

Just as in Ovid's account of the myth in *Metamorphoses* XI, where after his dismemberment Orpheus is reunited with Eurydice in Elysium, so Mishka is reunited with Leela in the Daintree. When Leela finds Mishka brutalised, tortured, and broken in an interrogation cell in Beirut, she decides she will take him back to his home in the Daintree, to his mother and grandparents: "‘Wherever he is,’ Leela said on the wide verandah of the house above the Daintree, ‘this is where Mishka is in his mind’" (290). The Daintree is as in mythic stories, the place of healing — of making whole that which has been dismembered — and Leela believes the rainforest retreat will annihilate the Cerberus that tore her Orpheus apart, thus enabling his return to the land of living: "High in the rainforest canopy, she would sit on the verandah with Miska's head on her lap. She would stroke his hair, while the parakeets settled on their shoulders, Uncle Otto would play while they dreamed" (357).

### Works Cited

- Heidegger, Martin. "The Origin of the Work of Art." In *Poetry, Language, Thought*. Trans. A. Hofstadter. New York: Harper and Row, 1975. 17-87.
- Ovid. *Metamorphoses*. Trans. Rolfe Humphries. Bloomington: Indiana U P, 1973.
- Hospital, Janette Turner. *Orpheus Lost*. Sydney: Fourth Estate, 2007.



**B N Oakman**

### THE RIVER NILE, VAN DIEMEN'S LAND (1837)\*

*Here with pensive peace could I abide,*  
wrote the landscapist John Glover\*\*  
when he established Patterdale Farm  
on the near side of the Nile,  
his place of pensive peace  
from whence, looking across the river,  
he painted this picture -  
a seventy year old Englishman capturing  
his new world.

The Nile curves gracefully,  
washes over a bed of yellow stones,  
delicate clouds float on sky transparent blue.  
In a forest brushed with golden light  
the feathery canopies of sinuous eucalypts  
never obscure the distant purple hills.

At first it's easy to neglect the figures,  
smaller than the spiky clumps of scrub,  
dwarfed by the soaring trees:  
naked black manikins who swim, fish,  
cluster around a campfire;  
two, weapons in hand, face each other,  
practising hunting skills perhaps.

An idyll unreproached by time.

Within twenty years William Laney's scrotum  
is souvenired for a coin purse.  
In twenty more, polite society proclaims  
they'd 'died out' at Oyster Cove,  
and Truganinni's skeleton awaits  
its glass case, to be labelled 'the last'.

Yet no forebodings disturb the tranquillity  
of Glover's Eden. No serpent slithers  
in his coarse undergrowth. Oblivion  
does not rip at his delicate foliage.  
Rapacity's monster does not surface  
in his Antipodean Nile.

A people abides with pensive peace  
under Glover's pale pellucid sky.

\* *The River Nile, Van Diemen's Land, from Mr Glover's Farm*, Oil on canvas, 1837, by John Glover, National Gallery of Victoria.

\*\* Born England 1767, arrived Tasmania 1831, died Tasmania 1849.

