A Writer’s Life
Michael Farrell

Every life is punctuated: the shorter
the sharper, the longer the more losses
A writer can feel that they’re living – loving
in parallel to the rest of humanity
(Though not necessarily all of life
It can be a bracketed existence
feeling the world perceives you like they perceive

a kangaroo: a [kangaroo] on the side
of the road or [kangaroo] on a plate
As if life will go on without them (it
does this with everyone, of course), but as
if that process has always been in train
as if the human arena is just
waiting for the last [kangaroo], last [writer]
to pass so we can begin to meditate
on their meaning. A morbid take on the philosophy
of life no doubt, but it’s how it struck …

Nathaniel. That living was not a story
but a line with knots in it. That the at
times papery undigested feeling
he carried around was from being bookish
and that therefore not everyone felt this
way. Yet he perceived each life as being
philosophical whether the life was
a ‘reader’’s life or not. Every writer
has their own parallel life, that of their
writing. It’s a satisfaction or …

dissatisfaction, or an undertow
that can keep them from drowning or flying
Nathaniel worried at the conflict between
creating this parallel and his sense
that all of humanity (privileged
or oppressed) were complicit in keeping
humanity centre stage. Meanwhile
the boundaries of the human theatre
and the territories beyond, become
more desolate quieter bracketed
This worry perhaps kept him – or kept him
feeling that he was – backstage or in …

wings, performing with and for others as
they weaved in and out of the arena
He was not strictly alone very much at
all, just enough to produce more words, more
characters and songs. He felt increasingly compromised by metaphors like ‘wings …

concepts like song, as if both were actively working to make birds into [birds], and then eventually just [ ]: a space or cage for humans to enter and contemplate birdness. He felt differently about children though and after an encounter with a child as fleeting as a smile from a two-year-old neighbour, he would write away as if writing were an innocent play space, and even draw birds on the page, feeling it would be silly to consider that his drawing could substitute for a real bird that it in any way pushed real birds into brackets. That he wasn’t a father was an aspect …

feeling that his life was in parallel that the men pushing prams and giving advice to their kids in restaurants were somehow on the main track, that his was a neutral existence or worse, parasitic. He had no sexual relations with women either: which meant he thought that even his writing couldn’t participate in …

potent stream with those male writers who did. Such turmoil led Nathaniel to an abstract form of writing, that seemed to some readers to displace the human world with one …

language. Wasn’t language part of the human world, though? It often seemed to Nathaniel that it wasn’t actually. That it wasn’t language but [language] that he was trying to grasp and the more the brackets fell away …

he entered the words as unbracketed language. Then the world became the [world …

human became the [human]. So he began again. He wrote about the people he observed, his family and his childhood …

his friends and their troubles. It was the wiser course he thought, one that began to produce respect and even a little success. Part of Nathaniel didn’t want to be wise, even as he gave up …
ordinary entertainments of life
that some call vices. He became a writer
whose writing was a philosophy of …

human arena but one that implied
what he perceived as bracketing. Like all
those who live alone he made his own toast …

wiped his own benchtop. He looked whenever
a bird flew into the glass and looked away
when an ant mouse or cockroach paid him …

visit. He was becoming patient he
was waiting for something he discerned as
he aged. That the love he sought was not …

love he had found in parallel but one
that would appear when the two kinds of life
that seemed parallel but were in fact …

gradually and inexorably
like hand-drawn lines getting closer to each
other – joined. It was this waiting (that felt
active not passive) that would keep him alive
through losses, undoubtedly, but would write
him into a death where love – life – was as
present as words. Nathaniel would then fly
from the arena. He would die like
everything he admired: it would be …

rush like finishing a book. Yet still he
worried at the thickness and the richness …

the book. To fly was one thing, it seemed to
take you beyond the human, yet the sky
had already been transformed into airspace
Besides Nathaniel thought, looking at his
thin short forearms that he would, at the last
rather bound like a kangaroo. He put
the fingers of his right hand together
as if to pull at or pick up a thin
or small piece of food then raised two fingers
like the ears of a shadow puppet. He
invented a voice for his kangaroo
hand. His two-year-old neighbour was in …

yard of the apartments with her stick …

Nathaniel wasn’t going to talk about
death to a two-year-old not even in
a squeaky imaginary kangaroo voice
he just squeaked [], and asked her ‘so, what’s up