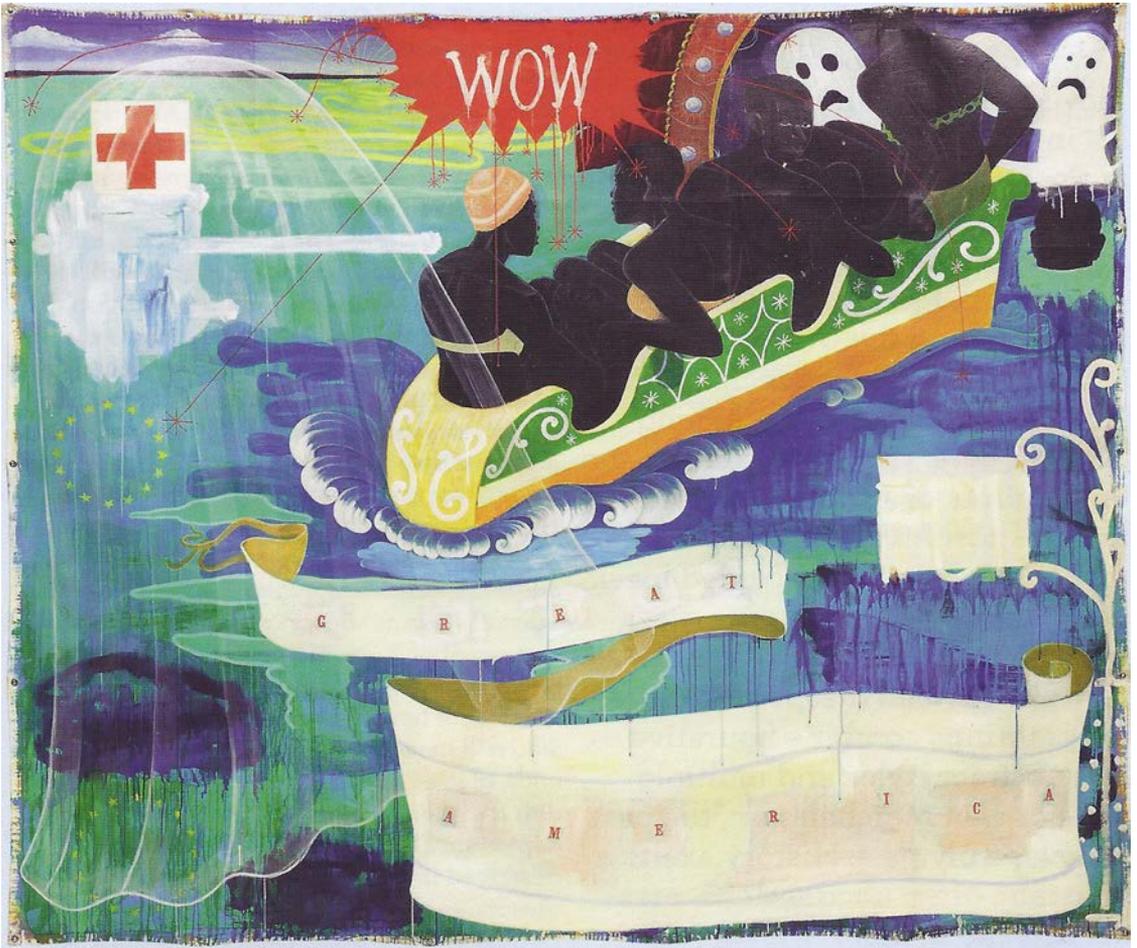


CHASING STEVE BUSCEMI

by Craig Garrett



Great America — Kerry James Marshall

CHASING STEVE BUSCEMI

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Disclaimer

Steve Buscemi lives in Brooklyn

We stayed in Brooklyn (Williamsburg)

Not once did we actually chase Steve Buscemi; Steve Buscemi was not injured during the making of this zine; & not once did we see Steve Buscemi sitting on a park bench — unfortunately



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OUR ITINERARY
SEPT 03–OCT 16 2013

Brisbane	(BNE)
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Los Angeles	(LAX)
NYC	(JFK)
Binghamton	(BGM)
Ithaca	(ITH)
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NYC	(JFK)
Washington DC	(DCA)
NYC	(JFK)
Los Angeles	(LAX)
Brisbane	(BNE)

Steve Buscemi (/bu: semi/; Italian pronunciation: [bu'ʃɛmi]) was a NYC fire fighter from 1980 to 1984, with Engine Company No. 55, Little Italy, Downtown Manhattan. He showed up at his old fire station the day after 9/11 to volunteer, working 12-hour shifts & digging through the rubble: 343 firefighters from 75 fire stations gave their lives (four from Engine 55). Fire Department of New York (FDNY) personnel still suffer illness, injury & trauma.

On May 25, 2003, at a union rally Buscemi gave a speech supporting higher wages for firefighters. He was arrested, along with 11 others, for protesting the closing of a number of fire stations, including Engine 55.

In 2012 he assisted in the clean up after Hurricane Sandy.

In 2014 he was appointed an Honorary Battalion Chief of the FDNY. He also serves on the Board of Advisors for Friends of Firefighters, which looks out for the welfare of NYC's firefighters.

Buscemi was born in Brooklyn in 1957.

Shona & I were supposed to meet up in NYC for my 40th (May 11), but when dad called on April 24 I knew it was worse than we thought. Shona was already at Cornell University, Ithaca (NY), as a Research Fellow.

My family aren't regular communicators, but mum

Books permit us to voyage through time, to tap the wisdom of our ancestors

— Carl Sagan

was ill, so dad & I had been speaking daily for about a month. Each time, I asked if I should fly to Canberra. He kept saying: 'We don't know... We just don't know...' But something was clearly wrong. Later, I found out they'd been requesting tests for months.

It began in 2012 with an operation on her right foot. She didn't recover as quickly as expected. She developed a cyst in her knee, then pain in her lower back/hip. The doctors said it was from wearing the moonboot. In January 2013 mum's dad passed. She was in so much pain she almost couldn't attend pop's funeral.

I called her for her birthday (Feb 17). She sounded terrible.

I'd sent her a microwave heat pack. We spoke for a minute before she passed me to dad. This wasn't like mum. We may not have spoken often, but we'd always have a good chat.

In March she lost control of her right leg & fell. The doctors diagnosed a protruding disc, even though she wasn't describing such pain. They gave her a walking frame & pain killers. There were tests, scans & specialists. She developed bowel problems (which needed an operation). They finally 'fixed' the disc, but the pain continued.

In April all strength in her right leg dissolved & she collapsed. She never walked again. I flew in on April 26.

She smiled when she first saw me; but how could she be happy? She said I wasn't to change my plans. I waited until the last minute to tell her I wasn't going to the us. We didn't tell her Shona was flying back until she was already in the country.

Mum's immune system was shot from the radio therapy. I think she appreciated that we supported her as best we could, but we were powerless.

We were at the hospital a lot. At times she annoyed me,

& at times, I'm sure, I annoyed her. (My sister told me not to get irritated. She was right. I was in denial.) At times I went into the hall, said I had to stretch my back — I didn't want to cry near her. She remained dignified to the end.

I miss her in such unexpected ways. Mum recorded their voicemail ages ago, so for a time, if dad didn't answer, I'd hear her voice. Sometimes, when I see a gran & granddaughter, part of me begrudges them their time, because mum doesn't get any more time with her granddaughter. Then I feel guilty for resenting someone else's happiness. Mum'd love they were having fun together.

We did get to the us. I had two 40^{ths}. My first was in Canberra with mum, dad, my sister, my brother-in-law & my niece. Mum ate some chocolate cake, which was special. She hadn't eaten anything in days. My second was at Hangawi Korean restaurant in Manhattan's Midtown on October 8. It was a tranquil place; respite in the middle of so much restlessness. Mum would have appreciated the quiet.

Happy 40th Craig
Love you forever
Mum

FAIRYTALE OF NEW YORK
THE POGUES — *IF I SHOULD FALL*
FROM *GRACE WITH GOD*

It was Christmas eve, babe
In the drunk tank
An old man said to me:
Won't see another one
And then he sang a song:
'The Rare Old Mountain Dew'
I turned my face away
And dreamed about you
Got on a lucky one
Came in eighteen to one
I've got a feeling
This year's for me and you
So happy Christmas
I love you, baby
I can see a better time,
When all our dreams come true
They got cars big as bars
They got rivers of gold
When the wind goes through you
It's no place for the old
When you first took my hand
On a cold Christmas eve
You promised me Broadway
was waiting for me
You were handsome
You were pretty, queen of NYC
When the band finished playing
They howled out for more
Sinatra was swinging
All the drunks they were singing
We kissed on a corner
Then danced through the night
The boys of the NYPD choir
Were singing Galway Bay
And the bells were ringing out
For Christmas day
You're a bum, you're a punk
You're an old slut on junk
Lying there almost dead
On that drip in that bed
You scumbag, you maggot
You cheap lazy faggot
Happy Christmas your arse
I pray God it's our last
I could have been someone
Well, so could anyone
You took my dreams from me
When I first found you
I kept them with me, babe
I put them with my own
Can't make it all alone
I built my dreams around you

B N E T O S Y D ; S Y D T O L A X ; L A X T O J F K
I was so excited that I hardly slept the night before we left. Even so, I dragged sorrow onto the plane. Had this happened like it was supposed to, I wouldn't have thought twice, but it was only three months gone that we'd buried mum.

I hit JFK confused. My brain & body sagged.

Now I've caught buses in Chennai, microlets in Dili & taksis in Denpasar. Chennai buses don't stop, they slow down at certain points, just enough for passengers to grab on & swing up. A Hong Kong 'backpackers' Shona stayed in was raided at 3AM. So you'd think catching the Air Train into NYC would be easy for us. Twenty-four hours on a plane & I'm all at sea.

A train was waiting, so Shona stepped on. As I followed, the doors closed between us. I stood & watched (& cursed). Inside the train, she went from shock to laughter pretty quickly. A group of travellers sitting behind her were laughing at me as well.

We'd been in the us five minutes — if you don't count the LA transfer & JFK baggage claim. I didn't know how to get to Grand Street, where we were staying; we didn't have us-activated mobile phones; & we hadn't discussed what to do if we became separated.

Another train came. I wasn't at my best, but I was cogent enough to stay put; this way we both knew where I was (although I didn't really know where I was). When a train came the other way without Shona, my doubts grew. What if she assumed I'd follow? Another train passed, then another. I was committed to staying by now. She arrived back on a fourth, still laughing. 'The look on your face,' she said, 'was priceless'. I still get onto public transport before her.

Reunited, we made our way to Brooklyn, Williamsburg: hipster central, the epicentre of everything hipster world-wide; it starts & ends here. I didn't know that before.

We were smelly & scattered when we reached our apartment (Airbnb), & although we'd never met our host Nathan before, he was a sight for sore eyes. It was evening. Everything was clean, our bed was ready, there were towels & a shower. Before leaving us to settle in, Nathan gave us directions to nearby restaurants, & when I asked about cafés for a morning hit he smiled. A kindred coffee spirit. He told me where to find the Black Brick Café. Right then I knew my first stop on my first morning in NYC.

But before all that: food. We showered, then left the apartment. Needless to say, given jet lag & the like, we became lost five metres from the door. Now, Grand St houses about 96 restaurants within about 17 metres, so we weren't going to starve, but it was discombobulating. After dinner at a Japanese restaurant we had a microbrew each at the Brooklyn Brewing Company. By 9PM I was nodding off. Back at the apartment I fell asleep & didn't move until morning.

Not one person I met in NYC called it The Big Apple

Shona hardly slept. She was ill. This happened a couple of times while travelling, & we couldn't pin it down. We thought she may have been allergic to a particular preservative used in the us and not Australia. We've subsequently figured out that she has a mild allergy to seaweed.

Next morning we did hit the Black Brick café, which is wood & brick eclectic with a dash of thrown together. It is thin, coffee- & cash-only. We sat at one of the few inside tables and I ordered an 'Americano' (Australia's 'long black'). I'd heard the us had shite coffee, but, like a lot of things about the us, that's not 100% true. Yes, there is bad coffee, but 300 million people live there, so of course there's good coffee as well.

I'd seen so many images of NYC in films & on tv that the narrow Autumn streets of Williamsburg were almost as familiar

I did get called 'buddy', as in, 'Out of the way, buddy!', or 'Excuse me, buddy!' This happened when I was moving too slow on the subway

to me as Canberra, Melbourne or Brisbane. Alongside cafés, we found bookshops & op shops; saw graffiti, tattoos, piercings, buskers, beards, checked shirts & sunglasses; & there was even a Melbourne-like chill in the air

despite the sunny day. (I imagine every single hipster is obligated to make a pilgrimage to Brooklyn at some stage.)

Although my first day in NYC was short-lived & punctuated by jet lag — we were heading upstate — I did manage to explore bits & pieces of Brooklyn & Manhattan, & eat my first ever NYC bagel with cream cheese. I was enjoying myself, but was I allowed to be?

THOUSANDS ARE SAILING THE POGUES — IF I SHOULD FALL FROM GRACE WITH GOD

The island it is silent now
But the ghosts still haunt the waves
A torch lights up a famished man
Who fortune could not save
Did you work upon the railroads?
Did you rid the streets of crime?
Were your dollars from the White House?
Were they from the five & dime?

Did the old songs taunt or cheer you?
And did they still make you cry?
Did you count the months & years
Or did your teardrops quickly dry.
'Ah, no,' says he; 'was not to be, on a coffin ship I came here; & I never even got so far that they could change my name'

Thousands are sailing
Across the Western Ocean
To a land of opportunity that some of them will never see
Fortunes prevailing
Across the Western Ocean
Their bellies full; their spirits free
They'll break the chains of poverty
And they danced

In Manhattan's desert twilight
In the death of afternoon
We stepped hand in hand up Broadway like the first men on the moon
And 'The Blackbird' broke the silence as you whistled it so sweet
And in Breandán Beacháin's footsteps I danced up & down the street

Then we said goodnight to Broadway
Giving it our best regards
Dipped our hats to Mr. Cohan
Dear old Times Square's favourite bard
Then we raised a glass to JFK
And a dozen more besides
When I got back to my empty room
I suppose I must have cried

Thousands are sailing
Across the Western Ocean
Where the hand of opportunity
Draws tickets in a lottery
Postcards were mailing
Of sky blue skies and oceans
From rooms that daylight never sees
And lights don't glow on Christmas trees
We'll dance to the music & we'll dance

Thousands are sailing
Across the Western Ocean
Where the hand of opportunity
Draws tickets in a lottery
Wherever we go we celebrate
The land that makes us refugees
From fear of priests with empty plates
From guilt & weeping effigies
And we'll dance to the music & we'll dance

E TRAIN TO 53RD ST; 4 TRAIN TO 14TH ST; L TRAIN TO GRAND ST

ISTANBUL (NOT CONSTANTINOPLE)
THEY MIGHT BE GIANTS — FLOOD

Istanbul was Constantinople
Now it's Istanbul not Constantinople
Been a long time gone
Constantinople
Now it's Turkish delight
On a moonlit night

Every gal in Constantinople
Lives in Istanbul
Not Constantinople
So if you've a date
In Constantinople
She'll be waiting in Istanbul

Chorus:
Even old New York was once
New Amsterdam
Why they changed it I can't say
People just liked it better that way

So, take me back to Constantinople
No you can't go back to
Constantinople
Been a long time gone
Constantinople
Why that Constantinople
got the works
That's nobody's business
But the Turks

Do
Istanbul... Istanbul... (x2)

Chorus
Istanbul was Constantinople
Now it's Istanbul
Not Constantinople
Been a long time gone,
Constantinople
Why that Constantinople
Got the works
That's nobody's business
But the Turks
So, take me back
To Constantinople
No you can't go back to
Constantinople
Been a long time gone
Constantinople
Why that Constantinople
Got the works
That's nobody's business
But the Turks
Istanbul...

Before visiting the US I had no idea how embedded superheroes are in the culture. Gotham City is associated with Batman, but it was a NYC nickname before that. Author Washington Irving (“The Legend of Sleepy Hollow”) attached Gotham to NYC in *Salmagundi* (1807), a literary journal that lampooned NYC culture. Irving was part of the Lads of Kilkenny, a literary-minded group of young blades out for a good time. The Lads frequented the Park Theatre & the Shakespeare Tavern, & in *Salmagundi* they published essays concerning events in ‘the thrice renowned and delectable city of GOTHAM’. This wasn’t flattering.

The word Gotham dates to Medieval England. Folk tales tell of the village Gottam (‘Goat’s Town’), which was supposedly inhabited by fools, perhaps because the goat was considered a foolish animal; however, a variant on this was that Gothamites played the fool to gain advantage. Burrows & Wallace (*Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898*) posit that it was the more

NYC is a city of nicknames: The Big Apple; The City That Never Sleeps; Empire City; The City So Nice They Named It Twice; & Gotham

beguiling sense of Gotham that Manhattanites assumed as an acceptable nickname.

FICTIONAL HISTORY

Gotham City was first identified as the home of Batman in *Batman* #4 (1940).

Writer Bill Finger was inspired by an entry in a telephone directory for ‘Gotham Jewelers’.

New York Times journalist William Safire described Gotham City as ‘New York below 14th Street, from soho to Greenwich Village, the Bowery, Little Italy, Chinatown, & the sinister areas around the base of the Manhattan & Brooklyn bridges.’ Gotham is also described as ‘New York’s noir-ish side... whereas Superman’s Metropolis presents New York’s cheerier face.’

Alan Moore first outlined Gotham’s history in *Swamp Thing* #53 (1986). Gotham was founded by a Norwegian mercenary & stolen by the British. During the American Revolutionary War, the ‘Battle of Gotham’ parallels the real Battle of Brooklyn. During the American Civil War, Union Army Col. Nathan

Cobblepot, an ancestor of 'The Penguin, defends Gotham at the 'Battle of Gotham Heights' (the real battle of Harlem Heights).

About Superman and Batman: the former is how America views itself, the latter, darker character is how the rest of the world views America

— Michael Caine

Frank Tieri, in *Gotham Underground #2* (2008), has Tobias Whale claim that 19th century Gotham was run by five rival gangs (similar to gangs based in Five Points), until the 'masks' appear, & form their own gang. It's not clear if the masks are vigilantes or costumed criminals.

WHY NYC IS CALLED

THE BIG APPLE

The first consistent use of Big Apple occurred in the 1920s. John J. Fitzgerald used it to describe NYC racetracks in his *Morning Telegraph* racing columns (1921–27).

'Apple' meant 'fellow' and 'Big Apple' meant 'big man'/'big shot'/'big time' in the slang of the time.

In the 1930s jazz musicians used 'The Apple' (less often 'Big Apple'), for Harlem, again suggesting the big time.

We bought Shona's dad (Gordon) an 'I love Harlem' cap at the Malcolm Shabazz Markets (w 116th St, near Malcolm X Blvd). He loves that shit; clothing with place names on it — even if he's

never been there. (He did write a thesis on the Black Panthers.) You know how these caps often name the city & state, well, Gordon's cap read: 'Harlem, Harlem', like

I want to be Robin to Bush's Batman
— Dan Quayle,
vice-president (nutjob)

there's nowhere else in the world.

In 1937 a short-lived dance craze called 'The Big Apple' was launched in Fat Sam's Big Apple nightclub, Columbia, Sth Carolina.

In 1971, Charles Gillett, then-president of the New York Convention & Visitors Bureau, used the term for a marketing campaign. (*Origin of New York City's Nickname The Big Apple*, 1991.)

Broadway is the Big Apple, the Main Stem, the goal of all ambition, the pot of gold at the end of a drab & somewhat colourless rainbow

— Walter Winchell (1927)

Gotham Theatre, Brooklyn, NYC



NYC FACTS — JUST A FEW

Founded in 1626 as New Amsterdam when the Dutch 'purchased' Manhattan island from the Lenape people.

In 1664 the English stole the colony & re-named it New York.

NYC began to include all five boroughs in 1898.

The first subway line, the 1RT, was opened in 1904 & stretched from City Hall to the Bronx. Over 100,000 people rode the subway the first day it opened.

NYC TO BINGHAMTON (NY)

After a day in NYC, we caught a Greyhound from the Port Authority to Binghamton, upstate New York. As the bus tracked north-west I was surprised at how quickly we went from city to semi-rural to rural. In comparison, Australian cities sprawl. Although we passed heaps of farming towns close to NYC, a lot of them looked abandoned.

We stayed with Diane (D), Jason (J) & Malcolm (M): a 5-year-old who loves spaceships, aliens, Batman, Superman & Spider-man. Neither of us pronounced ‘alien’ or ‘Oregon’ correctly, so M gave elocution lessons.

I do pronounce a few things differently now: ‘bell

I’m not normally a praying man, but if you’re up there, please save me, Superman!
 — Homer Simpson

pepper’ instead of capsicum; ‘Car-ib-ee-an’ (think the Pixies’ ‘Where Is My Mind?’) instead of Cara-bee-anne; ‘NYC’ instead of New York; and ‘portobello’ mushroom instead of Swiss brown.

As I said, I didn’t know



anything about superheroes until visiting the us. I think they’re stupid, but after meeting M I realised they’re culturally endemic. There ideas go beyond the individual story, so despite huge character flaws, each ‘hero’ overcomes ‘everything’, to save the us, & with it ‘the world’, over & over. The stories are redemptive journeys that are equal parts chronicle & prediction: outlining the us’s current narrative & defining the us as an ideal, regardless of real events or the comic’s story itself.

We had a great time in Binghamton, recovering from the insanity of flying half way across the world in a large pressurised metal cylinder.

D, J & M were wonderful hosts, & even though J had an upcoming publishing deadline (*Capitalism in the Web of Life: ecology and the accumulation of capital*), he hung out in the

evenings when he could.

M’s favourite meal is black beans, white rice, roasted bell peppers & onions. I’m also partial to this meal now, with the added zing of hot sauce.

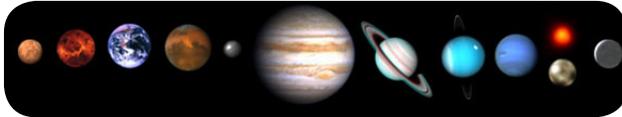
Hot sauce is everywhere in the us, & so many places have local recipes. I bought nine types & could have purchased 90 more, but I needed space for books... books... books. I avoided Tabasco — it’s available in Australia, & Cholula — it allegedly has lead in it.

Binghamton is surrounded by farms & has roadside stalls everywhere, so we were able to get local fresh produce. We even went to an apple farm & picked our own fruit. There was also a café, where we had an apple pie with fresh cream.

In Timor-Leste they make *ai manas* by grinding chilli, lime zest & salt in a mortar and pestle. (Garlic, brown shallots or tomatoes optional.) I’d pile so much *ai manas* on my food I’d sometimes burn the top of my mouth. I love it. A little too much, some say.

BINGHAMTON (NY) TO ITHACA (NY)

After farewelling all those in Binghamton, we made our way upstate to Ithaca, & to Cornell University's famous Carl Sagan (1934–96) Planet Walk (CSPW). Carl Sagan taught at Cornell from 1968 to '96. Yep, dotted around Ithaca are obelisks dedicated to the planets. It is an exact scale model (planet size & distances, down to one five billionth), with the Sun and terrestrials in Ithaca's downtown, & the gas giants



spilling out across Ithaca's parks, streets & footpaths.

I was so excited when I saw Jupiter's obelisk. After finding it earlier in the year, it took all of Shona's self-control to keep quiet. She knew I'd love it & she knows Jupiter is my favourite planet, so she orchestrated it so I saw Jupiter's obelisk first (corner of Seneca & Cayuga, not far from Moosewood restaurant).

We used the original Moosewood cookbook in my first share house (1995), but

I didn't know it was in Ithaca. There were three of us: Jodie was vegan; Aaron loved most meats; & I sat somewhere in the middle. Aaron's still a great cook — especially roasts.

In 2012 someone figured out where Alpha Centauri (our closest star) would be in relation to the CSPW. The Alpha Centauri obelisk is at the Imiloa Astronomy Center at the University of Hawai'i — some 8,000KM from Ithaca.

There's a similar scale-model Walk in DC: the Voyage National Program on the Mall, in front of the Smithsonian museums.

The DC plaques & Ithaca obelisks were designed in a bygone age. I find 'future-history' design both off-putting & compelling. Old tv shows & films, & especially 'futuristic' designs from the 1950s. I can't help thinking that now we're in their 'future', the existence of those aesthetics forced our hand,



somehow; that we're not really the masters of our own reality.

I completed both planet walks, although I kept getting lost between the terrestrials & gas giants... there's a lot of space between Mars & Jupiter.

Science is a way of thinking much more than it is a body of knowledge

— Carl Sagan

I have original 1970s NASA posters dad got for me while he was working at the Department of Science & Technology in Canberra. In the early '80s dad also borrowed a model of the space shuttle for my primary school Library foyer display. If they had taught science in terms of space (*Star Wars*) at school I'd be a scientist now.

Shona met so many wonderful people at Cornell first time around, so when we travelled back to Ithaca I was fortunate to meet Tess (T) & Shoshi (SH).

We stayed with T & I have to say, we ate sublimely. Ithaca has a wonderful food culture. Not a surprise, given that it's surrounded by farmland & Cornell's a world leader in food & agriculture research.

Importantly, Shona found me some good local coffee. Something that's happening more often now

Carl Sagan would be anti-fracking

is cardboard take away cups, regardless of whether or not customers are sitting in. This may save on costs (I've not seen any evidence of this), but coffee cup design has been honed over centuries: depth, width, circumference are just so — why mess



with that? And drinking out of cardboard tastes wrong. But enough of that.

Ithaca's weekend farmers' markets hug the banks of Cayuga Lake at Steamboat Landing. There's a jetty where people sit & eat breakfast. I had a breakfast burrito & coffee. I'd never heard of a 'breakfast burrito'. It was good.

We spoke to a farmer about different grades of maple syrup, did a taste test, & learned how to tap trees. We decided to buy his 'light syrup' because it's not available in Australia. That grade isn't exported because it doesn't travel well.

Once, while travelling with my sister & brother-in-law in north QLD we came across a mango variety we'd not tasted before. It was a blood-orange colour. The farmer explained that the breed was too fragile to travel, so never made it into supermarkets. I've only tasted one other mango as creamy, & that was a local variety in Darwin.

My coffee grinder (purchased Feb 2016) is made by a husband & wife team using local recycled wood. They have agreements with three tree-loppers & only take fallen wood they can fit in their ute. The mechanism is cast iron; the body, red cedar: a local SE QLD tree that was almost wiped out in the 1800s. We're lucky to still have this beautiful wood. I buy my beans from an Australian farm. I've seen fair trade at the grower's end, & while an exporter may be accredited, there aren't always the resources to enforce or review certifications, so farmers just end up getting paid the way they were before accreditation.



FRACKING'S FUCKED

Fracking, it seams [he he], is a world-wide issue. Ithaca's education campaign resonated with me. It connects fracking to a day-to-day thing: water.

The campaign's crux: if something goes wrong — & with mining it will go wrong — it'll blow up big time; & it'll all be about the water, not the mining. As happens everywhere, shit goes down, the company declares bankruptcy, moves offshore, & leaves the people & industries that rely on water up shit creek.

Ithaca itself is a beautiful regional town that's in the glacial Finger Lakes Region of New York State. It sits at the southern end of Cayuga Lake, which is the longest lake in the Region. The landscape is lush rivers, creeks, waterfalls & forests. It snows in winter. Australia's alpine areas are parched in comparison.

Cornell University is uphill from the town, overlooks Cayuga & has two gorges on campus: Fall Creek and Cascadilla. Lugging our bags

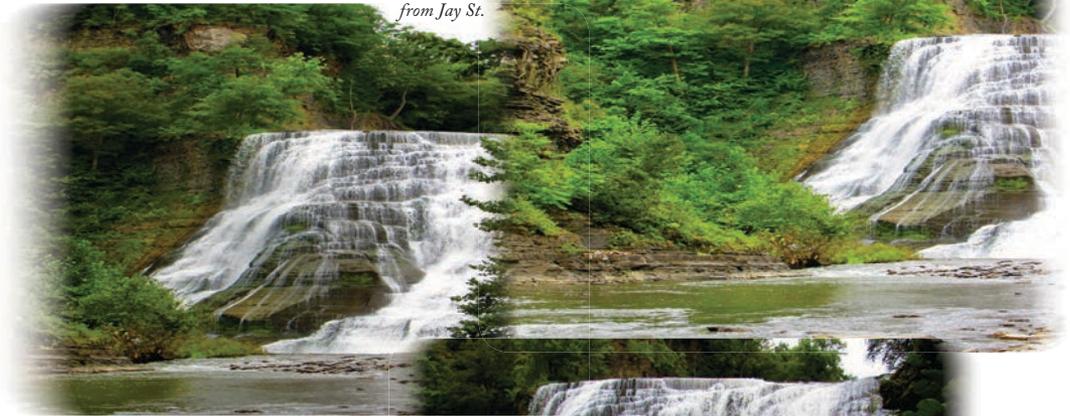
the Arts Quad lawn. I felt like I was in a film.

For the first week or so in the us I found it almost impossible to keep my eyes open after 3PM, so needed afternoon naps. Even with the nap I'd be in bed at about 8PM — although that's not too different to normal. On this particular afternoon Shona had to shake me awake.

When Shona was living in Ithaca earlier in 2013, her

house was on Jay St, near the centre of town. A lot of students at these regional universities live on campus & have nothing to do with the town. I used to think this was a narrative device to orchestrate conflict in films & TV shows, but there's a huge disconnect. Often, I'm generalising, students who choose to live in town do so for complex political, economic & financial reasons.

These falls are about a five-minute walk from Jay St.



up the hill from the bus stop was a bitch, but we arrived in the middle of a sunny autumn afternoon. So, after going for a walk in the forest around the university, & then buying lunch at the co-op, Shona met with her Professor (Philip McMichael) & I fell asleep on



Check out how tall the falls are. That's a man fishing (in the middle of town), about 100M away.

I THACA (NY) TO WASHINGTON DC

We didn't spend long in Ithaca, unfortunately, before setting off to DC.

I didn't have any desire to travel to the US before going there (except NYC), & quietly, I hate travelling; if I could, I'd never leave home, so I wasn't expecting too much from the US itself, let alone anything from Washington DC. I am a 'West Wing' fan, but I wasn't too jazzed about visiting yet another National Capital.

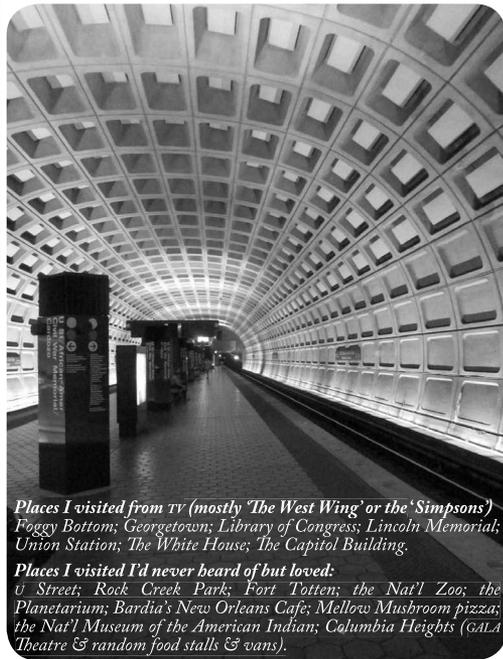
We loved Washington. Yes, I expected NYC to be awesome, & I loved it (cliché, I know), but for all the representations of the US in news, TV, film & books there are so many differences between our two countries (& between places in the US for that matter), that there's just so much we can't understand from the other side of the world. The people & the places were constantly surprising us — good & bad; nonetheless, it was exciting.

In Binghamton D gave us a 'tipping' lesson after we explained Australia doesn't tip like the US. She explained: 'Leave cash (10% minimum) because some employers dock the card fee from the employee's tip'.

My understanding of US culture is less certain now, having travelled there — a strange feeling, after growing up being sold that the US & Australia are the same. This constant overstatement is a politically convenient illusion.

In DC we stayed in Fort

described as 'Soviet', but that isn't the whole story, is it. All of us, all sides; our politics, our ideology, our architecture; DC, Canberra, Moscow — all of it was as affected by the cold war. Parts of Washington, & Canberra for that matter, look like those old photos &



*Places I visited from TV (mostly 'The West Wing' or the 'Simpsons')
Foggy Bottom; Georgetown; Library of Congress; Lincoln Memorial;
Union Station; The White House; The Capitol Building.*

*Places I visited I'd never heard of but loved:
U Street; Rock Creek Park; Fort Totten; the Nat'l Zoo; the
Planetarium; Bardia's New Orleans Cafe; Mellow Mushroom pizza;
the Nat'l Museum of the American Indian; Columbia Heights (GALA
Theatre & random food stalls & vans).*

U St/African-American Civil War Memorial/Cardozo Metro Station

Totten (think Aranda or Glenferrie), then Adam's Morgan (think Fitzroy or Newtown).

The Metro's design reminded me of all the images I saw as a kid of the USSR's architecture. Those buildings, so functional & brutish, were

images of Moscow.

I feel lucky that the US bared so many intimate things to me, that my relationship with the country is now more complex. Just like learning more about superheroes: familiar but not.

Canberra (the Bush Capital) is known for its natural landscape, but Washington has this as well. I didn't know.

The 'Garden City' & 'City Beautiful' movements drove the Griffins' Canberra designs, & there are similarities between both cities; although Washington looks to have been designed to be more 'grand' than Canberra.

Both Canberra's & DC's weather swings to extremes. One afternoon, DC put on a huge tropical storm. I knew DC was cold, but I didn't know it could get so hot. Canberra's similar: summer temperatures get into the 40s (Celsius), & winter temps drop below zero. Canberra's dry; DC's lush.



Rock Creek. This was taken near Adam's Morgan, under a bridge. Behind me is a major road.

Both integrate natural features. Canberra has Lake Burley Griffin, Black Mtn, Mt Ainslie, & creeks all through

it, while DC has Rock Creek Park & the Anacostia & Potomac rivers. I'd not heard of Rock Creek Park before. It's huge, & is a forested valley that follows the creek from north of the city to the Potomac. It houses, among others, a zoo & observatory.

Both cities have 'important things'. DC: the Pentagon, FBI, CIA, Arlington Cemetery, Library of Congress. I only went to the Library. (The Washington Monument was closed due to earthquake damage.) Canberra: the War Memorial, Nat'l Library, High Court, Defence Dept. I love the High Court Building.

In 1972 the Aboriginal Tent Embassy (ATE) was erected

in front of 'old' Parliament House (in '88 parliament moved up the hill into new digs). The ATE is Canberra's

most important building. We visit there when we can.

Both Canberra & DC house a bunch of monuments, but DC's all seem to have a water

I touched a moon rock — assuming we went to the moon

feature. The Thomas Jefferson, FDR & Martin Luther King Jr memorials sit on the bank of the Potomac River tidal basin, near the Japanese blossom trees. The reflecting pools near the Capitol Building & the Lincoln memorial are striking. Canberra's relationship to water is so different to DC's.

Of them all, I particularly liked FDR's monument. It's visceral & brutish.

We visited the Nat'l Museum of Natural History; the Nat'l Gallery of Art; the Nat'l Museum of American History (we saw Kermit); & the Nat'l Museum of the American Indian.

While Shona was doing research in the Library of Congress, I went to the Nat'l Air & Space Museum & the White House (WH). I touched the moon rock at the Museum, but couldn't get near the WH.

^ A friend of a friend, a poet, was hit hard. She works cleaning jobs to pay the rent & support her art. She didn't get paid during the two-week Shutdown, but the politicians received their pay cheques.

DC projects the self-importance you'd expect of a national capital, but, as always, it's more interesting where people reclaim space. There's a wonderfully ramshackle community vegetable garden right near Fort Totten station.

While we were living in Dili, Timor-Leste, someone planted a vegetable garden near one of the Immigration buildings. A simple reminder about empathy. We all eat.

DC & Canberra have vibrant music scenes. DC's Fugazi is one of my favourite bands.

Capitol Hill is the centre of DC & the Capitol Building looks down on the WH, which is in the centre of town. (Penn Ave runs diagonally from

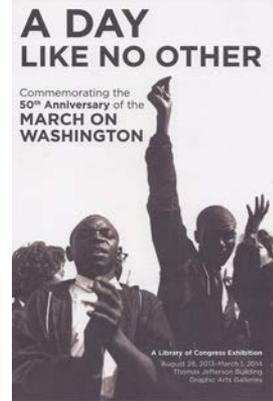
Georgetown to the WH to Capitol Hill). The WH itself is surrounded by fences, lawns & gardens, & is protected by snipers. The best thing there is the anti-nuke vigil (est. 1981) in front of the WH, near Lafayette Square (below left).

By comparison, Australia's Parliament House & the Lodge are isolated from Canberra's centre just enough to disguise that that's the idea.

We were in DC for the 'Shutdown' (Oct 1-16, 2013).^{*} The sense we got from speaking with people was that Speaker John Boehner (R) had overplayed his hand, & that many people felt the politicians didn't really care & it was all political strategy.

The *Washington Post* carried a story that I thought was a joke. It suggested sacking the President, the Senate, or both. The 'evidence' was how Australia dealt with a 'similar' situation in 1975. It concluded: 'Australia knows how to govern. When an opposition blocks supply, claiming the Government is incompetent, dismiss the Prime Minister.'

The article glosses over the Constitutional issues of



our 'Dismissal' & ignores all political context.

We were also in DC for events celebrating the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington (Aug 28, 1963) — lucky it wasn't shut down in '63. We also saw ADAPT march through the streets (Sept 27), calling for Medicaid reform.

The ADAPT Community

ADAPT is a national grass-roots disability rights group. We work for equality and positive change in policy and programs to include people with disabilities in American society.

The main goal of ADAPT is to end the institutional bias in Medicaid that forces people with disabilities from their home and families into expensive institutions and nursing homes.

ADAPT proposes legislation, advises decision-makers and suggests constructive solutions on local, state and national levels. ADAPT believes in action. Like classic civil rights struggles, we may use nonviolent civil disobedience.

Most importantly, ADAPT members have helped thousands of people with disabilities live in their own homes with their own families instead of being locked away in undesirable institutions.

Do you want to live in a nursing home?

ADAPT
www.adapt.org
adapt@adapt.org

Conception Picciotto protested outside the WH for more than 30 years. She passed away on January 25, 2016



* I was reminded of 'The West Wing' episode (2003) when President Bartlett (D) walks to 'the Hill' to negotiate the budget with the Speaker (R). The Republicans keep the President waiting outside their office while they debate tactics. The President leaves before they come out, so they lose their leverage.

Speaking of spies, Washington has the ISM: International Spy Museum. It's in the Penn Quarter, near the Nat'l Portrait Gallery, Ford's Theatre, & the Crime & Punishment Museum. All but one of the photos I took of it disappeared from my phone.

Canberra doesn't have an ISM, that I know of, but it does have the Ben Chifley Building (BCB): ASIO's five-storey, specially-designed, \$650 million HQ. After completion, ASIO refused to move in. Allegedly, the Chinese hacked the construction company's network, stole blueprints & bugged the building. (I couldn't make this up.) Australia's spy organisations know all about this malarkey. ASIS bugged Timor-Leste's (TL) cabinet office in 2004 while DFAT was negotiating the *Timor Sea Treaty*.

The Australian Government then employed another company to refurbish the BCB, I assume to change the layout & remove the bugs, but then a number of large glass windows randomly fell from the upper storeys. ASIO again refused to move in.

The windows were fixed (so they acted like windows & not stones), but — you guessed it — ASIO refused to move in. Allegedly, the basement car park floods. Some say it's the water table, some say it floods after rain, some say it floods after flushing a toilet. The building opened in 2012 yet remained empty until 2015. (As of Jan 2016 half of ASIO moved in.) I think there's a hidden, five-storey, fully operational underground HQ.

As an aside, TL employed China to build its Presidential & Foreign Affairs buildings, cutting out the middle-man. TL knew it didn't have the counter-intelligence capabilities to stop the bugs, so by letting the Chinese Government build them it knows the buildings are bugged. We were surveilled while living in TL.



Is that person looking out the window at me?

AUSTRALIAN INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY (AIC)

ASIS & ASIO

This is from the ASIS website, so there's surely more to it than this.

ASIS & ASIO are Australia's most well-known security organisations.

ASIO, as Australia's national security service, produces 'security intelligence within an integrated collection, assessment & advisory frame'. Its reach is national & international.

ASIS's work relates to foreign intelligence in the interests of 'Australia's national security, foreign relations and national economic well-being'.

AIC ORGANISATIONS

DIGO

Defence Imagery & Geospatial Organisation
{Information Collection}

ASD

Australian Signals Directorate
{Information Collection}

ASIS

Australian Secret Intelligence Service
{Information Collection}

ASIO

Australian Security Intelligence Organisation
{Collection & Assessment}

ONA

Office of National Assessment
{Assessment/Coordination}

DIO

Defence Intelligence Organisation
{Assessment}

DFAT

Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade
{Diplomatic Reporting}

Before the Shutdown Shona arranged a guided tour of the Capitol Building through our 'local representative', House Member Tom Reed (R): New York 23rd District (incl Ithaca). At the time New York State had 9 R & 18 D House representatives. Our guide was an intern named Teddy.

DC embodies self-importance, but, as always, it's where people reclaim space that's interesting

Building displays art. We saw a national secondary school exhibit.

Each street in DC (1, 2, 3... A, B, C) is defined by its relation to Capitol Hill. The Capitol Building is quirky. Under the rotunda is a crypt designed to entomb George Washington's body. A glass floor was planned, so people could view it. Wisely, Washington rejected the idea. He's buried at Mt Vernon (VA). Below the crypt they built a fallout shelter.

Teddy also pointed out bullet holes & burn marks on walls & columns. 'The scars,' he said, 'from wars, uprisings & some arson.'

The National Statuary Hall once housed the House of Reps. Each state has a statue. The room is beautiful, but the acoustics are weird. Teddy stood us on one side, while he went to the other. Then he covered his mouth & whispered. His voice was so clear. It sounded like a radio on low volume coming from behind me.

The myth is that John Quincy Adams (1767-1848) used to eavesdrop on conversations from his seat. But the dome that creates the effect wasn't installed until 1902.

Outside we found trees with initials carved into them. Many of the relationships looked to be term-based; a lot of names were scratched out or replaced. (Occupational hazard, I guess.) House members have two-year terms while Senate terms last six years.



The old Senate Vestibule contains the only columns decorated with corn. All other columns are decorated with tobacco leaves

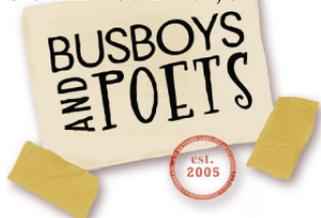


Kermit (1970): Nat'l Museum of American History



One evening we went to the Teatro Hispano GALA, Columbia Heights, to see Cabaret Barroco: interludes of Spain's golden age. English subtitles were provided via an on-stage monitor.

RESTAURANT, CAFE & BOOKSHOP 2021 14TH & V STS, NW
U STREET CORRIDOR, SHAW



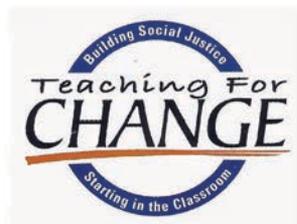
A wonderful find. We ate & drank here a lot, & bought heaps of books.

The Teaching for Change Bookshop is a not-for-profit that provides parents & teachers with resources.

BBP builds cultural connections by smashing art, spoken word, poetry & politics together.

We found writers & publishers we'd not heard of before. I was drawn to the fiction, Shona to the history & politics. The profits from the café & bookshop support community education.

The name BBP refers to poet Langston Hughes (1902–1967), who worked as a busboy at the Wardman Hotel in the 1920s before gaining recognition as a poet.



U STREET CORRIDOR

Until the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s, U Street, DC was known as 'Black Broadway' & was home to the us's largest urban African-American community. Martin Luther King Jr's assassination in '68 sparked riots across the country. DC's riots started at the corner of 14th and U. Then the '70s & '80s saw Shaw struggle, until urban renewal flowed into the neighbourhood.

U Street has some famous places, like Ben's Chili Bowl (1958) & the Lincoln Theatre (1922). I thought this was where President Lincoln was shot (It was the Ford's Theatre). It may sound a bit stupid to think that, but Australia has the Harold Holt Swim Centre. Harold Holt was a sitting PM who drowned while swimming off Portsea, Victoria. The pool was named in his honour after his death.

But there's a bunch of cool stuff around U Street. Like a clothes shop in a converted row house. The front door was

basically on the footpath & down three stairs. It looks like a Fitzroy or Carlton terrace house. The shop itself was run by an African-American gent who was knee-buckling stylish. I did not go into that store. I wanted to. You see, I picked up some very cool cufflinks in Ithaca, but I don't have any shirts that need cufflinks. I'm sure I could have found a shirt in the U Street



*Mingled breath & smell so close mingled
black & white so near no room for fear
— 'Subway Rush Hour' (Langston
Hughes, 1951; Montage of
a Dream Deferred)*

store, but the aforementioned gent used to stand on the stairs looking onto the street, & without doing anything, he increased the street's style rating while making the rest of us look unstylish. Like Morpheus in *The Matrix*, he combined colours that shouldn't be. Safe to say — as an unstylish middle-aged fellow — I did not go into that store. Should've. Still haven't used the cufflinks.

Between Washington DC & NYC we did visit New Haven (CT), for an international Food Sovereignty conference at Yale University, involving members from *la Via Campesina*. The conference was very cool & major players in the food sovereignty world attended. Yale, on the other hand, is not cool. It takes up most of the town. On one side of The Green (a local park) sits Yale's manicured buildings & grounds. Literally in its shadow poor people sleep rough. Universities like Yale & Cornell don't pay any rates or local government taxes, so while they may often be a town's largest employer, local municipalities receive nothing.



While I love NYC — it is bizarre. I probably love it because of its peculiarities, but I don't know how I'd go living with its oddness every day. Some places are so ugly, like Midtown's footpaths piled high with garbage; then the slick & commercial places like Times Sq are all billboards & advertising; but then places like the High Line open up space. And Central Park: so beautiful, so fraught. An unprecedented green space, but it waxes and wanes as a site of crime. NYC is the best & worst: it's contradictory. Huxley defined this contradiction in 'Heaven & Hell'. I went to the WTC memorial, but the area itself is horrible. The streets are narrow, the buildings lean in, & it's noisy & cluttered. I was on edge immediately. I went to Battery Park, sat, ate lunch, & looked across to Jersey City, Ellis Island & the Statue of Liberty, which was closed due to the 'Shutdown'.

WASHINGTON DC TO NEW YORK CITY (NY)

THE HIGH LINE

LINEAR PARK & AERIAL GREENWAY; MEATPACKING DISTRICT & CHELSEA RE-PURPOSING FROM RAILWAY TO PARK BEGAN IN 2006 PHASE I OPENED IN 2009 PHASE 2, 2011 PHASE 3, 2014

CHELSEA HOTEL #2 LEONARD COHEN — NEW SKIN FOR THE OLD CEREMONY

I remember you well in The Chelsea Hotel You were talking so brave & so sweet Givin' me head on the unmade bed While the limousines wait in the street Those were the reasons That was New York We were running for the money And the flesh And that was called love For the workers in song Probably still is for those of them left But you got away, didn't you babe Just turned your back on the crowd You got away I never once heard you say: I need you, I don't need you (x2) And all of that jiving around I remember you well in The Chelsea Hotel You were famous Your heart was a legend You told me again you preferred Handsome men But for me you would make An exception And clenching your fist For the ones like us Who are oppressed by The figures of beauty You fixed yourself, you said: Well, never mind We are ugly but we have the music And then you got away, didn't you baby Just turned your back on the crowd You got away I never once heard you say: I need you, I don't need you (x2) And all of that jiving around I don't mean to suggest That I loved you the best I can't keep track of each fallen robin I remember you well in The Chelsea Hotel That's all I don't even think of you that often

For our final two weeks in the us we stayed in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, with Laura (L), Sam (s) & Nathan (N) — a different Nathan. They are three fierce poets. And, of course, like a hyperactive puppy I wanted to see, do & go everywhere.

I became excited when I saw New Yorkers reading The New Yorker on the New York subway

I loved riding the subway, although I did get in people's way & I became very 'patriotic' about Brooklyn. I was struck by how subterranean I became.

One day we went to Chelsea, on Manhattan's west side. All I knew about Chelsea was Leonard Cohen's 'Chelsea Hotel'. We exited the subway & lines of yellow taxis sat gridlocked. The noise of horns & the sunlight hurt. It was like I'd been underground for years.

Shona was taking me somewhere to see something, but couldn't remember where (& wouldn't tell me what). I wasn't too confident, but along the way I bought a NYC pretzel from a street cart somewhere. It was crap. I now know, to get a good spot vendors pay a

licence. Classic NYC: the better the spot, the more expensive the licence. That's a lot of pretzels to pay for a premium location. The cart I found was in an out of the way side street.

As it happened, Shona was looking for the High Line: a 1-mile section of a disused rail spur (part of the Meatpacking District West Side Line). It's described as a green space, or aerial greenway, & looks downtown. It has views of the Hudson river, ESB & Chrysler building; includes liatris, coneflowers & birch plants; & houses installations, performances & exhibitions.



E TRAIN; A TRAIN; G TRAIN; N TRAIN; M TRAIN

THE SUBWAY

On the E Train I overheard two construction workers talking about the WTC towers & the construction industry. An older guy (OG) in his 60s

sites they'd worked on & figured out mutual colleagues. On a rumbling A Train a woman applied makeup, mistake free, without a mirror. On the M Train some young

animatronic toys around the Meatpacking District. This was before we knew about the residency. We saw it while searching Prospect Park for sb. We did not find sb, but we didn't look too hard, either.



'Sirens of the Lambs' parked near Prospect Park (Brooklyn)
It looked too weird not to photograph

& a younger fellow (YF) in his 30s. I can't be sure. They both looked fit, but the lines on their faces showed they'd worked outside a lot.

The OG took the E Train every day from Queens; it was coming into winter & he didn't know if he'd have any work after Tower II was done. The YF was working on Tower III, & said they'd enclose the site & heat it, so the OG should try to come work with him. The OG said he didn't like the travel: 'It's an hour each way.' The YF said, 'What about going by Brooklyn instead of Manhattan.' The OG shook his head: 'Same either way.'

They spoke of construction

fellows cranked up a stereo & danced. After, they asked everyone in the carriage to pay them for the 'show'.

There were also people collecting for the homeless. They wore t-shirts & caps with matching logos. I wasn't sure if they were legitimate. This could just be a x-cultural misinterpretation, but they looked way too slick for me.

BANKSY & BELCO PRIDE

While we were in NYC, Banksy carried out his 'Better Out Than In' 31-day residency.

We saw a lot of the work around town (see *Banksy Does New York*, 2014).

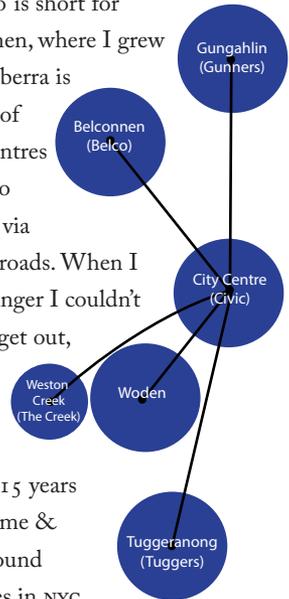
'Sirens of the Lambs', was where s/he drove screaming

I did expect to see heaps of cool art in NYC (& I did), but I didn't expect 'Belco Pride' (a photo exhibition by Lee Grant: www.leegrant.net) in Brooklyn Bridge Park.

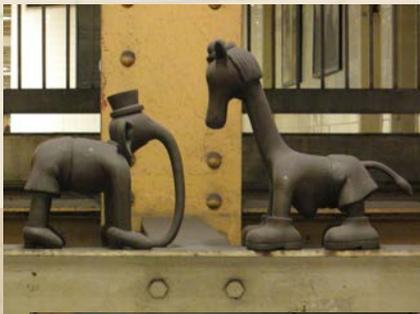
'Belco' is short for Belconnen, where I grew up. Canberra is

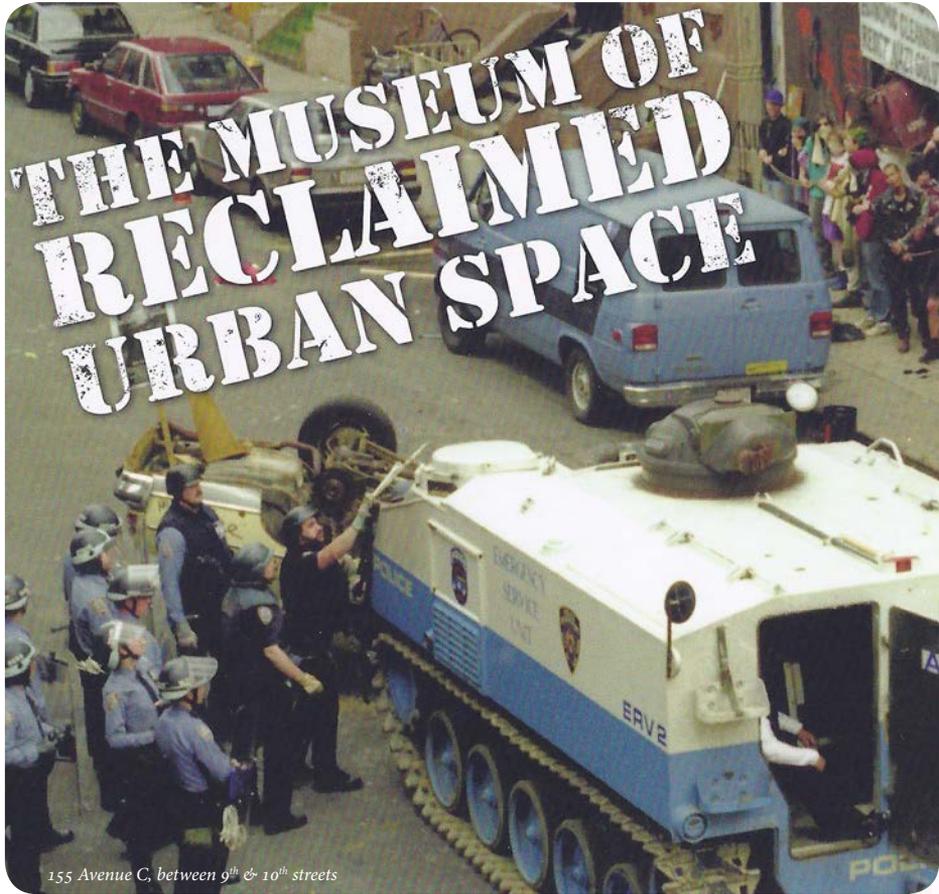
a series of town centres linked to the city via arterial roads. When I was younger I couldn't wait to get out, but in 2013 (after leaving 15 years earlier) me & Belco found ourselves in NYC together.

And while Banksy, the Met, MOMA, Central Station, & NYC's graf (5 Pointz; the Bowery; Sth Bronx; Bushwick; LES; Williamsburg) are cool 'n all, it was NYC's 8th & 14th Station that stole the show...



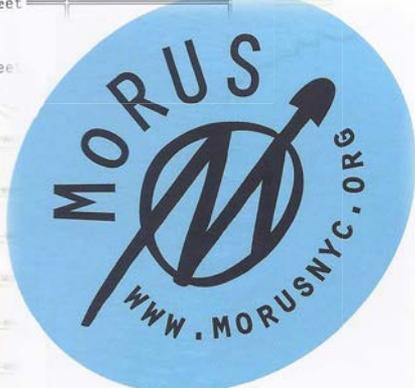
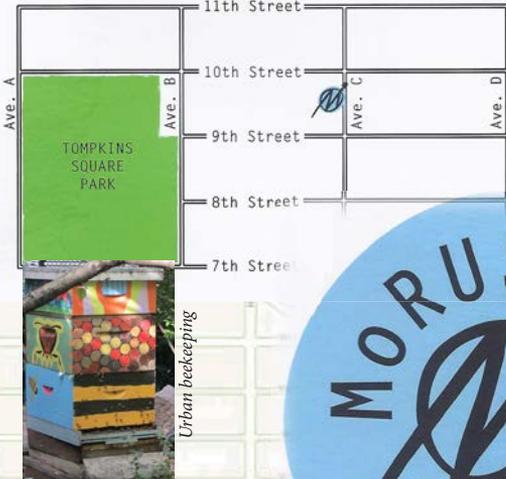
Tom Otterness' installation (2000) features bronze sculptures emerging from bits of the subway & playing along ceilings. It took several years to finish, owing to disputes with bureaucrats & because Otterness, as many artists can do, became obsessed with the sculptures & produced more than his commission asked of him. His wife had to talk him down — which also often happens to the best of us. In the meantime, parts of the installation appeared all over NYC: Central Park, Battery Park City, Downtown Brooklyn, the Pratt Institute. The entire installation is now in place at 8th & 14th. Yey!





155 Avenue C, between 9th & 10th streets

L TRAIN; 4 TRAIN MORUS is on Manhattan's Lower East Side (LES), near Tompkins Square Park. It chronicles the community's role in transforming vacant land & abandoned buildings into community spaces & gardens. We took a tour around some of these areas. Of course, Shona got to speaking to a woman (& her brother) who had also lived in Timor-Leste.



NEW YORK CITY COPS
THE STROKES — *Is THIS IT?*

Oh! I meant — Ah!
No, I didn't mean that at all

Here in the streets of
American nights
Rise to the bottom of
The meaning of life
Studied all the rules and
I want no part
But I let you in just to
break this heart
Even though it was
Only one night
It was fucking strange

Nina's in the bedroom
She says, 'Time to go now.'
But leaving, it aint easy
I've got to let go
Oh, I've got to let go

And the hours, they went slow
I said every night
She just can't stop saying:
New York City cops (x3)
They aint too smart
New York City cops (x3)
They aint too smart

Just kill me now 'cause
I'll let you down
I swear one day we're
going to leave this town.
Stop!

Yes, I'm leaving
'Cause this just won't work.
They act like Romans
But they dress like Turks
Soft time in your prime
See me, I like the summertime
But... hey!

Nina's in the bedroom...

Oh, trapped in an apartment
She would not let them get her
She wrote it in a letter:
'I've got to come clean
The authorities, they've seen
Darling, I'm somewhere
In between'

New York City cops (x 3)
They aint too smart
New York City cops (x 3)
They aint too smart

Our MORUS tour guide was so passionate about his neighbourhood that whenever a topic of political or social change came up he would explain how that movement occurred first on the LES. He wasn't claiming LES-ers started the movements, he was just being proud. I do like the parochialism people show for their neighbourhoods in NYC.

When NYC went bankrupt in the '70s, pretty much all municipal services were withdrawn from the LES & the people had to fend for themselves. He took us onto the roof of a squat, via his apartment. We could see south to the Hudson & across the East River to Brooklyn.

He filmed the second WTC plane from this roof. NYC's water is gravity-fed from upstate New York. For those people living on the first six floors of any apartment building, this means they don't need an electric water pump. Few, if any, of the

**NYC: The place where you
are least likely to get a bite
from a wild sheep
— Brandán Beacháin**

LES squats go above six floors, so after Hurricane Sandy they still had running water, unlike most of NYC.

That evening we went to the Highline Bar with our NYC-via-Timor-Leste

friends to see *Antibalas* play ('bulletproof' in Spanish). They were so much fun. We saw Reggie Watts (rw) in the audience, too. At first we weren't sure because his face was obscured by his trademark afro. He must've wondered about us: angling to get in close — but not too close; looking at him — but pretending not to look; then whispering between ourselves — but acting casual. We were probably lucky he didn't ask security to kick us out. Anyway, after confirming it was him, we looked around for SB, because RW, SB & *Antibalas* are all from Brooklyn — everyone's from Brooklyn! (except The Tossers, they're an Irish punk band from Chicago; people from Harlem, they're from Harlem, & people from the LES, they're not 'from', they 'are'.) We hoped RW, SB & *Antibalas* were hanging out together. They were not.

GENERAL ADMISSION

13 OCT 13 8:00PM

General Admission, Limited seating available. First come, first served. 21+ (under 21 must be with a valid ID).
HIGHLINE BALLROOM
424 N. 14th Street, New York, NY

* Fee or tax is average per ticket for the entire order.

PRICE: 25.00 FEES: 0.00 ORDER: 7/24/13 7/25.00

10/13/13 8:00P DRS 06:00



13 OCT 2013 25.00

HIGHLINE BALLROOM PRESENTS

ANTIBALAS

I found Laura, Sam & Nathan's home advertised on airB'n'b as: 'poet's haven in Brooklyn'; & the apartment was exactly that. It was homey & had shelves & shelves of books. In between exploring NYC, we cooked dinners, hung out & drank wine. They were such generous & giving hosts, & taught us so much during our time there: we talked poetry, literature & politics; they told us of gigs, cafés & books; & they introduced us to Barcade: beer + retro

I told everyone I met in NYC that I was from Brooklyn — my Australian accent didn't rate a mention

video games = fun. They are such warm & loving people. Although it was only a brief encounter, my time with them has allowed me to look at the world in different ways.

One morning on our way into Manhattan from Brooklyn Shona & I stopped at our 'local', Lula Bean café (Grand St), & there were more Australians than New Yorkers. The two women serving were Australian; the manager, while from the us,

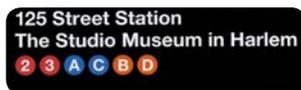


was married to an Australian; Shona & I were there; & a woman from Sydney (I picked her north-shore accent) was there as well. The only other customer, I'm assuming, was a New Yorker.

A few days later I was on the Upper East Side (UES), near Central Park & the Metropolitan Museum of Art when I thought I saw Woody Alan, but it was just a young spectacled guy in a Woody Alan t-shirt.

We didn't get to The Bronx, or Queens, or even large parts of Brooklyn, NYC's just too big.

We did visit the Brooklyn Bridge & Manhattan Bridge parks; DUMBO (Down Under the Manhattan Bridge Overpass); The Studio Museum (Harlem); MOMA; Chinatown; Koreatown; the Guggenheim; & Red Rooster (Harlem). There's also: SOHO (South of Houston Street);



NOHO (North of Houston Street); Tribeca (TRIangle BELOW CANAL Street); NOLITA (North of Little ITALY); and NOMAD (North of MADison Square). It's a '70s thing.

DUMBO is NYC's tech hub, & some years ago the cardboard box was invented there.

I wandered around Little Italy. Lots of cafés. It was similar to Harlem; in that the buildings overwhelm in many parts of Manhattan, but in



Weird art under the Brooklyn Bridge in Brooklyn Bridge Park

other areas, where the streets broaden & the buildings are shorter, there was a sense that the space was more relaxed.

Williamsburg can be relaxed & chilled, at least the sky has some space, but Brooklyn does have claustrophobic areas too, places like Flushing Ave & Forte Greene have an agitated air.

On October 8 we ended up at the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA). This was not a planned visit, but we saw *Magritte: The Mystery of the Ordinary, 1926–1938*, an exhibition by my favourite Surrealist artist, René Magritte; we happened upon a crazy sound exhibition called *Soundings: a contemporary score*; & we saw some bizarre sculptures in MOMA's sculpture garden. The garden was boxed in by tall office buildings. It'd be kinda relaxing to look out the office window onto all the sculptures & the people wondering about. Either that, or I'd be so distracted I'd never get any work done.

Mystery... focussed on Magritte's 'breakthrough Surrealist years', & brought together 80 artefacts. *Soundings...* was a group of sound installations, which were all interesting, but the one that took us most was the 'Microtonal Wall' by Tristan Perich. It had 1,500 speakers & was designed to create a 'continuum of pitch'. We created sounds by running, walking & crawling alongside the wall; contorting our bodies as we passed; & by getting in close or by keeping some distance. We ran up & down the wall like kids, & spent so much time there we were lucky security didn't move us on.

The day worked out that we were still in Manhattan coming on an evening, so I decided this would be my NYC birthday. We called Hangawi & booked a table. I also decided to start Parkour training back in Australia. I thought, if I can travel across the globe, I can attend Saturday afternoon training sessions in my home town.

We still had some time, so we zigzagged our way from MOMA — by foot & by subway — down to Koreatown (Midtown). Along the way we took in some sights: the Rockefeller Center ('30 Rock'), Bryant Park & the New York Public Library, the Empire State Building (ESB) & bits of Madison Avenue ('Mad Men'). I'm beginning to see a pattern: food, coffee, & TV & film references. And while the ESB is cool, I like the Chrysler Building (CB) more.

Current Ex

THROUGH JAN 12, 2014 SPECIAL EXHIBITION
Magritte: The Mystery of the Ordinary, 1926–1938

THROUGH JAN 12, 2014 PAINTING
Carol Bove: The Equations
 THROUGH JAN 26, 2014 PAINTING
Walker Evans: American

OCT 5, 2013–OCT 1, 2014 ARCHITECTURE
Designing Modern Architecture
 THROUGH NOV 3 SPECIAL EXHIBITION
Soundings: A Contemporary Score

THROUGH DEC 1 ARCHITECTURE
Cut 'n' Paste: From Assemblage to Collage
 THROUGH JAN 6, 2014 PHOTOGRAPHY
XL: 19 New Acquisitions
 THROUGH JAN 6, 2014 PHOTOGRAPHY
New Photography 2013

THROUGH JAN 20, 2014 DRAWING
Dorothea Rockburn Wright: Drawing Which Makes
 THROUGH JAN 20, 2014 ARCHITECTURE
Applied Design

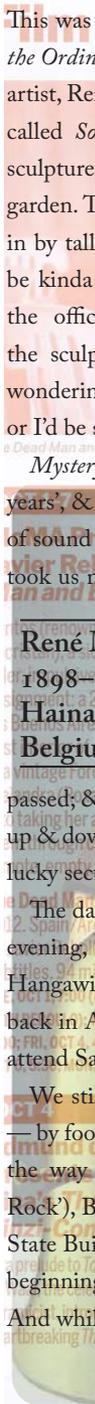
OCT 12, 2013–JUN 22, 2014 PRINCE OF GEORGES
There Will Never Be Another Like John Cage's 4'33"
 OCT 18–NOV 3 MARRON ATRIUM
Musée de la danse: The Gestures

THROUGH JAN 26, 2014 SPECIAL EXHIBITION
American Modern: The Art of the 1920s and 1930s
 THROUGH MAR 2, 2014 MEDIA
Images of an Infinite World
 ONGOING CONTEMPORARY GALLERY
Contemporary Galleries

THROUGH FEB 9, 2014 THEATRE
Dante Ferretti: Design for the Cinema



MOMA Audio is sponsored by





INFORMATION

Height 77 storeys
Architectural Style Art Deco
Location 405 Lexington Avenue (42nd St), in Manhattan's Turtle Bay Area

RECORDS

Tallest building in the world
 May 27, 1930 to April 30, 1931
Preceded by 40 Wall Street
Surpassed by ESB

HONOURS

National Register of Historic Places 1976
 National Historic Landmark 1976
 NYC Landmark 1978

CONSTRUCTION

Started 1928
Completed 1930
Cost US\$20 Million
 William Van Alen (Architect)
 WP Chrysler (Developer)
 Ralph Squire & Sons
 (Structural Engineer)
 Fred T Ley & Co
 (Main Contractor)

The CB is said to be one of the best examples of classic Art Deco architecture. Van Alen's original design attempted to create the illusion that the tower was floating, but this proved too much for the original contractor, so the lease was sold to Walter P. Chrysler.

The 1920s economic boom saw intense competition in NYC to erect the world's tallest building. The CB's rival was 40

Currently, the storeys above floor 71 only function as narrow landings for the stairway to the spire.

The CB remained the world's tallest building for 11 months, and served as the Chrysler Corporation's HQ from 1930 until the mid-50s. It was, however, born into the Great Depression. In fact, the spire was delivered on October 23, 1929, the day before Black



The CB is currently the fifth-tallest building in NYC, after the One World Trade Center (2012); 432 Park Avenue (2015); ESB (1931); and the Bank of America Tower (2004).

Wall Street. As both buildings neared completion 40 Wall Street's architects increased its height at the 11th hour (68 to 71 storeys), and so claimed it as the world's tallest building.

In response, Van Alen obtained approval for a 38m spire. It arrived at the site in four sections; was riveted together inside the CB in 90 minutes; then hoisted atop.

Thursday.

The Chrysler Co. didn't fund the CB's construction & nor has it ever owned it. However, various architectural details were modelled on automobile products, such as the gargoyles (the Plymouth's hood-ornament) and the 31st floor corner trimmings (radiator caps).

The ESB is located in Midtown, on Fifth Ave between w 33rd & 34th streets (several blocks from Grand Central and Penn stations). It's named after New York State's nickname:



The Empire State.

The site was first developed as the John Thompson Farm in the late 18th century. The block was occupied by the Waldorf–Astoria Hotel, which was frequented by ‘The Four Hundred Club’, the social elite of New York. Then in the early 20th century William F. Lamb designed the ESB, producing the drawings in two weeks, using his earlier Reynolds Building (RB) designs (Winston-Salem, North Carolina). Despite some setbacks over its lifetime, the ESB stood as the world's tallest building for almost 40 years — until the WTC towers.

The building itself began well enough — it took two years to erect and was completed 12 days ahead of schedule — but much of its office space remained empty for years, as the Great Depression hit hard. New Yorkers called it the ‘Empty State Building’. Then there were some near misses.

On July 28 1945, a B-25 bomber crashed into it. Fourteen people died, and elevator operator Betty Lou Oliver survived a 75-storey plunge. A year later, another aircraft narrowly missed it. Following the 9/11 attacks, the ESB was NYC's tallest building again, until the One World Trade Center surpassed it in 2014.

To this day, ESB staff still send Father's Day cards to RB staff.



KING KONG, ANDY WARHOL & GARY ELKERTON

The original *King Kong* was released in 1933.

The 1976 remake's final scene is on the WTC towers.

For the film's 50th anniversary (1983) artist Robert

Vicino placed a 27m inflatable Kong on the ESB.

The 2005 remake was set in 1930s NYC.

In 2004, the National Film Registry deemed *King Kong*'s cultural significance worthy of preservation in the Library of Congress.

Andy Warhol's 1964 silent film *Empire* is a continuous, 8-hour B&W shot of the ESB at night. [I saw this film at the Warhol–Weimei exhibition, NGV, Melbourne, 2016] Australian Surfer Gary Elkerton's nickname was ‘Kong.’

INFORMATION

Height 102 storeys

Architectural Style Art Deco

Location 350 Fifth Ave, NYC

RECORDS

Tallest building in the world

May 1, 1931 to Dec 23, 1970

Preceded by Chrysler Building

Surpassed by World Trade Center (North Tower) 1970 & One World Trade Center 2014

HONOURS

President Hoover turns on the ESB's

lights from Washington DC 1931

ESB gets its own zip code 1980

NYC Landmark 1981

National Register of Historic Places 1982

National Historic Landmark 1986

CONSTRUCTION

Started 1929

Completed 1931

Cost US\$41 Million

Shreve, Lamb and Harmon
(Architect)

John J. Raskob (Developer)

Homer Gage Balcom

(Structural Engineer)

Starrett Brothers and Eken

(Main Contractor)



Harlem: 3² miles; Lenape settlement; farming village; revolutionary battlefield; resort town; commuter town; 'ghetto'; centre for African-American arts, culture, protest & resistance. We didn't spend as much time in Harlem as we wanted, but we did eat at Red Rooster. Not a KFC-style joint; Harlem's Red Rooster chef Marcus Samuelsson catered Obama's first State Dinner.

Shona's mum (Elaine) gave Shona a 'Harlem Heritage Tour' for a birthday present. Our guide, in a similar vein to the MORUS tour, was a local fellow. He too was very proud of his neighbourhood.

Walking around NYC is a lesson in poverty & power. All I knew about Harlem growing up was the Harlem Globetrotters cartoon. (Come to think of it, all I knew of Brooklyn was 'Welcome Back Cotter'.) But where Central Park meets Harlem the streets are wide. In NYC's rush to go higher, it loses something. In the bits we're told are important — Park Ave; 5th Ave; Wall St — the buildings stop the sun way above street level. At the WTC towers I had to leave; it was too oppressive; but in Harlem, Little Italy, Brooklyn, the LES, where the obscure & unequal social &

economic forces driving NYC have, for some reason, stifled construction, the streets widen & open up to the sun.

NIEUW HAARLEM

The first European colony was established in 1637 by Franco-Dutch immigrants & was named after the Dutch city of Haarlem.

HARLEM

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore—
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over—
like a syrupy sweet

Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load

Or does it explode?

LANGSTON HUGHES

Before, it was inhabited by the Lenape. Due to 'hostilities', the settlers regularly fled to New Amsterdam, lower Manhattan.

The 'Battle of Harlem Heights' (in Hollow Way — now w 125th St) was George Washington's first American Revolution (1775–1783) victory. He outflanked the British & forced them back.

The British eventually chased

him north, then razed Harlem.

Harlem's post-war rebuild took longer than the rest of the island, & although it remained rural it wasn't poor. When the New York & Harlem Railroad incorporated in 1831, Harlem developed into an industrial hub.

In the post-Civil War (1861–65) 'boom' Harlem thrived, but property values crashed in 1873, so NYC annexed the 'troubled community'.

THE GREAT MIGRATION — GM (1910–1970)

Some six million African-Americans fled the rural South. Initially to escape the Jim Crow laws (& lynching violence), the GM coincided with an economic collapse (1890s); Harlem's 1903 housing boom; Harlem's 1905 housing-price crash (due to a housing glut); anti-black riots; & the destruction of houses for Penn Station's construction. Many African-Americans moved to Harlem during this time.



The Harlem River separates the Bronx & Manhattan. The Triboro Bridge is a complex of three separate bridges that offers connections between Queens, Manhattan (Harlem) & the Bronx. Harlem is to the left, the Bronx to the right

EAST HARLEM — EH (EL BARRIO)

Both Jewish & Italian 'Mafia' emerged in the late-1800s. But EH was also a major centre for musical theatre, vaudeville & film. After WWI, Puerto Rican & Hispanic immigration established a community which became known as 'Spanish Harlem'. The '40s & '50s saw many Italians relocate to the Bronx, Brooklyn, upstate NY & New Jersey.

**CENTRAL HARLEM — CH**

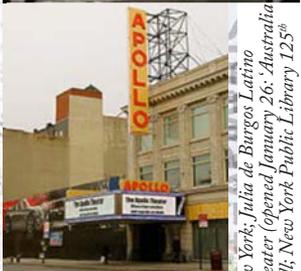
In the '20s & '30s over 125 speakeasies, cellars, lounges, cafés, taverns, supper clubs, rib joints, theatres, dance halls, & bars & grills operated. Some jazz venues, including the Cotton Club, where Duke Ellington played, & Connie's Inn, were 'whites only', while others, including the Renaissance Ballroom & the Savoy Ballroom (renowned for swing dancing), were integrated.

**THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE — HR (1919 to the mid-1930s)**

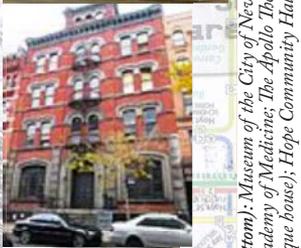
This was a cultural, intellectual, protest, arts & literary movement. I'm not sure how these things are defined, but the HR doesn't include jazz. I thought it would. The HR housed numerous theatre companies, including the Lafayette Players, Harlem Suitcase Theater, The Negro Playwrights, American Negro Theater, & the National Black Theater (Australia's own National Black Theatre, est. Redfern 1972, was based on this). In 1936, Orson Welles produced his black *Macbeth* at the Lafayette Theater. Harlem is the birthplace of dances like the Harlem Shake ('Albee'), Toe Wop & Chicken Noodle Soup.



Activists like Marcus Garvey, AP Randolph & W.E.B. Du Bois lived there. And organisations like The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP); the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA); & the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters were based there.

**PROHIBITION (1920-1933), THE GREAT DEPRESSION (1929-1939) & CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT (ongoing)**

Harlem became a major entertainment destination during Prohibition. During the Great Depression the 'Don't Buy Where You Can't Work' movement forced retail shops to employ black people. A successful boycott campaign was organised by the Citizens' League for Fair Play in 1934.



Harlem Landmarks (top to bottom): Museum of the City of New York; Julia de Burgos Latino Cultural Center; New York Academy of Medicine; The Apollo Theater (opened January 26: 'Australia Day', 1934, in a former burlesque house); Hope Community Hall; New York Public Library 125th St. Branch.

Harlem's recent history reflects the broader history of NYC itself.
 1960s & '70s

During the '60s civil society mobilised for better schools, jobs & housing. Harlem saw rent strikes, as tenants' groups demanded the City Council limit prices to within rent control regulations & enforce the housing code, so landlords would have to eradicate vermin & provide winter heating. In '63, Insp. Lloyd Sealy became the first African-American officer to command a NYPD station (Harlem's 28th Precinct).

In '75 the City almost went bankrupt & eventually needed a Federal bailout. To rein in municipal costs, the City ceased garbage, policing, education & health services to some neighbourhoods. This only entrenched poverty & stigma in places like Harlem, Brooklyn & the LES.

1980s & '90s

Plans to rejuvenate Harlem's economy in the '80s centred around a retail trade centre on 125th St, but Reagan's election killed it. The City did build one large construction project in Harlem during that time: a sewage treatment plant on the Hudson. (Thanks for nothing.) A compromise was reached so 'Riverbank State Park' was built over the



African Flag — Lisa Oppenheim

plant, but that took decades. After decades of neglect & mismanagement by officials, the '90s saw changes at City & Federal levels. NYC Mayors Dinkins & Giuliani enacted 'no tolerance' & 'stop & frisk' policies (based on the controversial Broken Windows Theory); the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone (UMEZ) was introduced bringing in \$300 million in development funds, but giving out \$250 million in tax breaks for wealthy speculators; & 'new' infrastructure replaced those City assets removed or left to rot during the '70s.

2000s & '10s...

In 2000 the first new supermarket in 30 years & the first first-run movie theatre opened in Harlem; in 2001 the Studio Museum & Bill Clinton moved into 125th St; in 2002, a large retail & office complex: 'Harlem Center', was completed at the corner of Lenox & 125th; & between 2000 & 2010 Harlem's population grew more than in any decade since the '40s. However, property values increased nearly 300% in that time, compared to NYC's average of 12%. So today many Harlemites are again, as they must have been during the exodus of the '40s & '50s, concerned about being priced out of their neighbourhood.



This sculpture stands at the crossroads of St Nicholas Ave w 122nd St & Fredrick Douglas Blvd, Harlem

I fell in love with The Strand Bookstore (Broadway & 12th St). It's close to Union Square: the L•N•Q•R•4•5•6 trains intersect here. The Square also has farmers'



markets, so on our way through we'd buy fruit, bread & cheese to keep us going on our travels. I found books I'd had difficulty getting in Australia. I even bought *Carpentaria* (Alexis Wright), but for less than in Australia. That didn't seem right.

Broadway is very long; running north-south from lower Sleepy Hollow, to the Bronx, across the Harlem River & down to Manhattan's tip (kissing Times Square, Madison Square & Union Square). It cuts through the Theatre District, & pre-dates NYC's 1811 grid plan, so wiggles across NYC like a lost tourist.

Times Square was under construction, so there wasn't much pedestrian room. We did see three freaky Elmos getting photos with people & possibly trying to steal back packs. I saw a stand off: two



people in each other's face. One said: 'Step back. I am not asking; this is my personal space'. The other said: 'No. This is my space.' They could've had guns. Coming from a place where people don't often carry guns, I felt strange thinking 'that angry guy could have a gun'. Now, the altercation could've been street theatre — a circle of 20 or so people watched on — but I walked past; if it had have been a real dispute, I didn't need that malarkey.

We also went to a spoken word gig, on advice from L, S & N. The organisers were so welcoming. They even run workshops for first timers before each gig. Neither of us read, but we were roped into 'judging' proceedings. I don't like rating people like that. All the performances were excellent & we had heaps of poetry fun.

In this photo Shona's looking at Birdland Jazz Club. I remember first hearing 'Cantalooop (Flip Fantasia)' by us3 in 1993.



Brandán Ó Beacháin was an Irish poet, short story writer, novelist, playwright, volunteer in the Irish Republican Army (IRA), & he was an inner-city working-class Dubliner. (Joyce's *The Dubliners* & Calvino's *Cosmicomics* are some of my favourite books.)

When asked what he thought of Canada, he said it would be all right when it was finished. But he said NYC was the greatest city in the world. It was 'the place where you are least likely to get a bite from a wild sheep'.

MONKEY GONE TO HEAVEN
PIXIES — DOOLITTLE

There was a guy; an underwaster guy
Who controlled all the sea
Got killed by 10mil pounds of sludge
From New York to New Jersey

This monkey's gone to heaven (x4)

The creature in the sky
Got sucked in a hole
Now there's a hole in the sky
And the ground's not cold
And if the ground's not cold
Everything's gunna burn
We'll all take turns; I'll get mine too

This monkey's gone to heaven (x4)

Rock me Joe [spoken]

If man is five (x3)
Then the devil is six (x3)
And if the devil is six,
Then god is seven (x3)

This monkey's gone to heaven (x9)

JFK TO LAX; LAX TO BNE

to brighten your day



All graf photos (Shona; Brooklyn, NYC), except 1: 'Parkour' & 2: 'There Is No Spoon' (Me; West End, Brisbane).



2013 was turned upside down by death, then balanced by generosity, child-like wonder & joy.

Happiness & grieving don't happen in isolation, do they, so how do they fit together inside us?

My first day in NYC was a bright Autumn day. As I said, the us was somehow familiar. Even the smell of the sun falling on paths, roads & buildings as it battled to warm the day felt regular. My trip began & finished in Williamsburg. I'd wanted to see NYC ever since I heard The Pogues' 'Fairytale of New York' when I was 17. I was happy, but was that allowed?

Death is difficult precisely because we continue. We age, we have highs & lows, we fall in love, we have kids, we travel...

As my friend Shane, whose mum passed a decade ago, recently said: 'It's hard to believe how much my life has changed since then, how much the loss changed me, how much I haven't been able to share with her.'

We buried mum's ashes next to her parents'.



*Alice, the Mad Hatter, the March Hare, the Dormouse & the Cheshire Cat
Central Park (1959)*

**I wonder if I've been changed in the night?
Let me think: was I the same when I got up this morning?
I almost think I can remember feeling a little different.
But if I'm not the same, the next question is, 'Who in the world am I?' Ah, that's the great puzzle!**

— Lewis Carroll

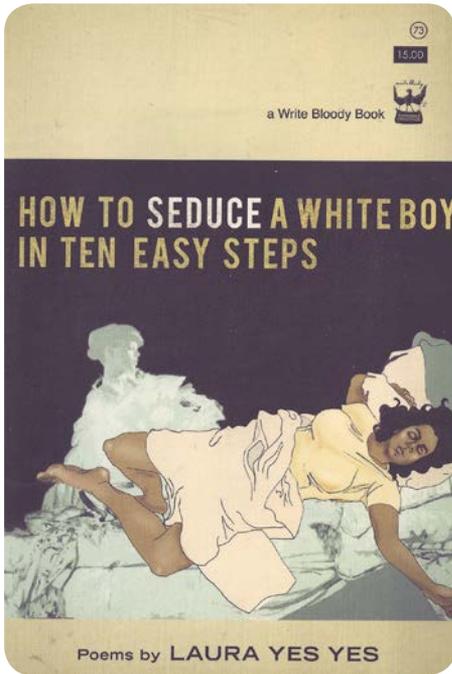


*Robert ('Rabbi') Burns — The Literary Walk
Central Park (1880)*

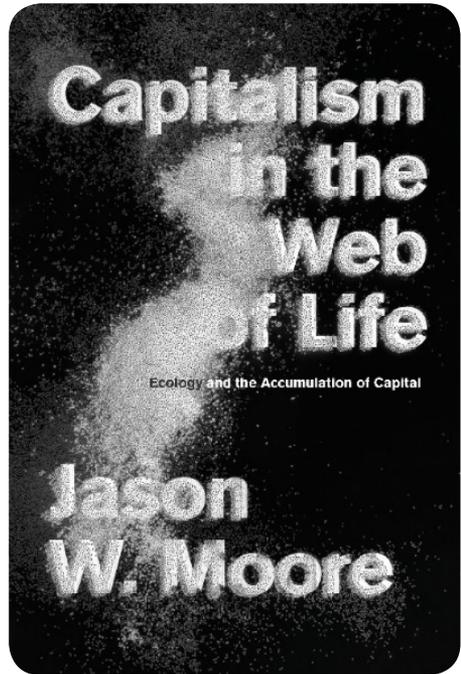
During these past three years

I've found grief to be confusing & hard, but mostly strange. I forget mum's gone. I still grab for my phone, intending to call, because we haven't spoken in a while. We used to go ages without speaking, then one of us would phone & the other would answer with: 'I've been meaning to call'. Then I remember... & re-live the exact moment she really understood she was dying. The look on her face...

The day she passed (5PM) I woke early & went outside — me, dad & my sister stayed with her in the hospice, we slept on the floor of her room — & the sunrise was so intense that I took photos over Lake Burley Griffin. It was a cold, clear morning, the light was striking & there was a downy frost. Canberra can be beautiful. The past weeks had been horrendous, & that day was carrying such a sense of sadness & relief. Maybe the sunrise wasn't that beautiful at all; I just needed something simple & normal & everyday to happen.



www.writebloody.com



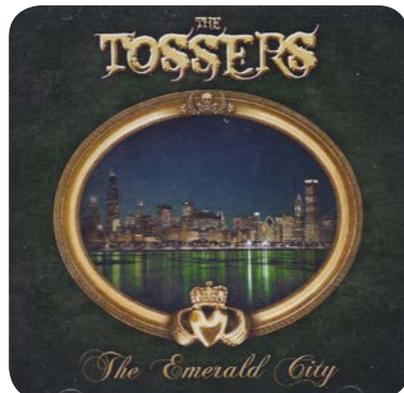
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Statue of Lieberty — Miss Me
Photo Shona (off Grand St, Brooklyn 2013)

