

18 AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL EXTRACTS

BILL DIREEN

18

Autobiographical
Extracts

Legal Deposit: January, 2016
ISBN

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BILL DIREEN

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FICTION

Wormwood. Paper edition *SPORT 18*, 1997

Utopia Rag. Paper edition *Nusquama* Alpha Books, 2002

Onaevia, fable. Paper edition Alpha Books, 2002

Jules. Paper edition Alpha Books, 2003

Coma, Three Stories in the First Person. Paper Titus Books, 2005

Nusquama. (German tr. A. Loeffler). Paper Titus Books, 2005.

Song of the Brakeman. Paper edition Titus Books, 2006

L, a story of three places Paper edition Random Static 2010

Hyperbaton. Paper edition *brief48*, 2013

Stoat. Paper edition Alpha Books, 2016

Princess of Nineveh

Jonah at Kapiti

Jones

The Stadium

POETRY

Inklings. Paper edition Nags Head, 1988

Evolution. Paper edition Nags Head, 1991

Crappings. Paper edition, 5 to 12, 1993

New Sea Land. Paper edition Titus Books 2005

Dunedin Poems. Paper edition Kilmog, 2011

Versions Translations. Paper edition Kilmog 2014

Seasons. Paper edition Alpha Books, 2016

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Devonport, a Diary. Paper edition Holloway Press, 2011

Tourtagebuch. Tour Diary (tr. A. Loeffler), 2012

Paekakariki, 41°S 175°E Alt om, Autumn 2004

When our family used to go to the beach, to Himatangi or to Foxton, my father would bound into the water, partly as an example to me not to be afraid. He would splash water onto his bared arms and chest before plunging into the breakers. I would never leave the shallows.

A man, a father, is on this shore, half-naked.

Paekakariki

Before, well before, cars approached a hill that marks the beginning of an attitude. Cars after cars full of children and dogs, families after families, even today, pass a white mother Virgin on Paraparaumu Hill and descend to the capital.

On the beach, a man, a woman and a dog. The dog is a curly-tailed, ginger-brown high-country sort of beast. It runs out of the gold as if seeded by the assault of sun on water. The man's jeans are flared. His hair is flowing. He is carrying the woman's sandals. She is wearing a red tee-shirt and a blue denim skirt. Her bare legs and feet are moving more quickly than his. He is confidently swinging her sandals and gesturing with his other hand at the island. Their child has not yet been born.

Since they exist in the past they are not advancing. The dog is snapping at eternal dark shapes. The man throws a stick which it will always retrieve.

Dunedin, 45°52'S, 170°31'E Alt om, Spring 2007

Today [I write the word exactly as my mother used to write it] the world is square. [My mother who is unable to escape, and yet who seems—though we cannot know for sure—to communicate with visitors.] A heat disturbance above the eastern horizon makes the distant blue stop dead, as if water reaches the edge of the world and drops, sending up a spray.

I think that people did not so much believe the world was square as that water possessed the quality we now attribute to space. It surrounded us and behaved in ways we explained imaginatively. It was not the substance we believe now, rightly or wrongly, that we know and whose behaviour we try to predict. It was mysterious not only in that it possessed occasional monsters such as the Pacific Ghostfish, but all its creatures were monstrous—nearby seashells, octopi and stingrays. With its salinity, changeable colour and its ability to absorb and reflect light, it must have seemed a medium hostile to our senses, the very medium of insanity, of death. Being able to float upon it, to master a vessel floating upon it, to sail out beyond that clear, near water, surely gave mariners an exclusive rank in society, a rank not far from those who could read the entrails of birds.

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The sea is shining. You could believe the surface of the water is light, and that its deeps are knowledgeable.

Paekakariki

The sun is descending over the tail, the southernmost part of the island called Kapiti. It weakens and it becomes possible to look directly at it. A belt of deep blue runs from the headland across the horizon and before the island, vanishing into a rally fiercer, brighter than the glitter of drifting kelp. An ebullience of reflected neverstill twilight. The air has cooled. A widening, deepening green claims the water in the channel, as if the bay were imagining a forest.

Are we still ourselves when we return from the sea, or are we again ourselves? The dog's recognition suggests we are, at least, ourselves, though we carry some of it, a little of the sea on our forearms and thighs. When we rise from it, emerging from our origins so like walking fish ourselves, we are heavy without it, so heavy with only air to support us.

Divers, sleek, dripping figures, lead a dinghy up the shore. They are happy the weather has held. The weather office predicted a storm, but they took the risk and went out. The weather office has been wrong this year; its word is not gospel. As they prepare to load some of their gear into the boot of their car the dog races about them, leaping up on each one. It is excited. They smell as they did before.

Jonah does not doubt that dogs have fewer failings than

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men, but he will watch the sea this night, compelled as dogs are never compelled. The divers stand their oxygen tanks together on firm sand. A four-wheel drive and trailer draw out of the line of vehicles parked above the tide-line. Silhouettes roll empty trailers into the shallows to load returning craft. Someone is turning a wrench, bending unnaturally, seeking more force than he possesses. The sounds of iron tightening and of steel resisting emerge from the white noise of wind and ocean. His eye seeks things that emit no sound, a piece of frosted glass, a wet stone, a dark streamlet of fresh water incising the bare slope.

A man and a woman turn back to back and link arms at the elbows. The man lifts the woman up onto his back and lets her down again. The boy gambolling around them takes no notice. He has seen this before—he knows all about his parents, and he is not surprised when they kiss. He knows them so well he will not be surprised when they separate. His parents do not see him as he is, they see him as he was.

They climb inside a car with rusty trimmings. There is something drunken about the way it curves out of the dunes. Something drunken and untimely. Now the waves are red, not with the sun, but with rata. The man and the woman are dead to each other. She will blame the man, not the city that remains standing.

With all the changes of the water, a day by the ocean is like many inland days rolled into one. Where the sun falls waves glitter; where cloud shades the water, a leaden blueness

is broken by dark confetti. When the tide is going out there are waves that reach higher than you'd expect, washing your feet like it's Holy Thursday.

Divers are letting out the ballast water. Their car, like the local gulls, is light grey with a streak of red. It has rear wind-bracers, a bar above the boot and an antenna-flagstaff holding a triangular banner.

A gull shrieks autumn. The hour of the day is the same, but the beach is a litter of lifeless relics. The island is aflame under a 'V' of cloud. The sun reflected spreads itself evenly over the wettest sand at the shallowest reaches. There where the sand and the sea are almost one, neither beach nor ocean, there the disc is reflected most faithfully.

If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. (John xiii, 8)

Paekakariki

The silences between letters (when I think of you) are like those between waves, longer as the tide reaches its zenith. Then, not even a letter will do.

The highest and driest reaches are guzzling the longest of the waves. It is more night than day now. Moths are flying about seeking fires, of which there is a small one down the beach, but on higher ground. It looks like a campfire, a place of lowered voices and eventually of sleep. Night has fallen and the tide has turned. 6:15pm. 22 April. 1st full moon after Easter. Jewish Passover. No more unfurling, only that black shine speeding into the ocean, water drawing back like a skin as if earth has expanded...

NOTE: As the monster took the shipwrecked Egyptian sailor into its mouth and placed him upon an island, a mother crocodile takes her young into her mouth to move them away from danger. Did this give rise to the story, and to Herodotus's belief that crocodiles gave birth from their mouths? To be enclosed behind the teeth and released; to be apparently taken and regurgitated.... Is this not as wonderful as being conceived or born in regions used for urination and excretion?

...earth has expanded and left us a monster-island of taking-children-into-the-mouth crocodiles.

Is metaphor not a matter of sudden belief? A rock exists as sand, as petrel or as a lamb if we allow it. It remains rock, but rock which we allow to be transformed. If we do not allow it, if it imposes itself upon us, this is hallucination or nightmare. Is there comfort without a denial of the unreal, without a grounding sense of the trite?

In coming here I passed the museum of locomotives, fields of horses and sheep, lone dying cabbage trees and other trees, hardier, shaped by the leaving winds... past the disappearance of the sea, the near-meeting of the island and mainland, the island becoming a distant hill, and those veils of sea-breath blueing its slopes... real, all real.

Rangipakihī, 36°58'S 175°15'E Alt 0, Autumn 2005

A film of the sea? It would have to be uncut, hours of the sea, with silence and wind in the tussock grass, flaring the nostrils of strollers and lovers. A suicide. There will be caravans and tractors and barbecues and other film-makers or photographers, musicians and writers with cold feet all; and fishermen. And it will be little more than a snap, but a long one in our terms. People could sleep in the cinema.

When I was a child I didn't think of the sea as male or female. If it is feminine it is of a hard, masculine kind, if masculine, birthgiving. It is unlike infinity in being measurable, unlike earth in having fluidity, unlike the wind in having such weight, unlike space with its minerals and elements.

My father bathing always in the same rough way, splashing the cold water on his arms and chest before plunging into the breakers. Always the same gestures. Always the same way. Plunging into the man-woman waves towards the monster beyond.

In order to undergo analysis you have to take analysis seriously. Disbelief in God for one who has truly believed is nothing if not well-informed.

When we went to Himatangi, my mother would be so worn out by the end of the day from looking after us, seven of us or more, that she would fall asleep in the car on the way

back. No one was to disturb her. She would spread out the picnic upon a hardwearing tartan rug... (I can't write more about her. Why?) I used to linger in the shallows. I don't remember seeing my father swimming, I remember only his way of entering the waves. He disappeared from view beyond the breakers I did not dare breach.

When the cold sea water 'touched' my genital area I wanted to urinate, and I was worried enough about pissing as it was—I wondered if the wildlife there in the cold water might retaliate in some way. (See 'Notes' for the Koran's interdiction of same). In the event (I admit it) I was never pinched by a crab nor stung by a 'blue-bottle'. I didn't know about what those jellyfish looked like until my brother showed me hundreds of them stranded upon the beach.

As for swimming I could never master the knack of breathing out under water — I have a certificate for 25 yards "crawl", as it was called. It was the longest 25 yards of my life. I clutched a rail $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way along the "length" of the Hokowhitu pool. My older sisters, two of them, were screaming at me to keep on going as I gasped for breath, but I had never come close to mastering the technique. I was imitating the action of swimmers, rotating the arms, turning the head, gasping, splashing, gasping... they detached my hand from the safety rail and I was again in deep water. So, you see, I never felt good about it, the certificate. I felt I had cheated by clutching the rail. And what if I were expected, because of the certificate, to swim one day, to save my life, or someone else's?

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Panic, and that feeling, sudden and sharp, of water entering the sinuses... a salty, dirty pain... sometimes not leaving them for hours... it would flow out warm, and often at some inopportune moment... I could smell nothing but chlorine or the acrid sea for hours. As for diving, if I descended more than a metre or two my ears imploded; when my ears filled with water it was as if my cranium was filling up: I did not know if or how this could be prevented. I was stupid, I suppose, and remain so, you might say. Perhaps I am revealing too much... Too late! We were returning from a day at the beach one day when the car lurched and I swallowed a counter from a board game which I must have been sucking or rolling around in my mouth. A Chinese Checkers piece. My brother said I should watch out for it and pointed to his lower parts. It was the first day I realised that there was a relationship between shit and what goes into your mouth. You see, I had never thought of it.

So swimming was not my favourite sport, but I loved to go to the sea and to rivers. I loved the look of the latter, their ranging cliffs and one-way waters, their livid “water-holes” where older children dived, and the feel of small round stones under the soft of my feet. So, too, at the beach, the damp sand turning silver about my feet and that feeling, you know the one... you stand on that gleaming grey till a long puddle licks up and around you, and as it retreats you feel the sand slipping away under your sliceable soles. That was really going to the beach.

I never thought that my father was there, out there beyond the breakers, though he must have been far, far out at sea; I don't remember him being there except when he entered the waves. He sometimes encouraged me to do the same, to go out there where the genitals would be frozen and the breakers would surely fill your sinuses, where the swelling ocean was deeper than I was short and people swam or miraculously remained in one place their feet off the ground, treading, "treading water". He was out there all right in the glacial deeps, beyond the smoothly eroding sands, beyond the broken shells and stones, beyond the crabs and jellyfish, out there where a fish may swallow a man.

And so I was called a sissy by boys who seemed like warts, but the name did not stick because on the rugby field I knew no fear. I was knocked about, knocked out, and was particularly courageous when my father came to watch a match. Like any boy.

So I was not a coward, though I played piano and rather liked to be alone. I used to spend afternoons up a pepper tree saying poems and watching people pass on the street below. A tree-climber safe, I suppose, from incoming water. One poem was about a catdrowning. I've discovered that Susan was, in the first drafts of the poem, Harry ('Ode on the Death of Favourite Cat', Wharton MS., 1747, and in Dodsley's Collection, 1748)! Harry would have made his presence felt, imposing quite a different rhythm on the line. I'm for Susan.

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*No Dolphin came, no Nereid stirr'd:
Nor cruel Tom, nor Susan beard.*

But perhaps some of Thomas Gray's readers resented the change to Susan as much as my mother did when the language of the Mass changed to English. *Peace be with you and Let us pray* could never (for her) create the same atmosphere as *Pax vobiscum and Oremus*.

Cloud-shadows darken large tracts of water on the wind-ruffled surfaces. A few lines remain longer than I'd expect, clear lines, as if a boat has passed or currents have differed from each other.

Rangipakihī

What did the fishermen catch as I left the beach today? I heard them shouting as if they had landed a huge fish, or a rare one, a never-before-seen one, or was it not a fish, but a wearing-away by friction and currents, a water-carving of a bird-fish or a fish-man?

One of seven, born in the autumn. Began school before school-age because autumn-children could start early. Autumn-children were the youngest of their year and the smallest of their class. One called Andrew was smaller and yet he was older than us. He was so sickly he was exempted from rugby—quite an exemption in those days.

It seemed my opponents and playmates were bigger and more capable than me, but my anger and willingness to be injured redeemed me. My oldest sister won a diving competition, high dive; my brother took to scuba diving. I could tackle well.

NOTE [Paris, 2006—for latitude see p.60]: *I am transcribing these hand-written notes on the fifth (top) floor of a division of the Bibliothèque Nationale in the 2nd arrondissement. A hail-storm*

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is raging and clattering against the skylight panes. This is masking the usual noises researchers make, so we can clatter away happily on our laptops without bothering each other. The next page in the “Rangipakibi” notebook has a drawing of a figure fish- ing a monstrous cocoon from the sea. S torm flotsam? Or is he pulling the monster from the cocoon?

Blue-greens to red-browns. Skeins of grey. Pohutukawa bark covered in fair-green lichen. Their long trunks sway, their leaves shake in the wind. A gull hovers in sunlight through a hole in the clouds as if confused.

I should mention while I’m at it (and because the experience is indissociable from these writings) that in spring 2001, from the bridge of the Isle S t Louis, I let myself be seduced by the polygonal shades and sharp-edged reflections of the surging waters of the Seine. I did not want to enter the water but I felt that I was already a part of it (my brain coursing blood as brains do, surgent as any spring or river). There was something of a great concert about this event—I was spectator and participant. It felt dan- gerous too—however wonderful it was to be so, as I said, seduced—for a moment I was afraid I was losing my bearings. (And considering I am on the other side of the world from the country where I spent three quarters of my life, the word “bearings” is never used lightly.)

Until last year, 2005, I gave in to the persuasiveness of surfaces of water (not necessarily those of the Seine, though that’s where the effect was the strongest). I enjoyed it for a few minutes—this inti- macy with reflected light and inanimateness (minerality, the “other side” of

life), but each time "I" (that part of me that was carefully watching the experience) was able to return myself to the usual, more from fear than anything. Eventually, I stopped the "spell" of the waters taking effect by an effort of will. By turning away from any vast surface of water, I could prevent the condition from developing, and I can now look at water without any change in my mode of perception.

Paekakariki

There are those who insist, without knowing, that there is no such thing as accident. There are others who deny, even when predictions are borne out, that the future can be foreseen. I say it again: if the present is correctly described the flow of events is made evident. But the flow of events can change. Jonah interprets the present correctly, but the flow will change because of his seeing and because of his words; the future he predicted will not come to pass. Jonah will not be honoured. He is a servant, a tool. Tools are a means to an end, to fire which may destroy the toolmaker.

Chops are grilling on the embers of the bonfire. It is late to be eating but a few people are sitting around the glowing centre, passing a bottle between them.

Rangipakihī

I have found a good spot here but the mosquitoes have discovered it too... I will be eaten before writing in this day-book, as if to be eaten is necessary before we may eat (see/hear) the present. Jonah penetrated a monster, not only its mouth, as the little man of the papyrus did, but its belly, the place of breaking down.

A light shining across the water. Obscured. When it flashes again it seems to have shifted position. That's the way we are. It is hard to hold our position in the darkness. We need points outside of our minds to situate blinking lights. We shift them. We are always shifting. We are our own metaphors. Nowhere moves in Noman's mind.

Six hours to withdraw and to advance, to reveal and conceal, to capitulate and reclaim; the tide is returning noisily now, crossing boulders that separate sandy beach from estuary, as the darkness is quashed by a glorious moon. They say the moon pulls the water harder at this time of year, increasing the reach of full and the retraction of low tide. Photons, neutrons, smooth waves or toothed, whatever this light is made of, it helps me to situate those blinking lights.

Jonah: an alimentary experience! Excretion bypassed (tide

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reversed). The tollbooth, the checkpoint of the belly. From the belly we are born, outside the belly we live independently, without a belly we die. To a kind of belly we go, one of recomposition, the organic model, digestion of earth, of birds, of sky, of fishes, of sea.

The ocean and the rivers—the great zones of recomposing, not evacuating but transforming, bearing, returning. No wonder people found it easy to believe creatures were actually born by the (mothering) mud of the receding Nile.

The sounds of the sea are like echoes of a great roar from a time before human life existed (and speculated upon such things). Aspects of prehistoric absurdity are released when waves break, as they are penetrable in the silence between waves, of unbroken water.

Water of absurdity. Somewhere near Gisborne (38.4S 178E Alt.o) groups gathered to be the first to see the sun of the new millenium. We are in April 2005 [this entry]; in April 3005 the vital repercussions of our stay will have ended; our stay will (I dare say it) have no effect upon those lucky people... if our species will have survived! I am not sure, suddenly, that life, earth, or universe exist outside of our consciousness.

Creature which in some tales tells its own story, does not in ours speak.

Its mouth will open and take what is before it.

It will do this blindly, wildly.

x

Tide controls us, though we resist. Tide is the determination and the will of that which we fear if we do not have terms.

A cat mews. How long is Jonah's night? Long enough for a dream to sink, a moon to pass, a tide to rise and fall? His eyes open. The time, for the island, is dawn.

In the half-light a pile of discarded tractor-tyres now seems like crouched forms leaning one against the other, the kind of wrinkled lumps that Jonah knows, human forms sleeping in the corners of the city. Behind the scattered petrels and smouldering bonfires the island, nascent, wakes from shade and takes on an intermediate shape. The island, haunt of historians, scientists and back-packers, refuge of warriors, murderers and whale strippers, is becoming as great as its name, Kapiti. A white streak from north to south splits the diffusion of the east. The contours of the island reveal themselves. See, it is a reptile beating northward as quickly as it retreats.

The sand comes into its own, grey-violet and brown. Tussock

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shoots briefly silver and in a moment golden. Its waves relaxed and rhythmic, the tide is in the ease of near-fullness. With regularity comes agreement in the mind. He can still make out two lights on the island. Officers and scientists there will be rising, washing, and going to the rocks before breakfast, to the dark wheezing seascape. The waves release a little of the true light of dawn and close wilfully like conceding eyelids.

This day is not as the day before. The dogs have gone, the whanau and friends around the driftwood fire, the families driving down Highway One, all have gone. A boy we have not seen before is on the beach, a red handkerchief hanging from his pocket. Alone there, collecting stones and shells, he imagines he is a castaway. He positions some stones along the ridge of a split log as a kind of message. Now he is placing two sticks in the sand. Their shadows reach down the shore. He draws the line of a shadow, then waits for the shadow to move away from the line. He is measuring time. The sea expands. It is deepest green, deeper even than the bush of the island whose shelves mark discrete ecological communities on this, the leeward, the visible side. Ratas are flaming, filled with honey-seeking birds. The boy picks up a handful of stones and all at once throws them into the air.

As the sun rises and the clefts and folds of the island reveal themselves, seven, ten, twelve mountains appear, each with its peaks and ridges and slopes. The sand today is tongue-red. Toi toi flags are breaking up in the breeze.

Jonah feels the impulse to walk into those waves and never return. He is observed by a one-legged, grey-winged gull whose beak is as red as its eyes.

No one would stop him.

Paris, 48°N 2°19E, Alt 34m, Winter 2008

And the preacher said to the crewmen going, though they did not know it, in search of Moby Dick: 'I am that man, the fugitive. I am he who did not carry out the word of God.' To hear such a word is to act on it — for what is it but the response of the being to the letter of its senses. Such a word has persuasion and eminence. This is why they who have heard the word and plugged up their ears are truly the damned of this earth. No heathen knows Hell. The preacher carries with him his failure to obey the penetration of his spirit by the meaningful syllable. Though some say that Herman Melville was wrong to argue this.

The biblical story shows us hopelessness in all its form, impuissance of the sailors before the storm, of Jonah before his task, of the gourd-plant before the sun.

Rangipakihī

This full tide is more like a flooding, a release that might not be controllable, than a predictable advance and retreat. The estuary of the stream, a tiny fordable creek at low tide, fills to become a little harbour with a curving outcrop, a miniature of the bay with its promontory, which finds its correlative in the Coromandel Peninsula and Hauraki Gulf leading to the Thames estuary. A fisherman launches a dinghy from a steep bank into this high tide pool.

I suspect that most of us recall only too well that childhood experience we prefer to forget (an experience, moreover, which occurs all the time in the womb), of urinating while dreaming of doing so in some place that in the dream seems perfectly appropriate.

The estuary is filling. A pool in the centre is filling from the inland estuary side; water has somehow got around behind me and is hurrying down a wide slope in a golden-bright cascade.

There was a sensation of warmth and wetness followed by alarm coinciding with consciousness. Few living beings can control the function as effectively as mature man. My dreams convinced me, each time, that the situation was ideal.

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There was none of the practicality, the “making-do” aspect of Rembrandt’s well-known ‘Pissing Woman’. It was an oneiric, not a necessitous function.

Now the bay before me is full. The ocean is gulping the stream, as if it was thirsty for fresh water.

Paekakariki

On the shore at Kapiti the sun is 10° before the line that joins the boy's sun-sticks. The island, like the sun-sticks, runs north to south. It has no other side to speak of, nothing but a plummeting cliff above a slim ledge of stone hardly wide enough for a boy and his father to walk along.

The seaswell increases, storm-boding; further south, a profusion of kelp is making its way to the shore.

The birds fall silent; a car from another epoch glides to a halt. The driver of the car changes hurriedly behind an open door. No one is watching him; although he is hidden by an open door, he is hurrying as if he is exposed, as if all the world, or his God, can see him. Naked, he is like Jesus and Jehoshaphat and Jonah in the matter of circumcision. He pulls on his waders, big-booted khaki green waders that come up over his belly, then he backs the trailer toward the waves which yawn blackly. Some do not break. He disconnects a trailer and pushes it further into the water until the boat is afloat. He anchors the boat and returns to tow the trailer well above the high-tide-line then pushes the boat over the nearest, most worrisome waves. His body swivels as he tries to get the motor to catch. The boat is drifting towards the shore but he does not panic. He takes oars and again breaches the line where the rollers first sense land. This time the

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motor catches. Propeller blades cut into deeper ocean where the imperceptible swells. The outboard makes a sequence of white splashes.

Once, all things seemed possible. A poet called Fairburn could swim across a harbour, a prophet could walk over water. A boat might be bringing news, great news about the present, news all men would hear and understand.

Rangipakihī

Insects are good at walking over dry sand. I clamber like an amputee and it tires me out. The sting from sandfly bites here doesn't last but they are irritating enough. I have none of the patience of fishermen. There's one walking into the water to cast his line further out to the sea, a few metres is enough to reach the currents and—a catch!

Two dog owners meet on the beach. From the trend of the water and waves it seems the tide is receding. The fishermen confirm it; they are going home. Each time they walk from the sea it has changed. Each time they walk from the sea they have changed.

The tide recedes rapidly from zenith to nadir. With four mid-tides a day you'd need a different type of clock to live as fishermen do.

The waves now are sandy, grey-brown with sand. Where the seafloor drops steeply, a brown streak defines the breaker sector. Nearby, a green gunge, pustuled with slimy bubbles, is sliding down the slope—overnight rain has washed down algal deposits from fertiliser-rich rivers.

The sun gnaws. The peninsula is visible now, as Kapiti materialised during last year's trip when I stayed at, of all

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places, a hostel called “Barnacle Bill’s”.

Paekakariki

When I wake, the pressure between the ears of the past few days is gone. I hear. Und hast die Welt gemacht (Rilke). I have heard the world, and in hearing it, made it. We create the universe an infinite number of times (in all our measurable instants), any and all of us, sailors and failures.

Writing at this little table, my hand casts a shadow which is reflected in a mirror...twice inversed and defleshed. Our shadows belong to us, as the reflections of our shadows belong to shadows—if shadows can be reflected. They have an effect upon the lit-up parts of the room—but they do not exist really! They do not have material substance. It is forms caused by the lack of light that are being reflected. Light—or lack of it—is also “reflected” off the surface of my eye.

Friends drive away, they remain as presence, saddening me as they did not when they were before me, but close to me as they were not.

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Dunedin

Tears are of different kinds. Some of them smart unlike the sweeter tears of grief or of helplessness. These tears that smart, they are the strangest of all. They are the ones that say we could have changed all this, by listening... by seeing.

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