing out your own forms and memories and treasures of this kind.

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**Feel Free to Look Around** must have had a number of beginnings. I think one was when I moved from Cairns, Far North Queensland (I always loved living in a place that was 'Far') way south to Sydney, at the age of eight. That shift was a telling one, from a fibro 'Queenslander' (roomy timber house with verandahs, raised on high stilts) right on the edge of horse-paddocks, cane fields, cloud-wreathed purple mountains, jungle, taipans, and coral reefs, to pre-gentrified Paddington, a densely-settled inner-city Sydney suburb, every inch of it paved and built and intricately detailed in its subtle urban decay. My brother and sister and I had eyes and ears keenly trained to the natural world; when you put that together with a strong sensitivity to place and a 'storied' imagination, the imaginative shock of Sydney went very deep. Another impetus was having my brother, Michael, who induced the naturalist in me, later on become an architecture student and take me about with him seeing Sydney with his architect eyes - so much so I nearly became an architecture student myself.

Another start into this project came about seven years ago during location-searching for a feature film I was writing about the implicit and explicit forms of

terrorism in our culture, called **Breathing Under Water**. The film I eventually made took the form of a woman's underworld journey, down under the streets of Sydney and through its imaginary sub-floors of reality. But I discovered that something interesting happens when you move around inside a (real) place as if it is a possible location for an imaginary journey. Driving and walking around many of the stranger parts of Sydney, reading them as possible zones of the underworld, and hearing other people's suggestions from their own explorations, opened up unpredictable dimensions to the city. And to my own psyche.

Even now, location-searching for another film **Blind Love Tango**, set partly in Buenos Aires in the seventies, I am excited to find you can go about travelling and photographing Buenos Aires right here in Sydney. Let me recommend to you now one simple and obvious way to 'make strange' your eye as it falls upon the habitually familiar world around you: dream up a film, maybe take a camera, and go location-searching in your own back-streets.

And so I met people who were storm-water-tunnel walkers, people who even walked the underground train system in the quiet between midnight and 3am on Sunday nights, searching for the 'false starts', the abandoned tracks, the odd ruins rumoured to be left in there in obscure tunnels, people who visited disused gasworks, brick-pits, the underneath of old wharves, people who boated up the old industrial canals of Sydney, who combed land-fill sites and took Sewage Treatment Works tours... People who knew about the underground passageways linking old Mental Asylums with landing-stages on the harbour... I didn't just meet them, I joined them.

Notice the little edge of an odd and particular excitement even just this list of things raises in your chest? That's where the looking around is lodged. That's where it stirs. That's where you look from. Grow attuned to it - it will tug you to the treasure.

That opened up a sense of the way places change once they are invited under the gaze of the imagination. Once you put aside, that is, any question of what was originally planned or intended for this aspect of the street and decide to take that up only towards the end of your looking around, as one thing among the ten thousand things worth divining about a place.

It's not too hard to do. In the late twentieth century, don't we all notice good film locations, mentally play a fragment of film that they suggest, appreciate a nicely cinematic angle or a good lighting effect? That's the pleasure I started with - of being present to a real place, full of existing stories, histories and meanings (including the architect's or planner's intentions), while being even more open to more private, unconscious and imaginary resonances and possibilities that come alive for you in that place. I had to slip past the guards of many a 'private' industrial road, saunter round the backs of things, poke my nose into the cracks, poke around the bits marked 'Danger. No Entry Except To Authorised Persons'. You have to find your born right to be free to look around even there. Especially there. The slight danger and un-respectability of the enterprise is a large part of its value.

And even more recently, I have begun to recognise other denizens of this layer of the street of the world. In Ben Katchor's cartoon strips collected as **Cheap Novelties: the pleasures of urban decay** for example, I met the Jewish seedy New York real-estate photographer Julius Knipl, a fellow-soul, a pure delight. Knipl knows even the hot afternoon smell of dark ice-chest water when the blocks have melted and the bottles have floated there a-whiles, and the strange pleasures of fishing out a defunct brand of soda. He has a sixth sense for obscure bus routes facing extinction, notices how the telephone books in public places begin to yellow and roll their leaves as their replacement date approaches with its inexorable season, considers how the eternal flame burning under the steel boiler of a hot dog stand soberly marks the necessity of cheap food, talks to a man whose business is 'going-out-of-business' liquidation shops, and how the limit of going out of business is around three years before the possibility is completely played out...

The Yiddish word for little treasure to put away for a rainy day, little nest-egg that the palm of your mind can hold, is a *knipl*. Julius Knipl has an eye that can see a New York right down to the 1930's strata of the street; knipls are always touched by time, carry evidence about its tidal shifts. Ben Katchor gives an example of a knipl: 'The best ones are things I never saw the interest in before. Like, today, I was walking down the street and noticed a very faded, tattered, almost illegible old sign, a sign from - who knows? - maybe forty, fifty years ago, warning about rat poison... I mean, think about it: the rats are long gone, the people who posted the warning are gone, the people they are warning are gone. The sign's still there. It's a *knipl*.'

You'll notice that there is a private lair of the soul created right there on even the most bleak or shelterless street at such a moment. This is the impulse, and the consequence, of touching an intimate inner perspective, a nest for dreaming, right there on the homeless street. It creates a journey out of even the most routine city moment: once you place one foot into the unknown and the other in the most deeply recessed self, you are in liminal space, *travelling*, any day of the week, right in your own home town.

It takes little more than missing your bus and walking in the rain those five blocks, finding the streets are black mirrors and the rain light deforms each thing just beyond its habitual invisibility... Enter there.

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Architects are not the only public dreamers of the built environment; what they make are merely the props for all the other dreamers. On the street, and there is a deep well-being in this, all of us have right of way, a share in it. We share a right of public dreaming on the street. The streets, even the most unlovely ones, are brilliantly art-designed stages for our dreaming minds. And streets have life of their own that we share in but do not own. It is a special joy of the street, to be only one of the dreamers. In it, we blend our dreams with strangers. Some kinds of street are less alive to you than others, but a street has life the moment it grows interested in you,

'has an interest', as Katchor said. Then it will talk to you, waft smells at you, set off trains of inner connection and dreaming.

'Dreaming' is a word with potent connection to place in Australia. Aboriginal spirituality understands every speck of earth on the ground and every natural feature of a place, to be charged by its participation in a deep dreaming story of place, a *Tjukurrpa*, that works upon you according to your level of initiation. The dreamings are Big Stories, much bigger than any individual, and they hold encoded in symbolic form all the guidance needed for the people who belong to it to live in a right relation to other people and the world. People are the caretakers of the dreaming that created the place in its particularities and dreams us still, in every moment; the ancient dreaming is always happening now.

But while the Dreaming leaves some trace in every moment of dreaming in this continent, I am pointing here to the more daylit kind, and to the fact that we are never entirely dry or out of the deeps of consciousness. I'm thinking here of the way images continually break the surface of our dayworld mind — as reverie, fantasy, verbal imagery, the desire to tell a story or a joke, the moment of *deja-vu*, the sense of a pattern in things, of synchronicity, the feel for an event, a scene, as not unlike a dream — not to mention our constant tuning-in to gossip, drama, soap-opera, tv, film, billboards, photos and all the predigested imagery that flows through us. But even when the image is coming from without, the inner life stirs to meet it from inside its own dreaming, like the soft opening in Heidegger's *Gelassenheit*, the "letting-go-ness towards things". And every act of attention is in part a custodial gesture of responsibility towards a small fragment of the human dreaming.

The street is a midden of the human world and every thing in the midden has its proper place in our attention as it descends through the layers of time, acquiring 'pearlescence'. Each thing in the human midden belongs to a natural poetry that the great Yun-men spoke word for word when he challenged his monks with 'Everyone has his own light. If you want to see it, you can't', and then responded to his own implicit question with 'The store-room. The gate.' The kerosene lamp on the kitchen bench. The box of cabbages. The verandah. The front step. No-one can go past poetry of this force (and every day we do, we pass over it as if it were not the breath of God on our faces!).

The proper pace of feeling free to look around is lazily slow and detailed, half-entranced, the kind of pace at which you might stop and stare and see (when woods you pass) where squirrels hide their nuts in grass, as Chesterton would have us do. But on the street, it might be the almost unseeable gap between two buildings, a gap big enough only for mysterious thin objects like straws to have been poked in over years, a gap big enough to let your eye look in and grow dark-adapted and begin to see, and your nose to register the dankness of things down near the mystery area where a building meets the earth...

Walter Benjamin in the 1930's explored Baudelaire's Paris by way of the century-old Parisian shopping arcades, whose decayed grandeur had so delighted the Surrealists before him. His way of study was to become the figure that these entrails of the city seemed to call into being: the *flaneur*, or *flaneuse*, the lazily strolling observer

whose slow and purposeless peregrinations brought the city into being. The *flaneur* 'goes botanising on the pavement', writes Benjamin. And then he notes (astonishingly!): 'Around 1840 it was briefly fashionable to take turtles for a walk in the arcades. The *flaneurs* liked to have the turtles set the pace for them.'

An almost unnaturally slow, rhythmic, mindful walking is exactly the proper pace for feeling free to look around, for botanising on the pavement, feet paying loving dues step by step to the earth that is still completely there under the brief asphalt. This is the pace in which the trance of looking and noticing can overtake your errand, your small sense of self-importance; and this is the pace in which the inventory of loved things has a chance to grow. A varicose outbreak of plumbing high on a wall, for example, a bold series of gradual solutions welded with flare and an eye for how the mid afternoon shadows will pick it out in particularly strong relief...

A late twentieth century shopping mall is not quite a fit place for feeling free to look around - on the air-conditioned privatised 'street' your rights are more limited than you might think. The fluorescent bath of denatured light (we're all suspects) is part of the trauma, the trapped effluvium of electronic sound is another... You can't doss down on a bench there. You certainly can't escape the forced muzak and announcements. In fact it is often frustratingly difficult to escape at all - the rare exits are marked in such very small print. Real choice, real surprise, real discovery is very limited - is this why sleepiness falls like a pall? Something has been fatally pre-digested, like the 'imagination' called for by a video game. You are welcomed by the Cheshire Cat of commerce just as long as you consume, present a willingness to be consumed. Feeling free to look around in a privatised public space is on an uncomfortable edge, and it is difficult not to grow more sharp than receptive.

The telling difference is felt in an older-style arcade, which is a true indoor street, random in sequence, not subject to corporate plan, open to surprise and change, a kind of 'weathering' in time. Feeling free does not take kindly to being badgered by too much everyday, administered reality, the kind you feel in a 'mall'. However, it can take up even that - the bullying of administered reality - as a perverse pleasure, when there is really no escape from the shopping. And even in the mall, the ruin is in progress if you really look, and catch sight of how the maintenance deficit is growing and interesting little compromises or inventiveness's are creeping in, and a tile has fallen off there revealing interesting texture and an unintended punctuation effect, and no-one has bothered to replace the ceiling panel because the air conditioning breaks down every day and continually needs adjustment...

And if you want to experience a vertiginous example of Doorwayland (see categories below), you can walk decisively through any nondescript door inside a mall marked 'Exit' and enter the maze behind the walls; a true exit to the street is almost impossible to find; you may stumble into a loading dock, but you may also have a door slam one-way behind you and have a lot of time to explore the smells, the strange hot air, the scuffed white walls, the echoey steps and passageways, before one of the attendants of administered reality finds you and shepherds you back to the public side of things like a stray, like - a bit of a suspect.



Architecture is a pretty official kind of business. It has concern with Face. Buildings face the street, their aspects are planned, their pre-construction sketches are clean and fascinatingly utopian, utterly without reference to the clutter and undergrowth of other actual things that surrounds the site. But even if the things of the street are made as conscious as possible by architects and city planners, there is a far far larger, ever-growing reservoir or repertoire of things that remain *or become* relatively unconscious, evade planning, get used for other purposes in the end, grow weathered, overgrown, overtaken, abandoned, altered, turn feral...

A street is a palimpsest of still-readable or dreamable story fragments, a poetry of place gradually learning to speak in the layers, false starts, 'improvements', refurbishments, erasures, adaptations, debris, decay, the fascinating *undergrowth*, of the street. Who can resist it? Each silica fleck in the night pavement holds up the moon.

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So **Feel Free to Look Around** is a first, partial inventory-taking venture into the treasury of the nondescript particulars of the great outside world of the street, a personal and preliminary thesaurus of such uses and meanings, and implicitly, an invitation to the reader to inhabit the street freely, by making more conscious exactly the poetry of place that goes on in us all the time.

There's no end to the adventure or the storehouse, of course. Any act of classifying is an endless game of invention, that grows more intimate and refined as observation and experience probe more deeply. I focus on the city I know best, Sydney, as everycity, as well as exactly herself and no other place. I explore her nondescript particularities in a way that opens up new values in the world - new categories of city things anywhere worthy of the love that attention implies. This categorising is a deliciously absurd and interminable task, and it is undertaken as a playful and serious task of love for the world, to urge the reader on to their own curate's egg of classifying...

The first stage of the work is a sample of the endless pleasure of finding / inventing categories of looking, arising in my walking experience of Sydney. The second, a number of 'invisible', nondescript small *places* explored in very close detail. The third is a series of much more broadly imagined and simply suggestive descriptions of *zones* offered by Sydney for other people's explorations, a kind of map for the inward tourist of their own home-town.

Some categories, for example (in absolutely no particular order):

- electricity substations, and all the other 'unfathomable', numbered apparatus of water, power and communications, like pumping stations;
- manhole covers (portals to the underworld);
- things seen only from trains;
- wedge-shaped buildings;
- gaps between buildings (between 'worlds');
- voids;
- back-entries;

- above-the-awnings/below-the-awnings discrepancies, a pleasure known possibly only to Sydneysiders;
- forgotten bus routes;
- lost but still traceable and even glimpsable, water-courses;
- specialised maps (such as fishing maps);
- depots (for anything);
- eccentric shops, strange businesses;
- seams, sutures and traces of pavement repair and removed tram-tracks;
- fantasy monuments of old abandoned or disowned city works such as power stations, coal-loaders, gas-works, brick-pits;
- walled cities within a city;
- survivor trees;
- depots, for anything;
- forgotten stacks of things, now incorporated into the street;
- doorwayland, doorways in unlikely places - like the walls of underground tunnels (and what might be behind them);
- street 'billabongs' where commerce has all but receded, leaving only a suburban beauty shop, tax accountant, often a public clock with hands stopped at three o'clock; building mottoes and bas-reliefs;
- specialised 'views' of the city, such as the taxi-driver's Sydney, the tow-truck driver's Sydney;
- old street directories of Sydney showing what is not;
- darkneses in night streets;
- underpasses of highway flyovers, often the most unloved and untended of spaces next to carparks;
- street 'banks' eroded to near death by traffic flow;
- faded signs, mysterious writing, ancient graffiti;
- 'crazed' houses - 'fixed up' beyond all recognition
- architect impressions - the building's brief utopia
- the back sides of convents and churches - the subtle place where the utopian/presentation aspect ends and the 'backside' begins;
- hole-in-the-wall businesses;
- suburban beauty shops - the intimate boudoir right on the street
- the strange privacy of people who live in public view of freeways, railway lines, etc;
- 'alephs' - places in which time meets space, like airports, train stations, film, TV and sound studios.....

Of the second - and although this will only have meaning for Sydneysiders, there is a mantra-like power in naming the places - small stretches of particular roads or their immediate environs, such as Addison Road, Marrickville; Anzac Parade, Maroubra; Enmore Road, Newtown; Old Canterbury Road, Campsie; the top of the hill in Devonshire Street, Surrey Hills; the lanes behind Oxford Street, Taylor Square, Pyrmont Bridge Road nearest to the City Morgue...

And of the third, broad tracts of Sydney where much 'writing over' has taken place, and the eraser has not yet been applied, so the pickings are rich for anyone feeling free to look around. For example, Mortlake Gas works through to Homebush Bay (rapidly becoming the Olympic complex); La Perouse/Botany; Maroubra. Rookwood and Auburn; Silverwater, the backs of the Duck River; Smithfield through to Cabramatta; the transition from Campsie through Belmore to Bexley; Roselands (already an archaeological specimen, by now); the Old Western Highway where it departs from the Great Western Highway. Maybe, in a sense, all of 'the west', as the

great, true unconscious of the city... The riches are in the west and south of Sydney, very little to the north, where too much money smooths too much away, too quickly.

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There's a pilgrimage aspect to this, too. Where we live can become a place for true journeying, as liminal and alive to us as any exotic travel destination. And the little 'stations' of discovery can be revisited and celebrated - a small and secret homage to a crack in ordinary banality through which the light has shown itself. You can take other pilgrims to share your arcane joys, to strengthen the sacred as it stands up in the ordinary. Walking is a pilgrim's wisdom. The category of Things Seen Only From Trains will probably best remain seen only from trains. But the categories of the 'ordinary' marvellous opened up on foot cannot be praised enough.

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And the deepest level of play with the locus genii of the streets you live on always knows each thing is sacred and speaks the strongest, plainest poetry — a fast-dripping tap heard in the too-thick grass on an abandoned lot, the old tracery of bathroom tiles on a slab half lost in weeds, the shape of a smokestack in the last light, the half-inch forest growing thick in the crack that marks where the tram tracks used to be thirty years ago, riotous diversity sheared off by heavy traffic to minute uniform height. *Everyone has her own light. The kitchen. The storehouse.*

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Kids feel free to look around. Remember those never-never places of your childhood, where the way was open for anything to happen, anything to be the case. Fringe areas, the true homelands of childhood and the imagination, where the ordered and organised gives way to things that are less planned, or neglected, or overgrown. Places - and this is an important clue to the looking - where one thing gives way to another. Lantana is always a propitious sign of fertile *looking* ground, in Sydney - vast, rosy, prickly tracts of it, declaring how very different this side of the world is from the one it came from. Like the thorn hedge of a Sleeping Beauty, it guards the rich unconscious places from easy overview, inspection, and control, and keeps them sleeping for long stretches of years - as well as initiating you into the adventure with distinctive scratches on your arms and a smell you'd know anywhere, rank and sweet at once, fertile and dubious, definitely interesting. Lantana harbours whole underworlds; you can find other people's tunnels through it and you can come upon half-buried objects that are now only being dreamed of, lost forever to rust and lantana.

Just - follow the little tug of curious interest somewhere in your chest or belly, and curl your palm inward around the *kniphs* as they collect you into the treasury of the ten thousand things.