

Redgum, Working Girls

She said she came from Portland
Where the ashen skies and leaden ocean
Left her like the local boys, barren of emotion
As we talked we watched the raindrops
Running down the window
Laundromat in Darlinghurst,
Like a fish shop from the past.

And her mother called her Mary
After Mary Magdalene,
To deny her beauty
Would have been the greatest sin
It was a profile in the neon and a Kings Cross Doorway lean
To half an hour of tending someone else's tangled dream.

There were lines of sailors, lines of speed
Lines upon the Footpath where she stared
When things were quiet, as night deferred to dawn.
And the coke cups played red rover
In the breeze that scuttled through the streets
Taxies left for greener fields
While Sydney stretched and yawned

And her mother called her Mary

After Mary Magdalene,
There were virgins in the morning,
She had sisters in the pain;
And the wives would clutch their husbands
Perhaps they shared the shame,
'cause working streets and Weddingrings are sometimes much the same.

She tap-danced with the buskers
Near the subway shouting blues songs
They remembered from their teenage years of dreamtime radio.
And the years withdrew behind her eyes
To let the little girl look out
In simple childish innocence
At drawings in the sand.

And her mother called her Mary
After Mary Magdalene,
She had long dark hair and massage oil
And a key to let you in;
And the lines upon her face were maps of roads she'd travelled,
Lined with people throwing stones because they didn't understand,
That a half an hour of tenderness (perhaps they shared the same)
'cause working streets and Weddingrings are sometimes much the same.