

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE SKY

In 1958 Arthur C Clarke published *The Other Side of the Sky*; a collection of short stories that described tales of a future where reality is no longer contained in earthly dimensions. This title is a Platonic quote about the space beyond reality and understanding. It suggests that reality may not be confined to what is perceptible to the senses. It was just some words that made me think about the limits of life, death and an unfathomable 'beyond'.

I recently found a book called *The Night Sky* in a second-hand store. Since the beginning of time (whatever that means) people have been attempting to map the stars. I read about the history of stargazing and that early astronomers used to make up their own subjective maps and named stars whatever the hell they liked, placing them anywhere - not related at all to reality. I read of stars called Cepheid variables. They pulsate and change luminosity constantly. By monitoring these stars and measuring changes, the distance of other stars can be calculated, giving humans the ability to measure far out into other galaxies. A distance beyond comprehension.

The street where I live is lined with London Plane trees. The trees are covered in brand new and rusty drawing pins from years of local notices, lost and founds, Pilates classes and Bible meetings. The trees have become cosmological maps recording moments in time. Over two years I amassed a collection of these pins, digging them out as I wandered past, to and from home.

A dream...

Outside the church he got off the tram, huddled in his green coat¹ hunching gently, looking downwards. I watched as he entered the dark church courtyard. I lost sight of him and followed quickly to find him again. I moved through the courtyard towards the sound of singing.

A small man on a park bench sang soulful blues as my Grandfather laid curled up on the neighbouring bench with his green coat spread over him for warmth. I heard a harmonica playing from within the darkness, but could not see who was playing it. As my Grandfather cupped his hands over his eyes like a happy but tired child, he said the song was his favourite, which made me think he came to listen often. He was happy there

¹ The green coat is the coat my Grandfather died wearing. It hangs on the back of my studio door.

with his legs resting slightly lifted towards his stomach in a kind of foetal position and his eyes shut, scrunched up all warm under his green coat. The stranger sang loud.

After a while my Grandfather got up, smiled and slowly headed out into the night, shuffling towards home.

David Turley, 2014

