

RAE DESMOND JONES

Ash Wednesday

to Kerry Leves

the moving stairs at Kings Cross station
groan upwards from deep beneath Victoria Street –
as I step on them flat steel
slips beneath my feet.

i have a ticket, which allows me
to pass an unlikely Angel at the gate,
a heavy middle aged man in blue
who glowers as the machine
chews my ticket like a broken biscuit.

(Give us this day our daily bread)

along Darlinghurst Road a man in shorts
with a Satanic tattoo on the back of each leg
shouts his price across the petrol fumes as he deals,

i weave my way through
a flickering trinity of lights at the crossing,
ignoring those demons revving engines, searing
the soul of the young prostitute who dances between them.

the fire station is here
although i am not sure that it still
puts out fires, traffic rolls over what
was once the Apollyon cafe although there

the earth moves,

the holocaust memorial
building's sombre brow curls
as a large class of girls huddles around the door
slurping coca cola.

(Kyrie Eleison)

i arrive at the exterior
of the Sacred Heart Hospice
– glass reflecting an empty sky –

although i wonder what compels me to come,
not being a Catholic (forgive me,
Irish Grandfather) nor have we ever been close,

but you wait with your mind
sharp as ever even while your body
collapses softly, elegantly into the ash
on your forehead

(Graciously look upon our afflictions, O Lord)

around us hover those we have helped
&, a little distant, those we have failed;

their lives assemble quietly,
clothed in light.