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Andrew Miller

Eschatologies, and future-looking reminiscence

Abstract

*Traditionally, authors of memoir, life writing, and autoethnography have used prose to tell their stories, with the occasional image to supplement their narratives. In the multimedia age some life writers are turning to art, photography, design and technology to increase the scope of their research and writing. In turn, such authors have created new authorial identities and become graphic-authors, artist-scholars, or even bricoleurs. Writing for artist-authors takes on a more Derridean flavour, and comes to incorporate all manner of meaning-making inscriptions, including images, design, and non-verbal elements. Readers, too, become active rather than passive, challenged to read against traditional left-to-right reading gravity and to navigate between different textual elements (as they do online). Readers become viewers and participants, and the text shifts from 'readerly' to 'writerly' in the Barthesian sense. Consequently, authors are designing new hybrid forms of life narrative for on-screen viewing rather than on-page reading; in other words, for digital rather than paper forms of dissemination and authorship. As screen-based visual-verbal constructions, **art(e)facts** combine art, virtuality and facts to create evocative critical-creative bricolages.*

Keywords: graphic life writing, autoethnography, artist-scholars

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The background of the entire page is a collage. On the left side, there is a large, semi-transparent image of a woman's face, looking slightly to the right. The rest of the background is composed of various rectangular panels, some showing abstract, blurry green and blue patterns, and others showing darker, more textured areas.

Eschatologies

And Future-looking Reminiscence

Andrew Miller

This text is designed to be *viewed* as much as *read*, thus disrupting traditional academic discourses and logocentric and restrictive conventions surrounding research and learning. Knowledge exists outside and beyond the white A4 page, 12 point fonts, footnotes, references, and serious academic texts and articles. It is *this* knowledge, and these *sites* of learning and being, that this artist-researcher wishes to explore. And *why* in the name of text not?

logocentric

These pages will be no more than a formless record of my reveries. I myself will figure largely in them, because a solitary person inevitably thinks a lot about himself. But all the other thoughts which pass through my mind will also have their place here. I shall say what I have thought just as it came to me ...

(Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, 1792/1979: 32)

Abstract: **Multimodal Art(e)facts**

Traditionally, authors of memoir, life writing, and autoethnography have used 'prose' to tell their stories, with the occasional illustration or image to supplement their narratives. In the multimedia age some life writers are turning to art, photography, design, and technology to increase the range and scope of their research and 'writing'. In turn, such authors have created new authorial identities and become *graphic*-authors, *artist-scholars*, or even *bricoleurs*. Writing for *artist*-authors takes on a more Derridean flavour, and comes to incorporate all manner of meaning-making inscriptions, including images, design, and nonverbal elements. Readers, too, become active rather than passive, challenged to read against traditional left-to-right reading gravity and to navigate between different textual elements (as they do online). Readers become viewers and participants, and the text shifts from 'readerly' to 'writerly' in the Barthesian sense. Consequently, authors are designing new hybrid forms of life narrative for *on-screen* viewing

rather than on-page reading; in other words, for *digital* rather than paper forms of dissemination and authorship.

New technologies are making such multimedia *bricolages* possible. Visual-verbal bricoleurs can now write *beyond* prose by making use of multimodal and screen-based methods of dissemination and viewing. This adheres with Derrida's ideas on 'picto-ideo-phonographic' writing, where multiple registers, discourses, and visual elements are woven together to form tripartite (or polyphonic) texts. Images, narratives, and critical commentaries merge to extend the text's meaning-making potential, and to present the life narrative in new and hybrid ways.

This text combines words and images—design and discourse—to create the first instalment of a screen-based 'graphic memoir bricolage' that takes research beyond prose and beyond paper and into the aesthetic and digital. It also takes the author away from being a paper-based prose-writer to a *screen-based bricolage*-writer. As life writers and artists (who 'write' with visual, verbal, and nonverbal elements), such authors occupy both 'author'

ART (E) FACTS

and 'subject' positions simultaneously, and often create text(s) from multiple standpoints and from different moments in time, thus revealing the author-subject as fluid, ever-changing, impermanent, and 'in process.' This is poststructural authorship and scholarship that shows both the author-as-author and author-as-subject as *con/textual* creations, open to interpretation and re-contextualisation depending on the modes and media used.

The resulting texts are multimodal and multivocal 'art(e)facts'. As e-texts, art(e)facts are *screen-based visual-verbal* constructions that combine art, virtuality, and facts to create evocative critical-creative bricolages. Here, aesthetic elements—and aesthetic knowledges—are as important as verbal elements.

All images in this text were created by the author.

Remembering as a means of
forgetting
...

'Life-stories' hold us
together and stop the world
falling apart
...

MEMOIR & MYSTORY

People tend to weave their images of the world out of the yarn of their experience.

(Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Love*, 2003/2006: 87)

I LIVE ALONE. I have done so for a number of years now. Before that I lived in share-houses and doss-pits. This may explain why I close my bedroom door at night and why I feel uncomfortable and exposed with it open, even in summer, when a breeze would be nice. Sapphire, my dog, sleeps at the end of my bed. It occurs to me that if I died in my sleep she would have no escape. My death would go unnoticed for weeks, possibly months. My body would rot back to bone before the authorities broke in. Sapphire, poor girl, would be all

¹ An American hobo symbol from the 1920s and '30s. Translation: 'The police here are not friendly to hobos.'

*Shine on you crazy
diamond.*

Pink Floyd

alone and entombed. She too would die. Her death would be slow and gruelling—drawn-out, agonising, thirsty, hungry, and lonely. How many days would she nudge at my head before nibbling at my ears? Before crying out and moaning at the emptiness? Would she drink my blood and eat my heart? Would she scratch the door to shreds and her paws to bone? Would she bark at the night until hoarse and defeated? *Ahooooooooo—*

I hate to think. But even if I did leave my bedroom door open her prospects for survival would hardly improve. She could drink from the toilet to stave off thirst, but eventually her food would run out. My flesh would fade. Shit would pile up. Piss would sink in. The stench of decomposing dog would replace the stench of decomposing human.

Ahooooooooo—

Even still, this is no way to start a memoir. Memoirs usually dwell on past experiences rather than dream about future horrors. ‘Future nostalgias’ are usually the morbid luxury of eschatologists and doomsday prophets, not damp-eyed memoirists and self-obsessed megalomaniacs. Unless, of course, you take the view that memoirs capture the

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An autobiography promises feats worthy of record, conversations with famous people, a central role in important events. There is none of that here. At the very least, an autobiography implies a summing up, a certain closure, that hardly suits someone of my years, still busy charting his way through the world. ... Finally, there are the dangers inherent in any autobiographical work: the temptation to color events in ways favorable to the writer, the tendency to overestimate the interest one's experiences hold for others, selective lapses of memory. ...

'fragments' of life while autobiographies capture the 'whole' of life, in which case reflections on the perversities that go on 'inside' the head are just as permissible as the heroic feats that go on 'outside' the head. I'll take the view that neither memoir nor autobiography can actually capture life, either in part or in full, and instead take the view that both endeavours merely represent possible *versions* of life, in part or in full. On a different day, in a different context, using a different perspective, in a different mood, a different story would be told. It all depends on *how* the story is told and who or what is included and ignored. One 'life' could mushroom into multiple *lives*—one 'self' into multiple *selves*. And all would be true. As Paul Carter notes in *The Road to Botany Bay* (1987: 142-143), '...the true dialogue the writer conducts is not with external reality, but with language itself'; that is, with what Jacques Derrida calls the 'undecidability' of language and the 'free play' of signs (i.e. polysemy). Carter continues:

We clarify our ideas by setting them out. By covering the previously clear page, we give our un-

(Barack Obama,
*Dreams from my Fa-
ther*, 1995/2008: xvi)

ruly thoughts an order and perspicacity all their own. The linearity of writing (in contrast with the multi-dimensionality of experience) and the linearity of the logic it expresses reflects neither the nature of experience nor, for that matter, of history, but rather the limitations of the medium (157).

Which explains, in part, why this text is *multi-modal* rather than *monomodal* (i.e. visual, verbal, and episodic, rather than verbal and linear), and why it attempts, as Derrida advocates in *Of Grammatology* (1967/1976), to break with the linearity of the book even while encased *within* the book.² Such a text would be what Derrida calls ‘pluri-dimensional’ and what Julia Kristeva (1980) calls ‘polyphonic’ and ‘dialogical’ – as opposed to

² Derrida writes: ‘The end of linear writing is indeed the end of the book, even if, even today, it is within the form of a book that new writings—literary or theoretical—allow themselves to be, for better or for worse, encased. ... This is why, beginning to write without the line, one begins also to reread past writing according to a different organization of space. ... Because we are beginning to write, to write differently, we must reread differently. ... What is thought today cannot be written according to the line and the book...’ (86-87).

‘monological.’ Contemporary critics like Espen J Aarseth (1997) and Ilana Snyder (1998) might call this ‘cybertextual’ or ‘hypertextual’ respectively. I might call it ‘para-eclectic-al’ or ‘scatter-textual’ interchangeably.

In *Wasted Lives: Modernity and its Outcasts* (2006), Zygmunt Bauman picks up on the order-building ambitions of storytelling. He writes:

Stories aid the seekers of comprehension by separating the relevant from the irrelevant, actions from their settings, the plot from its background, and the heroes or the villains at the centre of the plot from the hosts of supernumeraries and dummies. It is the mission of stories to select, and it is in their nature to include through exclusion and to illuminate through casting shadows. It is a grave misunderstanding, and injustice, to blame stories for favouring one part of the stage while neglecting another. Without selection there would be no story (17).

This is because, as Walter Doyle and Kathy Carter (2003) point out,

THERE IS NOTHING OUTSIDE THE TEXT.

Derrida

We as human beings tend ... to interpret our lives by weaving comprehensive frameworks in which the incidents, people, actions, emotions, ideas, and settings of our experience are brought together, inter-related, and situated. In this process, we sort through our experiences, dividing the pertinent from the extraneous and filling in the gaps as we construct sensible renderings or accounts of our personal histories (130).

In other words, storytelling is an order-building and meaning-making exercise. You can't *not* do it. We are language creatures who 'make' sense by 'making' stories. *There is nothing outside the text*, as Derrida says (1976: 158). All our experiences are mediated through language and interpretation. Clearly, then, there is no one way to write a memoir or autobiography. There are, as Derrida and Michel Foucault have taught us, *innumerable* ways to represent the past.³ And these need not be 'true'

³ As the *Collins English Dictionary* notes, the verb 'represent' means (1) to stand as an equivalent of, (2) to act as a substitute or proxy (for), and (3) to act as or be the authorised delegate or agent for (a person, country, etc), among other connotations. In the same dictionary, the term 're-present' means (1) to present again. As Derrida might note, the thing that 'represents' (in this

Even better than
the real
thing.

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in the rational or empirical sense. In fact, most of our stories are untrue, half-truths, exaggerations, fabrications, utter lies, or fictions when measured against the paragon of 'actuality' and/or an extra-linguistic 'reality' (which the poststructuralists remind us we don't have access to anyway).

The victors, after all, write history. And if I'm alive to talk or write that history into being then I'm sure as hell going to shape it to fit my needs and interests. This makes me, in a sense, an unreli-

case, the numerous narratives being constructed to *represent* the past) *stands in for* 'the-thing-in-its-absence' (in this case, the lives-lived). To represent the past, then, is to offer up a series of signs and symbols which *stand in for* the *absent presence* (the past), and thus do the work of tenancy. My text(s) will stand in for the lives-lived and the experiences-experienced: they are not the lives-lived themselves. They *represent* the past, *stand in for* the past, but are *not* the past. They are *the present* (the narrative *now*). I am 'presenting again' the past (from the standpoint of the present) and 'standing in for' (and speaking on behalf of) those who are absent (the dead or otherwise departed, including former selves). And the moment from which I narrate, *the now*, is itself slipping quickly into the past, *the then*. Forget about trying to step into the same river twice, you can't even step into the same life twice—or the same world twice. These phantom constructs are slipping into the past as quickly as one thought replaces the next.

able and hostile witness. After all, consciously or unconsciously, I will conceal as much as I reveal. I'll soften my defects and talk up my assets. And somehow, by some means, these makeshift versions of history will be 'truer' than their originals. They will be 'hyper-real,' as Jean Baudrillard might say, or *more real than real*. Simulacra histories: *even better than the real thing* (as U2 have sung). As infamous underworld hit man Mark 'Chopper' Reid proudly suggests, *don't let the truth stand in the way of a good story* – particularly when your post-prison career relies on writing books and telling yarns that embellish your past life.

This text is no exception. It fights as much with language and representation as it does with memory, reflexivity, ego, incompetence, bias, and the context in which it is produced (i.e. the modernist institution which makes it almost impossible to think and act outside the existing *prose-centric*, *answer-insistent*, *project-directed*, *order-dependent* 'structured' paradigm). It won't attempt to write or perform one story or one truth, but *multiple* stories and *multiple* truths. Like Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* (1962), the fragments will hope-

I am writing my
self 'into'
being.

Miller

fully converge to tell another story, a bigger story, a more accurate and false story. The various narrative threads and episodes will form a *bricolage* of life, an incomplete and thorough account of past and future memories and imaginings. I am writing to find out who I am (*and who I might become*) and where I've been (*and where I might go*). I am writing my identity *into* being rather than pretending to capture a pre-existing subject. No such subject or history exists. I am inventing my 'selves' as I go along, even past selves and past histories.

As Janette Turner Hospital points out in *The Last Magician* (1992), the past is never finished: *it lies in wait, just ahead*. It is a story we keep writing and inventing from cradle to grave. The past keeps bobbing up in the present, every bit as 'real' as its original, and the ghosts of yesteryear keep crowding our heads and speaking our names. While I'm talking to you I'm talking to my dead dad. *Ahooooooooo*— I'm both present and absent from *this* moment and *that* moment. I have a foot in every day I've ever lived.

At the 2008 Adelaide Writers' Week, Robyn Davidson suggested that 'The past is not sealed,

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immutable. It doesn't belong to anyone' (2 March 2008). She added that in her memoir *Self Portrait with Imaginary Mother* (unpublished at the time) she wanted 'to keep the past open.' In fact, she wanted her dead mother to write her own story. And why not?

I too want to keep building and altering my innumerable pasts to fit my present needs and circumstances, and to let the dead 'speak.' Of course, as Carolyn Ellis and Arthur Bochner (2000: 745) point out,

Narrative truth seeks to keep the past alive in the present. Stories show us that the meanings and significance of the past are incomplete, tentative, and revisable according to [the] contingencies of our present life circumstances, the present from which we narrate. ... After all, stories rearrange, re-describe, invent, omit, and revise. (original italics)

Possibly, then, Mrs Smith is right when she says that 'Autobiographies tell more lies than all but the most self-indulgent fiction' (AS Byatt, 'On the Day that EM Forster Died', 1987). What's more, the whole premise of the film *Terminator 2: Judgment*

John Connor:
 'The whole thing
 goes: The future's
 not set. There's
 no fate but what we
 make for ourselves.'

*Terminator 2:
 Judgment Day* (1991)
 Accessed 10.2.09:
[www.imdb.com/title/
 tt0103064/quotes](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0103064/quotes)

John Connor:
 [voiceover] 'The
 future has not been
 written. There is
 no fate but what we
 make for ourselves.
 I wish I could
 believe that ...'

*Terminator 3: Rise
 of the Machines*
 (2003)
 Accessed 10.2.09:
[www.imdb.com/title/
 tt0181852/quotes](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0181852/quotes)

When talking about
 their lives, people
 lie sometimes,
 forget a lot,
 exaggerate, become
 confused, and get
 things wrong. Yet
 they are revealing
 truths. These truths
 don't reveal the
 past 'as it actually
 was,' aspiring
 to a standard of
 objectivity. They
 give us instead
 the truths of our
 experiences.

(Marjorie Devault,
 'Personal writing in
 social research,' *Wiki-
 pedia*, 17.6.08)

Wikipedia, 17.6.08)

Day (1991) is that, not only is the past not set, *the future is not set*. The future, like the past, is subject to change and revision: a mirage floating and shimmering on the distant horizon. So, I'm not just re-writing and re-imagining the past, *I'm re-writing and re-imagining the future*. For the future emerges *out of* the past. Change one and you change the other. 'How do I guess at the future?' asks The Seer in Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist* (1988/1998). 'Based on the omens of the present. The secret is here in the present. If you pay attention to the present, you can improve upon it. And, if you improve upon the present, what comes later will also be better' (103).

This text, then, is part memoir, part autobiography, part autoethnography, part 'mystory' (Finley 2005, Ulmer 2004), part fact, part fiction, part *anything goes*. It is an example of what I call 'The Postmodern Pedagogondage' (Miller 2008a, 2008b, 2010, 2013): a vagabond-tourist pedagogy that drifts and tours simultaneously. This is a textual and pedagogical theory and practice that picks and chooses from the bric-a-brac of postmodern life while insisting on eclecticism and diletantism as a matter of principle and course. It learns and

... I think once something is written down it is necessarily frozen ... and it takes on an authority ... [that] destroys the actual fluidity of life – the fact that life is constantly changing – that life is a dialogue between ... what actually happens and one's own interpretation of what actually happens. So, yes, I think ... in this form, the memoir form, and autobiography, and indeed biography, inherently have these problems, which is to set a life ... or a time ... in amber ... and it can be very unfair, seemingly, to real characters who are set in that amber.

Memory *selects*, and *interprets* – and *what* is to be selected and *how* it needs to be interpreted is a moot matter and an object of continuous contention. The resurrection of the past, keeping the past alive, can only be attained through the active, choosing, reprocessing and recycling, work of memory.

(Zygmunt Bauman,
Liquid Love, 2006:
2003-2006, p. 87)

unlearns in equal measure. It forgets and remembers simultaneously. It welcomes creative digressions and spontaneous asides every bit as much as it plans packaged tours and structured holidays. It creates and disrupts and builds and destroys. In this sense it draws inspiration from the creative and transgressive feats of 'travel' writers like Frank Moorhouse (*Room Service*) and Bruce Chatwin (*In Patagonia* and *The Songlines*); picture book authors like Matt Ottley (*Requiem for a Beast*), and Gary Crew and Peter Gouldthorpe (*The Lost Diamonds of Killiecrankie*); and discursive essayists like Michel de Montaigne (*Essays*), Jean-Jacques Rousseau (*Reveries*), and Henry David Thoreau (*Walden*). These authors do not follow one road or one argument or one plot. Their texts are simultaneously structured and un-structured and planned and unplanned. They are neither essays nor novels in the 'monological' sense. These writers and artists leave the path and enter the scrub. They cross borders and mix genres. They keep their options open, as Zygmunt Bauman (*Wasted Lives*, 2006: 107) might say, and are ready and willing to turn left rather than right and backward rather than forward as

(Robyn Davidson,
Adelaide
Writers' Week,
2 March 2008)

A story is not like
a running track. A
story is a river,
made by the joining
of many streams. We
can explore a few,
but we can't turn
back to trace them
all. We have to
choose carefully.

A story is also
like a road. It
leads forward, but
turnings constantly
branch off from
it. We may go down
a few, but not
all. Some are even
dangerous. Every
breath of a good
story contains other
stories, entering
and leaving it, most
of which will never
be heard. That's
what makes a good
story good.

(In (Indra Sinha, *The
Death of Mr Love*,
2002: 132)

whim will have it. Itineraries change. Interests
peak and wane. *Bricoleurs* know that just as many
stories turn up in the sewers and back streets of
hell as on the boulevards and terraces of utopia,
and that the stories of beggars and vagabonds can
be every bit as compelling as those of tycoons and
tourists. One man's truth is another woman's lie. As
Nietzsche says, *there are no facts, only interpreta-
tions*, and travel writers know that *all* journeys and
all stories are provisional. *Until-further-notice*.

This text is as much a recount as it is a future
imagining. It is an eschatological memoir and fu-
ture-looking reminiscence. And this is as it should
be—neither here nor there—neither then nor now.
It is a simulacra memoir. A copy of a copy of a lie.
Of a truth.

Ahoooooooo—

So let's start again. Let's pray I don't die in the
night and trap Sapphire in hell. Let's pray I install
a trapdoor so she can escape if need be. And let's
pray I leave ample food by the backdoor to tide her
over until help arrives. Just as I did Santa and his
reindeers as a child.

So let's start somewhere else, somewhere nearer

NO FACTS,

ONLY

INTERPRETATIONS

AHOOOOOOO---

Sapphire

truth than fantasy, somewhere nearer the beginning than end. Let's start, as they say, *in medias res*, in the middle of things, and turn away from this troubling room and troubling aside.

So let's begin by playing somewhere else.

Let's begin by leaving...

Let's start somewhere else.

Eschatology: 'The part of theology concerned with death, judgement, and the final destiny of the soul and of humankind' (Oxford English Dictionary).

Let's start in another world—in another dimension—in a parallel life.

Many years have passed since I wrote the first lines of this text. And much has changed. I no longer leave my bedroom door closed at night and Sapphire no longer sleeps at the foot of my bed. She has grown old, and blind, and deaf, and frail. I spent so much time imagining and fearing her death that her demise came to me, like a delayed echo, only sharper and more graphic. Her deterioration has, in fact, matched my own transformation. Sadly, her diminishing has matched some-

Are we not as
pebbles in the
stream of fate, now
washed together in
some sandy bay, then
scattered along the
margin and then
dispersed? And when
the rain of time
descends and swells
the stream we are
swept before the
tide, some over
cascades, some in
deep bedded pools,
some on shore, and
some are hurried
away until lost
in the ocean of
Eternity. This is
the life of man.

(William Anderson
Cawthorne,
Literarium Diarium,
Wednesday October
26, 1842)

thing like my replenishing. *My beginning*. And I feel bad about that.

The end of one world has led to the beginning of another. One life fades while another shines.

My door is open because we need to hear the baby. She is two now, and the fitful and sleepless nights have given way to longer and quieter slumbers. Kate sleeps beside me. She has made a home, a family, an us. She didn't just make a new entity—she made a new world.

Sapphire moved outside, with our other two dogs, when our daughter arrived. She was new and they were boisterous. Things had changed. I built a three-room dog kennel beside the house, and the dogs repay us with fits of barking at the kangaroos and foxes that slouch and slink through the surrounding night. We live on a two-acre block with vegetable gardens, newly-planted fruit trees, mature eucalypts, and revegetation. We built an off-grid house. We make our own power and collect our own water. We recycle our own septic and keep our own chickens. We grow as much food as we can and we watch the seasons pass through the leaves and sky. The shadow of our daughter grows

and swells as the days lengthen.

She grows so fast. *Ahooooooooo—*

So, the story has changed while the need for story remains. The story has changed right when I thought I knew how it would end. But isn't that just how 'story' should be—uncertain, ever-changing, and revisable? A partial resolution that is just as likely to change, evolve, and grow? One story bunts up against another story and a new story cracks into being. Our daughter's story grows from our stories, and a family story sprouts from each. One story nourishes another just as Sapphire nourished me back from beyond. It was Sapphire's love and devotion that fed and nurtured my return, that taught me how to begin again. And so, as Stan Parker's grandson realises after the old man dies at the end of *The Tree of Man* (Patrick White 1961), 'in the end, there was no end.' The tree of life continues to spread and grow. Sprouts of green pierce up from the mud and from the tips of twigs.

One thing falls while another thing stands. One apocalypse follows another.

Life gives death, gives life, gives death.

And so now our bedroom door remains ajar to

let in the cries that split the night and nourish the soul. That shake the body from eternity and stillness, back to presence and action. To the urgent *now* and the imperative to act. For those cries for help that shake the night and rattle the soul are for us alone, and we must attend to their needs. As Gogo and Didi realise in *Waiting for Godot*, those cries for help still ringing in our ears are addressed to all humanity, and in this moment, this house, this epoch, all humanity is us, and it is for us alone to decide what to do... What to *really* do. To proceed or to recoil, to start or stop, laugh or cry. And we have decided what to do: we have decided to leave our bedroom door open so that we might stumble headlong towards our baby in the still of night, to love her with every wisp of our being. Fingers probing the darkness to find her face, to feed her need. To follow her cries to find our way home.

To her sighs.

Her songs.

And snatches of speech.

Her coughs, bumps, and calls that jolt us out of our sleep and back from the deep.

For they are the sound of *us*. The melody of life.
And, for now and always, that is enough.
Because the future is burgeoning with possibility
and the void is punctured by cries.

And we are clamouring towards them...

While Sapphire, dear dog, snores in the night.

Ahooooooooo—

The past is not sealed, not immutable, and it does not belong to anyone. It is an impression left by the telling of stories. I want to invent a world for my mother in which she is free to speak for herself and for her time—to fictionalise her own life. It is what we all do incessantly in an effort to find a personal truth (that glint of gold) to make sense of ourselves and of history—to keep the past open.

(Robyn Davidson, Adelaide Writers' Week,
2 March 2008)

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We are built from
layers of text, meaning,
& experience
...

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Perhaps the sense of our journey does not lie only in one direction, perhaps there is no terminus at the end of the tracks to justify our insistent movement forward? Perhaps we are riding blinded by a future whose redemption ultimately lies at our backs, in the rubble, misery and confusion that we think we have already overcome?

(Iain Chambers, *Migrancy, Culture, Identity*, 1995: 30)