

Some poems by Stephen Oliver

THE LAST DAY BEFORE

The painter has not arrived yet.
Clouds slant back from hills, toward,
and untoward; no, he will not
come, given his gaze is held otherwise,
a scene gaudy, maybe, to his inner-eye.

Though brush strokes of air and light
might have captured his hand;
hereabouts, shift and shunt through
silos of summer heat. The green slope of
hill and high farm road faience in

gouged lines round the bowl that
holds this town, country-ransomed,
found on a map antique or rumoured.
Buildings ghostly as pieces of pottery
thrown up from a promising dig.

Muffled engines of looters cruise
and idle the outskirts around and round
the bowl of the town, every night,
conspire to crash the bright party as the
sky shatters a million broken stars.

“NO PEN OR PAPER IN PARADISE”

—*Nawal Al Saadawi*

Housed within its crystal grotto the giant plasma screen creamily uncoils its mantra, one word chasing languidly upon another, “Madness Is Pandemic”,

and, “In America You Can Get Everything You Want” over a background of hazed, Maya blue, fathomless. Chariots of one sort or another crowd the company

car park; Phrygian, Celtic, Illyrian, Thracian; theme park or anteroom one might have thought, but being dead, one does not think, for the moment eternally dissolves one

into the other seamlessly; the dream of forever leaning, the fall, the long look back, the forced look down, and again, one thought chasing upon the tail of the next.

PSYCHOSIS

Starter motor, whirr of wings,
Bird in the dead of night sings.
Gravel crunches under wheel,
Engine steady, brakes of steel.

Glides softly by, barely heard,
Thought it was a midnight bird.
Dark folds back to empty air,
Distant & small, changes gear.

What goes ahead doubles back,
Time stretches, time is a rack.
Stars are spark plugs in the night,
Thought by far surpasses light.

The child feels solitude vast,
And knows that this cannot last.
Recalls the loss with sadness,
And one short step to madness.

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Stephen Oliver is the author of 17 volumes of poetry. Travelled extensively. Signed on with the radio ship *The Voice of Peace* broadcasting in the Mediterranean out of Jaffa, Israel. Free-lanced in Australia/New Zealand as *production voice, narrator, newsreader, radio producer, columnist, copy and feature writer, etc.* Lived in Australia for the last two decades. Currently resides in NZ. His latest volume, *INTERCOLONIAL* a long narrative poem published by John Denny of Puriri Press, dennyjhs@xtra.co.nz Auckland, NZ (2013) is as much about Australia as it is New Zealand. A *transtasman* creation.