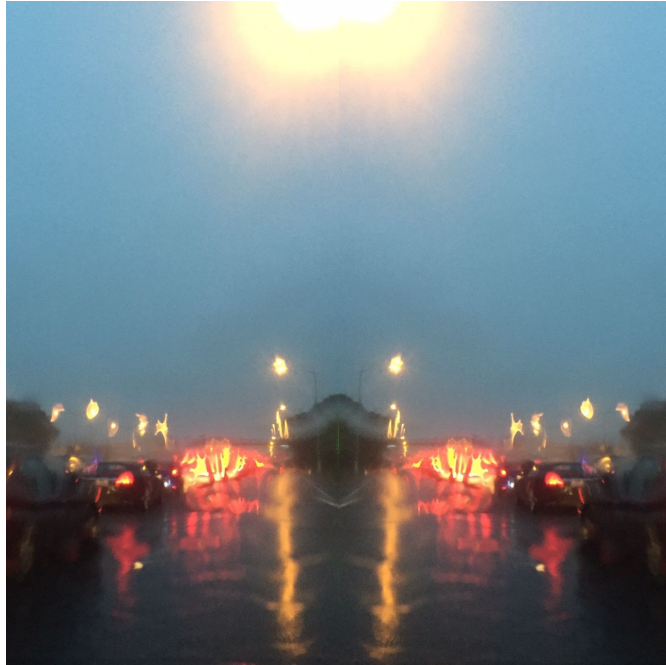


WALK ON HIGH
Auckland Writers Festival 2017

Twelve writers were asked to take a photo of a location in Auckland at either 8.30am or 8.30pm and then write an Insta essay to go with it. Here is what they created:

ALI IKRAM



All of the Above

When I first arrived in Auckland I bought a house on the main road. In an act of love that rendered me both speechless with gratitude and almost completely emasculated my parents were significant contributors to the purchase.

They flew from Christchurch so we could stand outside and admire it while shouting a barely audible conversation over the Saturday morning traffic.

The road only fell quiet between the hours of 2 and 4 am when a man with new responsibilities awakes to examine them from improbable angles. By the third week to my ears the noise could have been the rushing of surf. By the fourth I could not hear it at all.

On the cab ride home from the nightshift, the driver would ask “are you Muslim?” and once even “are you circumcised?” “are you married to a Pakistani?” - “No” - “I could have married a Kiwi girl too once. She love me so much.”

One of these nights the car had to pull hard left onto the shoulder of the road as a villa bending from veranda to deck was trucked down the centre line while a workman waved it on with one hand as he chatted on a phone held in the other.

The time available for us to judge the people who bought no fewer than five Grammar zone McMansions that rose in the vacant lot left behind was limited as a real estate agent soon appeared on the doorstep one Sunday night with an offer on our house.

Through the ensuing transaction I laundered my inheritance.

Still the blessings of our ancestors and the expectations that accompany them have always had a habit of also setting up their own parameters. Here from the earliest of times the great and enduring liberty was the meeting place of the harbours.

On the day that first generation dragged the sea going waka Tainui from one expanse of water to another the hulls left a furrow into which we attempt to fold a new city every year.

As the crew crossed over the birds who had swum, fed and nested there for millennia took flight.

“What is that noise? Are they the screams of men being massacred?” asked a kaumātua.

“He manu kau noa iho” came the reply, “Only birds.”

Tell me again about how time passes and how we are not returning over and over to the point of arrival.

To stand on the shore, to see the flock scatter, to sight it at the midpoint and then at the heads, only to find them waiting in the mangroves to be startled repeatedly by newcomers.

The seabirds glide the distance. But have you noticed there’s something in the flight of the smaller ones – the sparrows, swallows and tui? When in mid-air the bird wraps her wings about her body and rests from the effort for a breath while conforming to the same physical properties as a stone.

For some reason we have a funny habit of counting the number of times this occurs on the way to the horizon and calling it freedom.

ANTHONY BYRT



He was a green Hunter Thompson, all swagger and thrust and skinny legs, his double-teapot arms defiant against the glowing instruction he couldn't see behind him. He didn't look like a big moisturiser to me. But then, nor am I. And yet here we were, he and I, and the woman walking away from me who may have been there or not, a witchy presence disappearing into shards of night-vision light. The first ones at the party.

I've never been much of a clubber either, which is probably why I didn't understand that the 'Doors Open' time on the promo wasn't actually when you were supposed to show up. It seemed pedantic and possibly a bit mansplainy and definitely a sure sign I'm getting old to point out to the two young women on the door that 'doors open' should probably mean just that, so I crossed the road instead and sat in a bar as three drunk Englishmen nearby unpacked the delights of K Road, in a kind of degraded reverie. After a second beer, I crossed back, went up Artspace's stairs and saw the open glow.

I was there for the 'FAFSWAG Vogue Ball,' an event organised by a collective of LGBTQI Pacific artists who'd been doing their thing in South Auckland for a few years. All of a sudden everyone, including me, wanted to write about them. I'd interviewed FAFSWAG's spokesperson Tanu Gago a few weeks earlier. Rather than telling me what a FAFSWAG vogue ball was, we'd talked about what it wasn't. Don't call it drag, he'd said, with a vaguely cautionary tone, don't just compare it to *Paris is Burning*, and don't just write about fa'afafines. This was something else. What the hell was it, I sat there thinking, a little afraid to ask now so many options had been ruled out.

By nine the room was full, with the most mixed-up crowd I've ever seen in Auckland – gay, straight, art, Pacific, Asian, trans, gonzo, leather, even prim and uptight-looking. The music thumped and the MC, in army trousers and stilettos, called in the judges, all of them like something between Manga and mythic Pacific heroes. They sat imperious for the next three hours, throwing out scores. Bodies crashed through

space, shadowing each other with a kind of contactless ferocity, hands and hips flashing before they dropped and held poses on the floor, sometimes a hundred kilos plus of black grace, wearing 'Free West Papua' t-shirts or queenly, fairy-tale frocks.

The MC's high-energy refrain 'Is there anybody else, Is there anybody, anybody else,' drove people out of the crowd and onto the floor, like the tiny Asian woman wearing a cap and bright yellow sneakers or the massive trans Samoan, suddenly deciding she had a shot at the title after all – voguing to the disconcerting cry of encouragement: 'Yeah, Kelston Boys!' West, south, central – the main sources of the bodies willfully on display, less a celebration of Auckland's diversity than a live exercise in making a community – not didactic but deeply political, confronting, and hellishly sexy too.

But at midnight, everything changes back. The music stops, the performers disappear and the crowd disperses, as though it's 8:30 again and it's just me, the Hunter and the white witch, waiting in the green light, wondering if we'll see any magic.

JONOTHAN CULLINANE



“(W)hat is then interesting is to find, in that continuity, the less-obvious: the signs, the markings, the assemblages, the things hiding in plain sight in each cityscape”.

Last month I saw a homeless guy sitting on the footpath outside one of the big stores on 5th Avenue in New York. He had a cup in one hand and a sign in the other and the sign said, "Fuck Trump". He was making out like a bandit. I said to him, "Great sign!" and he said, "Good use for recycled cardboard, ain't it?!" The Teju Cole quote talks about “the things hiding in plain sight in each cityscape” and I thought that street people might fit that description. We see them but we don't see them. Maybe they make us uncomfortable, or embarrassed, or maybe we take the noted humanitarian and philanthropist Sir Bob Jones's view that they're lacking moral fibre - but whatever, they're there. So at 8.30 one morning last week I went for a stroll down High Street and sure enough there was a guy sitting in front of Unity Books and he had a sign that read, "Will Read From My Novel For Food". I thought that was entrepreneurial - it's not "Fuck Trump" but it's not bad - so I had a chat to him and he seemed a decent sort of a bloke and he explained that he had had a couple of reverses in life and business and had written a novel and was hoping to get back on his feet through the proceeds and I thought, "Hmmm, the very wishful thinking that's got you in the position you're in, perhaps", but I didn't say that to him. I gave him \$10 and he read a few paragraphs from his novel. And then I explained to him that I was doing this gig and would he mind if I read the same paragraphs and he said sure on the condition that I take the opportunity to pimp his book to the no doubt large and discerning and well-heeled crowd and I said absolutely.

So here it is. It's called "Red Herring". It's available for sale at Unity Books and numerous other outlets. It's set in this area in 1951. It starts with a quote from Lenin - the Bolshevik Lenin that is, rather than the I Am The Walrus Lennon familiar to anyone who's seen "The Big Lebowski". The quote in question is, "Not a single problem of the class struggle has ever been solved in history except by violence." Sir Bob Jones, take note.

“Auckland, New Zealand
February, 1951

Johnny Molloy stood in the shade of a verandah at the bottom of Vulcan Lane and watched the wharfies marching up Queen Street. He was in his thirties, not a bad-looking bloke, lean, with dark curly brushed back and a long Irish face that had been through the ringer. He wore a dark suit and a red tie. A cigarette was stuck to his bottom lip, smoke drifting up around the rim of a brown felt hat tipped back on his head. He was a private detective.

The wharfies tramped in loose formation behind a large canvas banner inscribed with the words, *Waterside Workers' Union*, the letters drawn like red and black coiled rope, looped at the end around baling hooks held in clenched fists. The banner was strung between two wooden poles. The Waterside Workers' Union president, Jock Barnes, carried one and his off-sider, Toby Hill, the other. Barnes did some drain-laying on the side and looked it, his big chest and broad shoulders squeezed into a tweed jacket that seemed a size too small. Hill, with his Harold Lloyd glasses and knitted vest, could have been an insurance clerk. But Molloy knew they were tough roosters, both of them.

Molloy had an appointment with an American named Furst at half past twelve at the Hotel Auckland. He didn't mind Yanks, having met a few in Italy during the war. Not bad blokes for the most part. Thought they won the show on their own of course but that was all right.

Queen Street was full of pedestrians. The shops were crowded. A Mt Eden tram was taking on passengers, the conductor reconnecting the pole to the overhead wire, the wheel arcing and spitting. The motorman leaned out of the cab, raised his cap to the passing wharfies, and shouted, "Good on you, boys!" A few spectators clapped their support. An office boy in a white shirt a size too big called out, "Go back to Russia!" and his friend laughed and said, "Too right!" A uniformed policeman in a white summer helmet gave them a look and the boys turned sheepish and shut up. Molloy knew the cop. Pat Toomey, a sergeant at Newton Police Station in Ponsonby Road. They nodded to each other. Auckland is a small place."

TEJU COLE



AUCKLAND, MAY 18 2017, 8.30 PM

You go to a place far away from home and make a picture of it. Are you trying to capture something typical and therefore recognizable of the place? If the Eiffel Tower is not in your photograph, how would people know you'd been in Paris? The Pantheon stands for Rome. We rely on such visual shorthand, but the effect of this habit is that places disappear: we end up showing not how they look but how our tutored expectations might expect them to look. The place is absorbed into its myth.

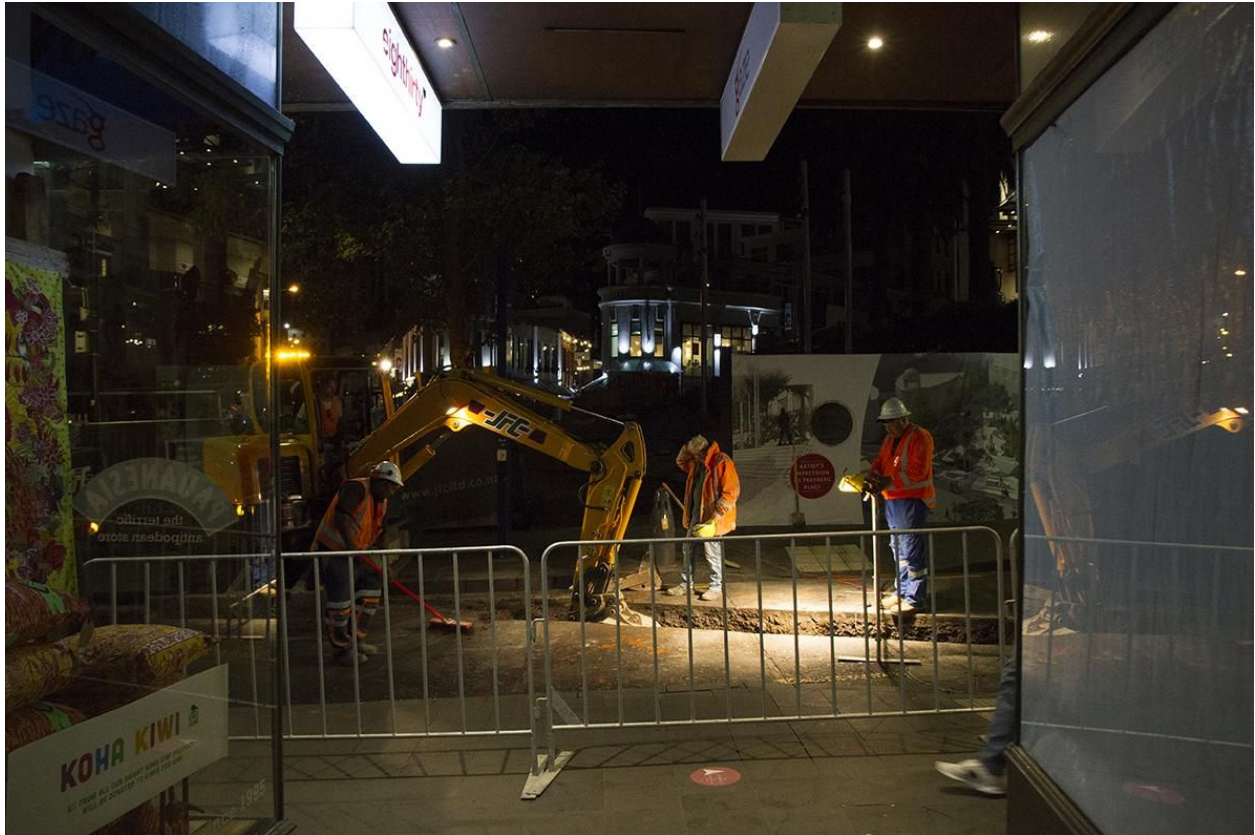
Let's say the place you've gone to is Auckland. How would people know? Perhaps the picture would be taken from the Sky Tower, or taken *of* the Sky Tower. Or perhaps it's a shot of one of the harbours. The photograph I'm showing here, lacking such markers (or obvious signifiers like All Blacks uniforms) is a little more difficult to pin down. There's a sense in which it could have been taken anywhere.

It's a night scene, with a profusion of patterns and textures. The image is dominated by the figure of a woman wearing a leopard patterned faux-fur coat. The main effect is due to the juxtaposition of this woman with another, turned away from her, whose black and white blouse is equally feral, though harder to pin to a particular animal. The secondary effect derives from the incidents that surround these women (we see their bodies, but not their heads). On the right is a third woman's animated face. On the left is a fourth woman's red dress, her leg, and her foot. She, too, is wearing a wildlife motif, on her shoes. And we have a man, turned away, in a grey suit, distant and small. There are wine glasses, and other faces in

the background. The fragmentation of persons and of bodily detail emerging from the shadows gives the photograph a baroque effect, like a Caravaggio.

Perhaps the fact that it's mid May and people are warmly dressed indicates that this photo was made in the southern hemisphere, where fall is coming to an end and winter is approaching. Some of the protagonists are white, but the woman in the leopard coat is brown; we are possibly in a cosmopolitan space, less likely a village pub than a soiree in a city. But whether this is Buenos Aires or Cape Town or Auckland is anybody's guess—and this is the value of the title and the caption. Without words, the photograph is merely another decisive moment, caught on the fly. With words, we confirm that this is how one corner of one party in Auckland looked sometime past 8.30 on May 18 2017. It is a view neither more nor less true of Auckland than one from the Sky Tower or the Viaduct Harbour.

SARAH LAING



They've found it – the entrance to the Auckland that lies beneath. They were meant to be laying fiberoptic cables, but the digger slipped, dug too deep, broke through the membrane that divides our world from the one underneath.

Once, lava coursed through the veins of the earth, searching for pores, eager for escape. Too much pressure. There were weaknesses, and they became explosions. Maungakiekie, Maungawhau, Rangitoto, Owairaka, Pukekawa. The lava blood and pus exploded out, cooled into the rocks, pumice, porous boulders, later to be stacked into status stone walls.

But before the streets were colonised and shabby little houses became million dollar properties with polished floors and Placemaker kitchens – the tunnels were something. Escape routes for warring Māori tribes. The lair of the Wilberforces, their granulated mucus skin polishing the walls to a black mirror. Scramble down there. Shine a torch on them and you'll see yourself. You'll look like a ghoul, a vampire, a corpse bride.

Go along a little. Enter the portico, find the right sized catsuit, don your Turkish slippers, their tips dipped in phosphorescence. Run along a bit and you'll come to the glowworm caves. Float in the pools beneath them – your catsuit is waterproof – they are warm, like amniotic fluid, and the worms seem like all the stars in the universe. You'll forget that you're underground.

You are weightless and the world has fallen away, but you must not forget where you are. Rise up and shake the water off you. Don't eat the fruit. It may look tempting – pregnant pendants bowing the branches of a silver tree – but, well, you've read fairy stories, right?

Did you ever wonder where all those High Street clubs went? The Box, Calibre? The ones where they'd play house and drum and bass and as I drew closer it would be like when I had my head under the bath, my limbs gangling, the beats murky and visceral. Then I'd push through the door and the sounds would come into sharp relief, dependent on drugs for their revelations, but I wouldn't have any drugs. I would dance – trying to have a good time – but I was faking it, my legs tiring, the kamikaze shaker tasting too sweet, and I'd long for guitar music, alternative, indie, pop, anything with a voice.

The clubs are down there. They have replicated themselves, along with other discarded things. Glove shops. Post offices. Haberdasheries. Go down a few tunnels – make sure you bring your spool of scarlet string theory or else you'll never find your way back to your own dimension. Down here in the underground there are no narrowed eyes, no hierarchy of beauty. There is no need to tug your top down because because your catsuit has made you sleek. You don't need to touch up your lipstick – the phosphorescence from your turkish slippers makes you glowy. You can dance all night and it will always be your favourite music and your feet will feel as if they have wings.

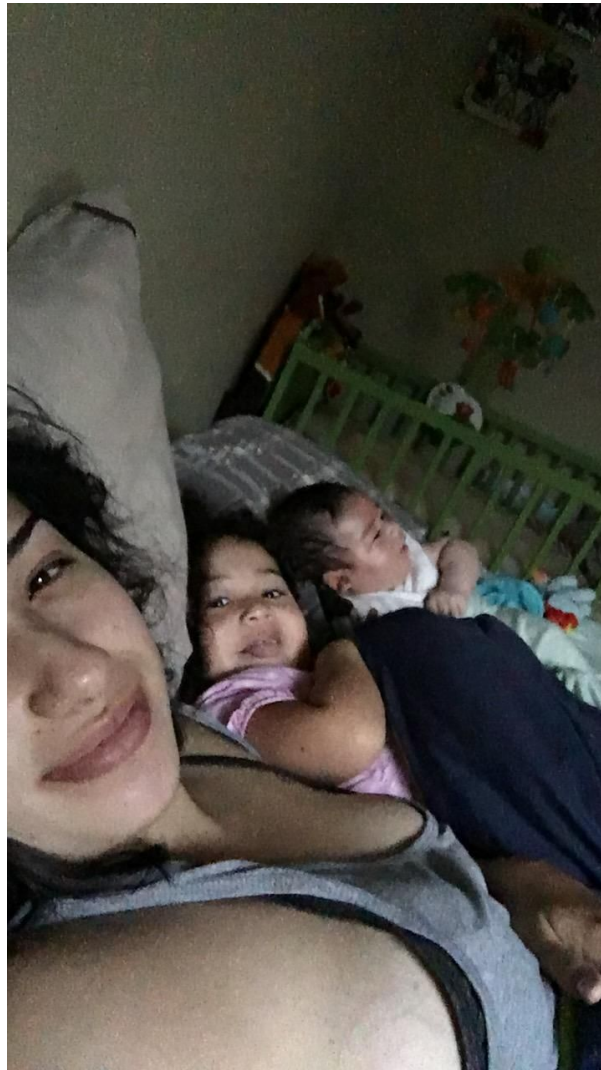
You're hungry? Did I mention not to eat the fruit? Not if you don't want to end up in those chrysalises up there. Yes, those. They look beautiful, right? Like fashionable oversized light bulbs. They were humans once, but now their flesh has broken down. They'll reconstitute themselves as glow worms soon enough. You wanted to be a star, right? Ok then. Take a bite.

Hurry, hurry, you must get out of there – the man is sweeping the dirt back into the trench; the digger is hefting clods of earth on top of you again. The opening is closing up. Follow your scarlet string.

Or stay down there

Forever.

LANA LOPESI



Hidden spaces filled with hidden people, hidden labour and literal labour at that. It was real different this time round. Last time I had a vendetta or something, I wanted to prove that I could do everything, break stereotypes blah blah blah. This time I wanted a break. I tried so hard to take a break. Got parental leave and everything. But it didn't really work out like that.

By 8.30am I've showered and done some work, edited some things and written some things. Fed the baby, fed both babies. Being busy is ordinary or something along those lines, right?

I don't know why I am editor sometimes. I don't even know if the comma should go here, or here, or here, or should there not be one at all. I studied Fine Arts. I read an article once that grammar was a marker of privilege. Let's just go with that.

I wonder why we, collective we, write. Like why do we add more think pieces, reviews, articles, general literature in to a world that already has so much. So many thoughts and so many opinions floating around, like a non-stop op-ed length Twitter feed.

The continuity of which is about being the most obvious. About the most obvious performance of self, performance of intelligence. I kinda enjoy it though, to be honest. Especially when feeding at 3am.

For Mother's Day, I asked for a full night's sleep and a sleep in. Breakfast is overrated. I slept on a double bed in a room by myself, and Chromecast both series of Chewing Gum from Netflix. It was kind of weird celebrating being a mum by not wanting the kids around. But it was so worth it. No regrets. None at all.

IAN WEDDE



Hi. I'm Simple. Mr Simple. I like simple.

I like the word 'and'. It's simple. One AND one is two. Simple. You AND me. Simple. The two of us.

I like the word 'or'. It's simple. One OR one is one. You OR me is you or me. One of us. Simple. One or the other of us. Simple.

I like the word 'why?' – it's simple. Just answer the question. Also 'Why not?' is simple. Just answer the question. Why you or me? Answer the question. Why you and me? Answer the question. Why NOT you AND me? Answer the question. Why not you OR me? Answer the question. It's simple. It's simple.

Walking that way along High Street or walking this way along High Street? Answer the simple question. Why that way along High Street? Why NOT that way along High Street. Why THIS way along High Street? Why NOT this way along High Street. Answer the questions. They're simple. Simple.

Simple!

Hang on.

Walking *that* way I see a long-haired woman crossing High Street dangerously. Or maybe it's a long-haired man crossing High Street dangerously. I grab the words 'Look out!' before they leave my mouth. Because who am I shouting 'Look out!' to? I need to know the answer. Him or her? Or maybe it could be a him-and-her! That would be simple. One and one is two, only it's one. What? Hang on. It's simple, right? Or it's not simple. Why is him or her simple? Why NOT is him or her simple? Not simple? Why is a him-and-her simple or not simple? Answer the questions. Answer the questions! Answer the simple questions!

Walking THIS way along High Street I'm choosing a podcast. What's it going to be? *Stranglers* or *Dick Cavett Tells Tales of Hollywood's Secret Shame*? *My Dad Wrote a Porno* or *Blue Jam*? Just make a choice. It's simple. What? No, wait. Hang on. Which one do I want? Why do I want it? Answer the question. It's simple. Which one DON'T I want? Answer the simple question. Why don't I want it? It's simple. Answer the question.

No, wait.

Which 'I' wants *Stranglers*? Which 'I' doesn't want *Dick Cavett Tells Tales of Hollywood's Secret Shame*? Is the 'I' that wants *My Dad Wrote a Porno* the same as the 'I' that doesn't want *Blue Jam*? Is the 'I' that wants *My Dad Wrote a Porno* the same as the 'I' that doesn't want *Dick Cavett Tells Tales of Hollywood's Secret Shame*? Is the 'I' that wants *Dick Cavett Tells Tales of Hollywood's Secret Shame* the same as the 'I' that doesn't want to listen to *Stranglers*? Is the 'I' that wants *Blue Jam* the same as the 'I' that wants to listen to *My Dad Wrote a Porno* and *Stranglers*? *Blue Jam* AND *My Dad Wrote a Porno* AND *Stranglers*? What about *Dick Cavett Tells Tales of Hollywood's Secret Shame*? Do 'I' want to listen to that as well? Why not? Why don't 'I' want to listen to *Dick Cavett Tells Tales of Hollywood's Secret Shame* AS WELL AS *My Dad Wrote a Porno* AND *Stranglers* AND *Blue Jam*?

Keep it simple! Keep it simple! I'm simple! Mr Simple!

I'm walking west. Brake-lights. Stop. Going that way.

I'm walking east. Head-lights. Start. Going this way.

Stopping AND starting. Stopping OR starting. No, wait. Hang on.

Going this way and that. This way and that way.

Hang on.

Hang on.

Wait.

Going that way and going this way. Going that way or going this way.

It's simple.

Hang on.

HANG ON

LOUISE TU'U



“I think we should have done this before.” No answer. “You haven’t paid three weeks rent.”

Again, no answer. “Fucking stop following me Ivan!”

Heavy breathing and the clip clopping of heels.

The area that surrounds this building is a reserve. The top half has one of Auckland’s best playgrounds with blue tinged wood chips and cans of Woodys after a hard night. The bottom half is a grassy, private and eerie plain, next to state housing. The building occupies an uneasy middle ground, with terrible tags, rotting wood nailed over windows and a tinny looking security camera, which makes you think twice about investigating it. Years of inertia passed with no comment. Soon, this area, like many, began to gentrify. One day, the Council inserted a path from the top where I am through to the bottom where this lovely couple were having a domestic. Except their accommodation was the reserve.

A few moments earlier, I looked earnestly through the viewfinder, hoping to capture an image that was profound yet didn’t try hard: an image that gave a glimpse but left one wanting more. A faint sound of a voice started to become more and more clear. I say a voice because it was one person who kept addressing a silent other, which in a few moments after I took this photo, began to spook me.

My imagination made me quickly move to the other side of the building, where its’ motto, Honour Before All was barely legible. The full moon seemed to be mere centimetres above it. I pulled the camera from

my bag and attempted to take more photos, with the growing feeling that the building was laughing at me. Openly mocking my attempts as I tried in vain to take delayed photo after photo, depressing the button so hard I thought my two fingers would break it. The extreme flashness of the borrowed camera, the screaming partner and the clichéd moonlight did not help my artistic vanity.

“Stop following me Ivan! Say something!” The quickening pace of footsteps clip clop clip clop sometimes unevenly which were once clearly audible now fell eerily silent.

Let me tell you. I almost shat my pants when I stopped hearing the steps. My bob tends to cover my ears so it took about a couple of seconds’ delay to realise that the couple or at least one half, had gapped it. It was now 8.31pm and I was torn: keep shooting and forget about checking the images in the dark lest I get jumped by the absent partner and pray they would turn out alright or ring the police and report them. For what? Disturbing my middle-class peace? Screwing up my unseen photos? Having an argument in public? I turned reluctantly towards the reserve and saw the back of the silent partner, shoulders heaving as he ran down into the dark. I was relieved that the scenarios I had in my head could remain still in a daytime soap opera.

STEVEN TOUSSAINT



DEGREES

At home with contingency
breeze arrives like a first
principle. Autumn.

Red leaves welcomed, one
by one, into the yawning
corridor. A season's calm
demolitions, diminishing
returns,

imaginary saturations
of foliage on the threshold.

Window shocked
from the centre out, a spider
web ripple.

Transparency insurance,
daylight commandeering
other arms,

new violet lucidity.
A passage through
bathroom steam in a sequence

of traditions, the house-
painter's wash-up
routine.

Nostalgia's exhausted
fanaticism, a little-
known need of the senses,

is enough to distress
the drywall

in memory. Thumbs squawk
across matte finish, fingernails set
against edification. Milk flesh
maturing

olive in evening.

'The loudest quiet
street in Auckland.'

The crisis is dramatised
thus, this gently
noxious odour a neighbour's

responsibility. Privacy
delights in cautiously
collapsing distances.

The shower over an hour
ago, an aura
of warmth still clings to her.

Ropes of mist
enhance the typically
invisible line between
properties, slack there

so long a species of weed
might take hold

mid-air. Over the ambit
an argument in two
different languages,

mutually interpreted
with reference to a common
furniture,

the myth of Narcissus.

Under the couches, into
the corners the dead leaves die

further. Zoning
precautions, inspectors.

Building an arbour
without any natives

is historical
windbreak, shade and the illusion

of seasonal change
for at least another decade.

Arrested development
whose ownership blurs
in real estate

legend. 'Twenty years
since construction began...

...there are Norfolk pines
younger

than the foundation.'

Her attention is an accident
of resistance, shattering
her reflection to get

clean, hammering
the water so hard she might be

forging an object
amid the speculation, fresh

masterpiece.

ROSABEL TAN



Not regret but something like it

My grandmother was a born-again Christian. She had a small room in her house devoted entirely to prayer, and whenever I stayed with her we'd spend hours in that room, singing hymns I no longer remember and reciting psalms I didn't fully understand. I never truly knew her, so to describe her feels like an act of caricature: she was illiterate, she was a gambling addict, and all she ever drank was coffee and Guinness: bottomless, black liquids that were inconceivable to a child.

I think about her a lot, and about the complex and contradictory and unshakable conviction with which she carried herself, and how you can only truly possess that once you've left something and returned.

*

I used to spend every Saturday morning in a makeshift monastery on the outskirts of Whitford, learning Mandarin in a converted garage filled with creaky tables and chairs. I was ten years old and I hated it. There was a small window at the front of the room, and occasionally you'd see a flash of saffron fabric as somebody passed through the garden outside, but for the most part it was just me and my exercise book in the dense metallic air, struggling to string together words I didn't understand the meaning of.

I stopped going to those classes the same year I stopped going to church. I didn't think much about these decisions at the time, only that they made me feel good.

At one of the last services I attended, the reverend asked with optimistic expectation if I'd started asking questions yet – about my faith, and the relationship I was forging with God. I didn't have any questions. I thought about God the way I thought about a distant relative: someone I knew I should feel connected to, but who I'd probably pretend not to see on the street.

Giving up these weekend activities weren't related, but they were part of a drastic series of pre-teen decisions I seemed to make in preparation for an unknown adulthood. It felt appalling to fail at something, especially at the age of ten, and I was failing at my religion, and I was failing so badly at Chinese – and feeling like you don't belong is the exact situation that I was trying to avoid.

It took me a really long time to rediscover those threads I'd discarded, those parts of myself I might actually want to hold onto. Chinese families don't really talk. Care is an act of abstraction, expressed solely through food or money. You don't ask how someone is, you ask if they've eaten. When I broke up with my first boyfriend and spent days in bed, watching *Grey's Anatomy* and crying for myself (and for Meredith Grey), my mum stocked up on mee goreng, dried mango and kiwifruit Whitakers. When my dad got sick, we cooked, and we made sure he ate. But I still get confused about what kind of cancer he had, because there was never a single conversation where he mentioned it, or talked about it in any depth, at least not when he was sober, which was all the time, except once.

It's only been through talking to other people that I've realised that a lot of the experiences I thought were uniquely mine – the distinct and embarrassing and dysfunctional experiences of a teenage malcontent – were the experiences of all teenage malcontents with first-generation Chinese parents, and sometimes I feel sad and ashamed it took me so long to discover that.

*

Over the past month, I've spent my mornings in train stations around Auckland, giving away miniature Singaporean breakfasts to bleary-eyed commuters. There are so many things I've learned from this project, including that everybody is suspicious of a free breakfast – unless you call it art, because doing that gives any act of generosity the permission to exist. I've also learned that commuters in Henderson don't like making eye contact, whereas commuters in Otahuhu will approach strangers with warmth and curiosity, and serious-faced men in suits in Newmarket will come running as soon as they hear the words 'free coffee'. I've learned that asking people if they've ever heard of kaya, and would they like to learn more, makes you feel like a kind of missionary, and when you do it over and over and over again, you realise that's what you are.

MEI-LIN HANSEN



THE LEGEND OF ARA, THE WAY MAKER.

My walk to work takes me down Kingsland Avenue to a path that runs alongside the North Western motorway. A few hundred metres along that path, on the left, roughly taped to a tired rubbish bin is a hand-painted cardboard sign that shouts at me. "Shared Path", it shouts. "This isn't any old path" the sign insists, "it's a shared one, so take care about the way you go and the steps you take as you walk".

A lot of us forget that our city is built on legends. But legends are everywhere – in the seas that hug the city's sides, in the many maunga that spike its back, in the pathways that cut across its skin. There is, for example, a legend nobody ever tells about our city. It's one that got lost on the outside of the city's memory, a legend that was lost so far out, so far, far out, that even now, now that I've found it and have brought it back to tell you, you won't believe it's true.

It's the story of Ara, the way maker. Ara was a child of the winds and from the moment she was born, her fate was ordained. She was to lay the paths down which all the strange and beautiful creatures of the world would travel. Until this task was performed, she would never find peace.

Ara rode a whirlwind from her Pacific homeland to the shores of our far-out city. She settled in a cave on the cliffs at Manukau Heads and bound by her role as way maker, set about carving up the surface of the land. She made nice wide paths from Manukau to Waitemata and from Waitemata to Kaipara, she made narrower paths along the foreshores, through the bush, over and around the volcanoes and out, out, out

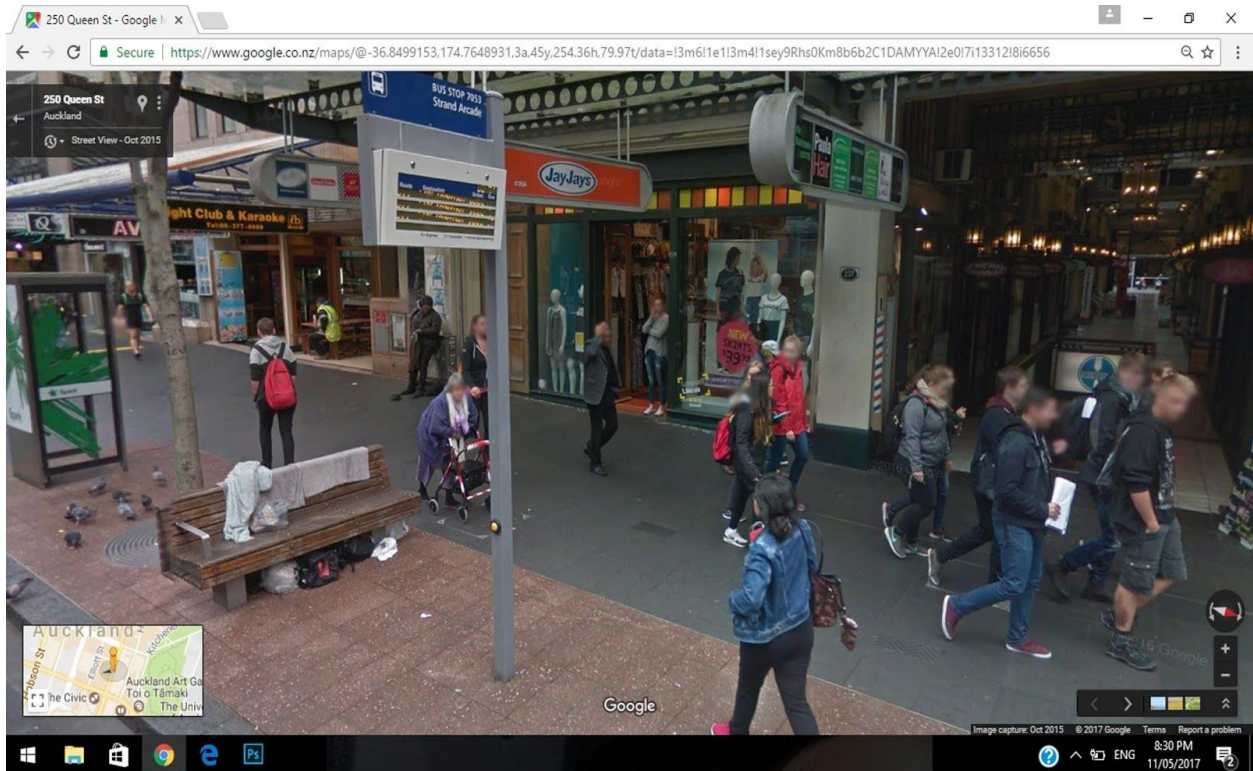
along the treacherous cliffs on the islands of the gulf. And Ara laid all these paths knowing they were to be shared, shared by all the strange and beautiful creatures who wanted to make their way in this new place.

She gave these pathways names – the path of provocation, the path of no more sadness, the path of imagination, the path of new tomorrows, the path of yesterday's memories. She called to the strange and beautiful creatures, a karanga stretching across the seas to faraway lands, she called to those she knew of and those she would never know, those who looked and spoke differently to her, those who couldn't speak for themselves at all, those with hopes, those with nothing but sadness, inviting them to come and find their way...so she could be at peace.

And come they did, from near and far, from other lands, from the centre of the far-out city and from the city's edges. Clambering, meandering, loitering, striding, prancing and dancing, the strange and beautiful creatures made their way along Ara's many paths. Ara welcomed each and every one of them, and once she saw they were on their way, she knew she would find peace.

So, to the shouty, hand-painted sign I see on my walk to work each morning, I say "kia ora". "Kia ora", for reminding me of the lost legend of Ara, the way maker. "Kia ora" for helping me see that every path is a shared path in this far-out city. "Kia ora", for prodding me to recognise that we all need to be able to make our way, that we all want to keep on going, and that we'll all make our way as strangely and beautifully as we choose. And finally, "kia ora" for giving me hope that we all might find just a little bit of peace the better we get at sharing shared paths.

DOUG POOLE



8:30

am

i

some people walk in one direction
young woman on a cellphone
four bags beneath a bench seat

bustop 7053 - the strand arcade

plastic bag contains a plastic bottle
pigeons eat a discarded food-scrap
new skirts 39.99

ii

towels hang on a bench seat
empty hat on the pavement
woman needs a walker for her bag

237 the strand arcade

man smooths back his hair

softly lit arcade
someone watches the bench seat

iii

man with a hat at his feet
a babershop upstairs
people regularly stand at the bustop

bus advertising screams - what the fuck!

Possessions are often hidden
carried on backs; deep in pockets
held in hands; against ears

iv

bus stop timetable is unreadable
bus stop has a yellow button
no one is sitting on the bench seat

unaffordable housing

the price of a new skirt
possessions at the bench seat
one blanket - two dirty towels

v

the image is copyrighted
the image capture date oct 2015
the screenshot taken 11/05/2017 830pm

assemblage of neglect -
ridiculous economics -
trickle down clothing sales -

all night bar and karaoke

pm

i

with your back to a wall - you can see who is coming
an empty hat on the pavement - asks for money
no handset - no food - no free wifi

standing still - back to a wall - hat on the pavement -

this image is a continuum
the image has all the markings
this image is online 24/7

ii

reverse two frames
traverse ahead four more
hiding in plain-street view

better safe than sorry
back to a wall – hat on a pavement
safer to sleep in plain sight

iii

not everyone ends up on the street
you have to make space for others
hiding's not a safe option

standing in plain sight
everyone can see you
not everyone will engage

people don't live on the street
or really get sleep – you need
a jacket on the street and boots

iv

you needs bags for stuff
working the street for small change
or conversation-

the street is not for everyone
some have posse's
groundsheets

hey bro-sis got any change?

some smoke, some smokes,
some p or piss
some one to drink wif-

v

not everyone ends up in the street
don't live on the street
stand and sleep when you can

the street is not for everyone – takes a survivor

ask nicely or say nothing
draw attention or don't - just stand
not all streets are for everybody

addendum -

not every hurt is visible not every want is seen everybody is vulnerable we all become unseen

Walk on High was proudly supported by Auckland City Council and Heart of the City

