

PARADISE LOST

Exile

Waste Management:

All things, born or made, human or not, are until-further-notice and dispensable. A spectre hovers over the denizens of the liquid modern world and all their labours and creations: the spectre of redundancy.

Liquid modernity is a civilization of excess, redundancy, waste and waste disposal.

(Zygmunt Bauman, *Wasted Lives*, 2006, p. 97)

The Stranger:

At first, one is struck by his peculiarity—those eyes, those lips, those cheek bones, that skin unlike others, all that distinguishes him and reminds one that there is someone there.

(Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, 1991, p. 3)

[Setting:] A **Shopping Mall** in Paradise. Present day. Noon. A clear blue sky, well swept pavements, and billboards, shop fronts, mirror-balls, music, bling, and perfect bodies in between.

An aeroplane leaves a thin white trail through a perfect blue sky. Seagulls eat french fries in perfect yellow sunshine. The tourist-classes rush hither and thither in search of bargains and thrills, leaving trails of perfume and cologne in their wakes.

In the Mall, which runs for 18 kilometres and 187,000 shops, a man is ambling along, eyes roving as if in search of something, a desperate glare to his otherwise sunken eye. He looks at the ground, not the shops.

‘Sort of thing,’ he mutters. ‘Sort of thing.’

He is perhaps thirty-something years of age, X Generation, with unwashed greying hair. He sports a three-day growth and a cut lip. His tattered clothes contrast the Edenic glitz of the Mall: the reds, oranges, yellows, blues, violets, silvers, and golds of an all-out consumer war.

‘It must be here somewhere,’ he says, crouching, and examining the pavement at his knees. ‘I know you’re here somewhere,’ he adds, smiling.

Unbeknownst to the man, a small, white, shiny van has made its way along the Shopping Mall, through the shoppers, and stopped at his side.

Two men in white overalls, white gloves, mirror glasses, close-shaven faces, and ear-pieces emerge from the vehicle. Blue letters spell—**Waste Management**—across their backs.

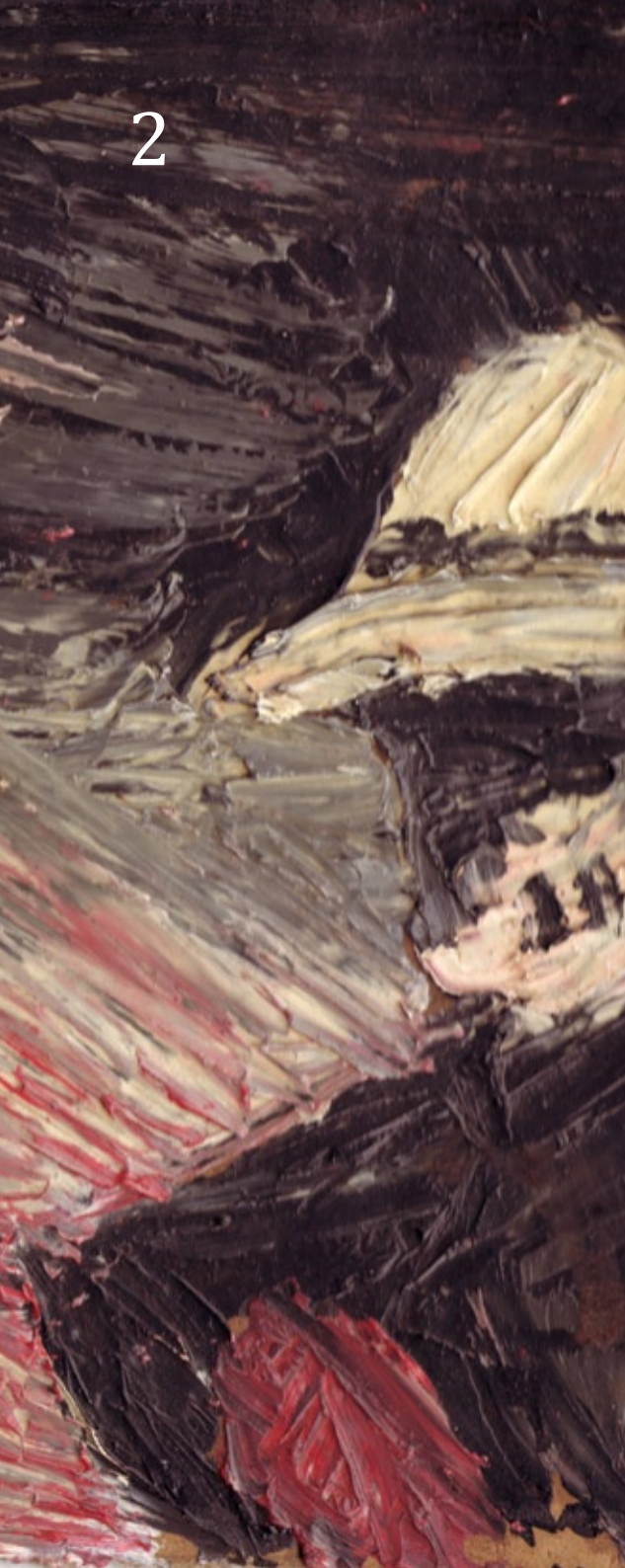
‘We’ve found him,’ one reports to his ear-piece.

To the general applause of the onlookers. *Click. Click. Click.*

‘Okay, scumbag, on your feet,’ says the other.

But the **madman** is too engrossed in the pebbles in the pavement

*Shopping malls: A place of motion, expansion and shrinkage, the shopping mall organizes space as a flow system in which histories, cultures, styles, identities and experiences are knitted together in “unique” configurations. Reproducing shopping as a leisure “experience” through the articulation of “themed” zones, the shopping mall blends the “ordinary” and the “exotic”, making consumption into something “exciting”. Here shopping becomes the dream of escape, the transformation of consumption into holiday time. Shopping, we might say, contains and re-creates the world: it is a simulation of tourism in which the shopper is an entrepreneur of (touristic) sensation’ (Colin Trodd, ‘Postmodern and Art,’ in Stuart Sim (Ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*, 2006, p. 90).*



Scumbags:

Unneeded, unwanted, forsaken – where is their place?

The briefest of answers is: out of sight. First, they need to be removed from the streets and other public places used by us, the legitimate residents of the brave consumerist world. If they happen to be fresh arrivals and have their residence permits in less than perfect order, they can be deported beyond boundaries, and so evicted physically from the realm of obligations due to the bearers of human rights.

If an excuse for deportation cannot be found, they may still be incarcerated in faraway prisons or prison-like camps, best of all in the likes of the Arizona desert, on ships anchored far from sailing routes, or high-tech, fully automated jails where they see no one and where no one, even a prison guard, is likely to meet them face to face very often.

(Zygmunt Bauman, *Consuming Life*, 2007, p. 127).

to notice the white bodies towering above him. Or the circle of onlookers taking photos with their mobile phones and demanding blood.

A sudden kick to the ribs and a taser blast to the neck is all it takes to put him down. He crumples forward. And over.

A lone maggot in Paradise.

The fallen consumer.

Hobo beyond redemption.

The white overalls drag the deflated body to the van, swing open the back doors, and toss it onto the pile.

A roar breaks out in Heaven. **Scumbags** will not be tolerated in Paradise. *We will decide who comes to this country and the circumstances under which they come.*¹ The poor, unskilled, deranged, sick, and homeless are not welcome.

Within minutes and the white van has left the Shopping precinct; within half an hour and it has left the Suburban precinct; and within an hour it has reached the perimeter fence: the dividing line between rich and poor—tourist and vagabond—shopping and starving. The van stops at a tower with the number 19 painted on its wall. A viewing platform silhouettes the sky above. Razor wire glitters in the afternoon sun. Two men in khaki uniforms and rifles wave the van through.

Beyond the gates and seventeen bodies are tossed onto a trolley and wheeled away. One of them, the one plucked from the Shopping Mall, dreams of death.

Blood, bile, and excrement.

He suddenly screams and the butt of a rifle comes down on his head.

‘Welcome to hell, maggot! Welcome to hell!’

Otherness:

“It is the criminals who make us insecure, and it is the outsiders who cause the crime”; and so ‘it is rounding up, incarcerating and deporting the outsiders that will restore our lost or stolen security’ (Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Love*, 2006, p. 119).

‘You can’t forbid people to be born – at least not yet’ (John Steinbeck, *Travels with Charley: In Search of America, 1961/1965*, p. 170).

‘We identify those who are different, who stand out from the crowd – the atypical, abnormal, aberrant, odd, irregular, even deviant or perverse – because they are set off against the norm’ (Wadham, Pudsey, & Boyd, *Culture & Education*, 2007, p. 143).

¹ John Howard, Prime Minister of Australia, 6 December 2001.



In the habitual terms in which human identities are narrated, they [the ‘strangers,’ the ‘others’] are *ineffable*.

They are Jacques Derrida’s ‘undecidables’ made flesh. Among people like us, praised by others and priding ourselves for the arts of reflection and self-reflection, they are not only *untouchables*, but *unthinkables*. In a world filled to the brim with imagined communities, they are the *unimaginables*.

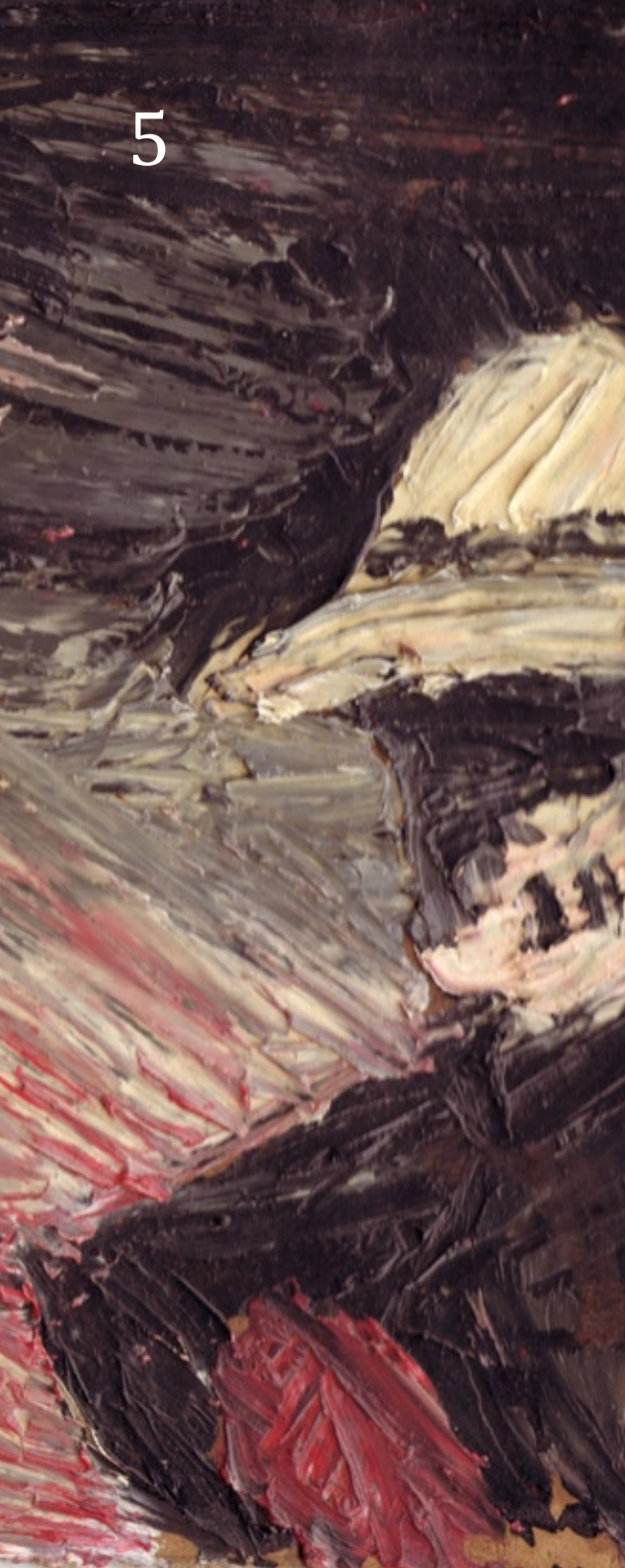
Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Love*, 2006, p. 141



4

*The Ridiculous Madman:
The Chronicles of Jack Diggins,
Vagabond*

5



The Day before Dying



6

From out of the darkness we hear a voice:

‘Sort of thing... Sort of thing...’ it stammers. ‘I *am* sane,’ it insists. ‘I *am* rational.’

‘I think *i-r-r-a-t-i-o-n-a-l* is a better word for it,’ a second voice responds, sending another blow into the darkness with the butt of a rifle. A thud and a shriek are heard in the depths. ‘After all,’ the voice continues, ‘only the market *is* sane, and *it* has decided your fate.’

The darkness lifts and the setting appears. Begin:

Scene 1

7



Like one, that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And having once turned round walks on,
And turns no more his head;
Because he knows, a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge,
The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,
1797-1798



There are two types of prayer.

In the first type, the person asks for certain things to happen and attempts to tell God what he should do. This does not allow the Creator either time or space in which to act. God – who knows perfectly well what is best for each of us – will continue to do as he sees fit. And the person praying is left with the impression that his prayer went unanswered.

In the second type, the person may not understand the Almighty's intentions, but he allows his life to develop according to his Creator's plans. He asks to be spared suffering, he asks for joy in the Good Fight, but he never forgets to add: 'Thy will be done'.

This is how the warrior of light chooses to pray.

Paulo Coelho, *Manual of the Warrior of Light*, 2004, p. 124



In the early Christian Church there were two kinds of pilgrimage: ‘to wander for God’ (*ambulare pro Deo*) in imitation of Christ or of Father Abraham who quit the city of Ur and went to live in a tent. The second was the ‘penitential pilgrimage’: in which criminals guilty of ‘enormous crimes’ (*peccata enormia*) were required, in accordance with a fixed set of tariffs, to assume the role of travelling beggar – with hat, purse, baton and badge – and work out their salvation on the road.

The idea that walking dissolved crimes of violence goes back to the wanderings forced on Cain to atone for the murder of his brother.

Bruce Chatwin, *The Songlines*, 1987/1988, pp. 201-202



Where post-modern authors in the humanities retain the subject, s/he is ... aware of his or her 'own fictionality.' Such subjects misbehave in a comic fashion. They refuse to hear the author's voice or to recognise his/her authority. These subject-characters try their best to evade, defy, or resist their author. They do what their author does not intend or may even prohibit. Sometimes these subjects express regret or pain at being written into a text!

Pauline Marie Rosenau, *Post-Modernism and the Social Sciences*,
1992, p. 45

11

