

elephant

LUKE BEESLEY

after the film by Gus Van Sant, 2004

I've been tasting roads all my life

River Phoenix playing 'Waters', *My Own Private Idaho*

*** 1/2 (Three & a half stars)

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The new *elephant* by Gus Van Sant offers volume to outside-life, or this it seems is the impulsive first-feel of what is beginning as a film textured with sadness.

Sant's skill is to imbue the street outside—or the spiralling sound of a bird, the screech of a truck—with a hollowness, and in this hollowness he asks us to wait.

An elephant hadn't appeared on the screen though now a thought happening about the whistling shapes of clouds that may have formed its outline (or possibly I missed this in the overall feeling) at the heart of the sky. Besides, Brisbane autumn has thrown a typically lush sky, and a number of us are looking at it from the lay-back of a city park.

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You have your back to me, though in between leaning to return your book, you've taken a quick look through autumn and the presence of sun.

A bell on the counter lifted quickly, like shock or laughter
and gradually slowed to the spell of smoke.

I imagine it now, beyond and mixed with the season, or making a name in the city building.

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elephant is Sant's 5th film, and it begins in a similar tone to his last attempt at closeness, *my own private idaho*: orange-yellow sun burning jacket tops and shirts, mountains and the roadside, a long horizon. And in writing I'd like to end with the title, or specifically, the word *private*.

1/2

- the particular hair colour (snow) of the narrator, the protagonist:
- his hair and its relation to the name *Frost*, the killer
- the town *Vanilla* (where the movie was shot) was settled (supposedly) by a passing troupe of actresses: the story lived on and held the town to a myth—people moving away because of the stories and others attracted to *Vanilla* and the strange weightless faces gliding in the streets and the stillness of lips (even in the middle of quite animated conversations).

LUKE BEESLEY writes poetry and short fiction, and his work has been published widely in Australian newspapers and literary journals. He is currently studying for a master's degree in creative writing at the University of Queensland. He lives in Brisbane.
