

RAIN WALK

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A Safe Little World Monograph
by Andrew Killick

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I can hear you
making small holes
in the silence

- Hone Tūwhare, 'Rain'

Prologue

Sunday morning, 25 November 2018, south-eastern side of
Ōmokoroa Peninsula. High tide and rain.

GoPro camera, wiping the lens on the lining of my rain jacket.

Worked my way along the coastal wetland pathway, limiting myself to two shots (sometimes three) of each subject, as I would have with slide film. Looking for details. Remaining present. Embracing the aesthetic of a wet lens, a set exposure and colour temperature, the limited photographic capabilities of a GoPro but the enhancement of waterproofing, and the possibility that none of the pictures would have any value beyond the moment of capturing them. Enveloped by the hydrosphere made tangible.

Wetlands are a zone of overlap between sea and land – not a fixed, tightly delineated meeting point, but an over-melding. Transitional.

‘[T]he cadences of stormy skies...’ The sibilance of rain on water, on foliage, the patter of rain on my hood [like night-time precipitation on the walls of a tent]. The smell. Petrichor.

Words emerge from silence and return to silence; emerge / return; emerge / return; like squalls of rain, waves or the rhythm of walking.

Hindsight of that day allows for romanticisation; it allows me to wax lyrical. But photographs are a present capturing and rendering of a moment in time, and I feel the need to emphasise the fact that on that day I was ill. Amidst the heavy weather of burnout. I didn’t feel well. Frankly, I felt pretty bloody awful. I was leaden. I see that

borne out in a selfie I took. I'm bedraggled in the rain, thin-looking, with dark circles, and unease in my eyes. The poem, though written later, still carries those artefacts as subtext. Strains of lament.

And yet, and yet... the fact is that something profound, beautiful in the deeper sense, came into contact with me that morning. And the fact that something lyrical might emerge through the art of hindsight, and the integration of those artefacts, is testimony to a profound progression, through and onward, to other days.

The pictures, perhaps by a mode of sympathetic fallacy (though *fallacy* is a harsh word), are sombre. But I hope there is beauty in them.

[...everything is tipped and haloed (hallowed)
by the presence of God]

- Extracted project notes

Part One:
Rain Walk



*Sabbath calls
by a gathering of rain cloud
low and beautiful*

-





*Sky to sea
closing in
drawn up and
reaching down*

—





*Heavy laden
and ready to pour forth*

—





*A solitude
a companionship
of weather
making sacred
earth to sky [or heaven]*

-

On Rain, Walking and Weather

All this business about deliberately going out walking in inclement weather begins with my older brother, Rob.

To the best of my knowledge he would *only* go walking (or rather, ‘tramping’) if the conditions were bad – or perhaps we should better say ‘wild’, because ‘bad’ is an all but useless and unnecessary pejorative in this context.

Sometimes, as I got older, I came along on these excursions. When I was too young to go, much like a great many other things my brothers did as they pioneered through life 10 and 12 years ahead of me, those outings seemed like the holy grail of adventure. I stayed at home and fostered a sense of the virtue of going out on landscapes made wild by weather.

In Rob’s landscape of choice, the rain only doubled down on the wildness that already resided there. Far from our home in the sheltered eastern suburbs of Auckland (places with the word ‘glen’ in their names), on the battered west coast was Karekare – a place of legend in my childhood imagination. The Tasman Sea pounding in, mist – a mixture of salt spray thrown into the air and the breath of trees – drifting amongst the deep green of the bush as the land transitioned from coast to forest, and black sand that really only revealed its true nature and meaning on overcast days when the sky hung low.

These kinds of walks went on to become a feature of my life, solo and with various companions. I embraced the old dictum that there’s no such thing as bad weather, only inappropriate clothing. In acknowledgement of society’s reticence (in general) regarding

the supposed unpleasantness of deliberately going out in those kinds of conditions, and an old and sensible folk wisdom that excursions of this nature are ill-advised, I referred to such adventures in the wet (locally or further afield) as going on 'stupid walks' (not to be confused with 'silly walks', which is something from Monty Python).

Regarding the *pleasantness* of this activity, there is something about it that carries the potential to make you feel refreshed, invigorated and alive – a sort of a Wim Hof cold plunge situation – even if that sense only reaches its apogee, resolution or forgiveness in a hot shower and warm clothes afterwards. But (or rather, 'and') there's also a melancholy turn. There's something ascetic in it.

The bearing of 'sin' and weakness into the wild. A sombre and brooding communion of the internal state with the elements.

A depth and acknowledgement that perhaps can't be felt in any other way. A sacrament of rain walking. And here we return to the realms of the poem and imagery of this book.

—

'I have met with but one or two persons in the course of my life,'
says Henry David Thoreau,

*who understood the art of Walking, that is, of taking walks –
who had a genius, so to speak, for sauntering, which word is
beautifully derived 'from idle people who roved about the country,
in the Middle Ages, and asked charity, under pretence of going à la
Sainte Terre,' to the Holy Land, till the children exclaimed, 'There
goes a Sainte-Terrer,' a Saunterer, a Holy-Lander. They who never
go to the Holy Land in their walks, as they pretend, are indeed
mere idlers and vagabonds; but they who do go there are saunterers
in the good sense, such as I mean. Some, however, would derive the*

word from sans terre, without land or a home, which, therefore, in the good sense, will mean, having no particular home, but equally at home everywhere. For this is the secret of successful sauntering. He who sits still in a house all the time may be the greatest vagrant of all; but the saunterer, in the good sense, is no more vagrant than the meandering river, which is all the while sedulously seeking the shortest course to the sea.

Going on pilgrimage is one thing, but what say walking, sauntering is ‘sainte-terre-ing’, ‘holy-land-ing’ in and of itself. Like Søren Kierkegaard’s ‘knight of faith’ strolling in the forest. Our feet in contact with and traversing holy ground, like a mad saint in the wilderness, sandals on or off, because this world is infused with the divine... it’s only our awareness that waxes and wanes.

And if walking as an activity in and of itself is somehow sacramentally holy, then walking in the rain, baptised by the elements, is that much more alive.

—

We are fickle creatures. We are always complaining – there is either too much rain, or not enough. We hanker for precipitation in times of dry, and we crave the sun when days of wet extend end on end. We like balance, and contrast.

I have felt the feeling of drought, when you thirst for the sound of rain on the roof at night; when water becomes a restricted commodity. But there are harder droughts than the ones I’ve faced.

And then when rain turns loose, like all the elements it soon becomes too much for us. Unrelenting. Inundating. Catastrophic. It breaks its bounds. The ‘big wet’ of summer 2023, when this



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