

Epic Introductory Sentence Followed by Opening Paragraph Detailing Quintessential New Zealand Landscape (Using a Novel Simile) Morphing Into Description of Actual Scene and a Person's Face that Reminds (Obtuse) Narrator of His/Her Childhood and Possibly Something Monumental Like His/Her Father - Thus Introducing a Strong Theme Early On. The Judges Comment on This and Call the Story: "The Introduction of an Authentic Voice in New Zealand Literature."

Or:



The gathering of manifesto crew has been happening since February 2004. It is getting very near now... I can feel it.

Here's what happens (how it pans out):

Local publication is looking for manifestos. Gives me – the agitator within the movement – a chance to stir everyone up.

So I call together whole gang to issue grandiose proclamation: "... now is our time brothers (and sisters), we have the present on our side, if nothing else... Let us gather and write one manual for life and art...[cut and paste inspiring speech here]"

"Like Braveheart", I say to myself as I lie one night in my lonely bed – talking to nothing but the darkness and little old me.

The gang stares at me blankly, banal, tongues poke out sides of mouths – then back to business. The room begins to hum again as they talk about cars and sport and politics and horse.

Question: What's happening next weekend?
Answer: A party at Kate's.

My speech – as already mentioned similar to, or as good as, Braveheart – goes unheard.

The gang is in full swing, and in this state cannot be reeled in. They are uncontrollable.

And I hide in the corner and watch them all. Poets, painters... pah, they wouldn't know anything more than ticking over in their miserable shit-hole lives. Not a novel concept among them.

Then, I calm down and like them all again. "Not such a bad bunch", more than one person outside the group has said on more than one occasion.

None will commit to manifesto. As gathering gathers momentum, individuals show signs of interest. Interest shown is, however, an example of the minimalist commitment required to be part of this revolution.

They'll all do it – just their own way. And nothing I can say/do/push will make them want to sign my manifesto in Heppy-blood.

Makark, the Surrealist poet tells me it is because they all enjoy their anarchic existences. He says he will not commit to a manifesto unless it is a reproduction of the Manifesto of Surrealism. He is stocky, with little wrinkly monkey-fingers, and fur over most of his body (perfect for lounging about in natural hot pools in the snow).

Makark once scooped margarine out of a punnet at a party, shat in container, neatly covered human pooze with margarine, and replaced in fridge (for poor house owner to find next day or later, smelly [or not so smelly and preserved by 5 degrees Celsius]).

He writes poem called: "Confessions of a Reformed Boys' School Addict."

Vince is also here, sitting by Makark – talking about beer. I'd hoped he'd've be into the idea, it would give him a chance to wildly claim that lowrider car art was the most pure form of expression. But no, this idea enthuses him little/none.

And he is the sort of guy that's easily enthused.

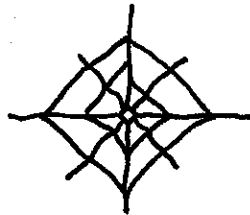
Vince is a triplet (the only triplet I ever meet in my time here on unfair old earth). His triplet brothers Vance and Vonce are not here this evening. While they enjoy hanging out and drinking, they didn't much care for all the art talk. They both read FHM magazine and apply the information to real-life.

If there were girls to be had, they'd be there.

Well, Vonce would like to be, but he is in jail for GBH.

The only way some people can tell the triplets apart is through Vince being the only one with short hair and Vonce having a tattoo on the webbing of his hand.

Vonce's tatt looks like this:



He got it the first time he went to jail but didn't realise that in some circles the symbol meant that had killed/had hated/had hit blacks.

"Some of my best friends are black."

He also got hepatitis.

Vance is at Shooters, a suitably classy establishment innercity.

So Vince and Makark sit on couch talking to one another about things that each finds interesting. To them, the fact that I have proposed a manifesto only goes to prove what a boring twat I am.

"For God's sake, do something... Anything man. All-you-do-is-exist. Wake-up sit around doing nothing go to bed dream wake up... You're like a convoluted sentence with no punctuation man." Vince, as a good, hard-working member of society, takes exemption to my transitory, gypsy-like lifestyle.

Now, sitting on my couch, and having listened to my plea for a manifesto, he remembers his grievances against me in general.

No, Vince will not be writing manifesto – I can stick my manifesto up my arse.

Other than Vince and Makark there are about 10 other people there. I wander the room, person to person, asking everyone if they are interested?

They aren't.

All I can count on is my flat mate named:



In June 2003 I had written to him from a Paris subway station suggesting it might be time for us to begin our manifesto. We conversed a number of times before I returned home to Christchurch.

I returned to red wine and much hilarity but no manifesto.



liked to do things at a glacial pace and thought I was much too rushed in my efforts to define my generation.

"You can't just go and write it man... It has to come from somewhere. It can't just exist because you want it to – it has to exist independently... You know? Now hand me that ol' red wine there."



was a photographer, stocky and strong like an Ox. He had renounced his name spelled using conventional letters. Someone had shown him how to write it in short hand once and he had stuck with that ever since. Whether a driver's license application or a competition entry form, he

always proved difficult and frustrating for some poor administrative person trying to work out his cryptic cipher:

A

was short for Arthur Bartholomew. Poor Artie Bartie'd had a terrible time at school, teased mercilessly until there was nothing left for him to do but be an artist. He retired to art class and learned everything there was to know about

colours.

He had an amazing ability to look at any colour and see exactly what made up that colour. What colours combined to create that final colour that people saw with their eyes. He could expertly mix everything to get the right colour, everytime.

He'd make them with paint and glue and water and dirt from wet bark.

add a dash of sunshine

Everyone agreed his colour skills were excellent.

"He is incredible," they would say.

Unfortunately his rendering skills were less than impressive.

He managed to scrape through art assessments with Bs and Cs while still generally being regarded as the most talented in art class. For God's sake, his name was A with a capital A.

Then, in sixth-form, he had discovered photography, and quite by chance, the fact that his compositional skills were also incredible. While his rendering of any object looked childish and inconsistent, the compositional make-up of the work was incredible.

So he took up photography and discovered pure ways of reproducing colours using chemicals and exposure to light.

He sniffed fixative and shook his wee head solemnly, lips pursed, thinking deeply with chin jut out.

Holding out unsuitable fix for bent peons of antiquity to carry away.

"No this will not do. It is unsuitable."

He could look at a photograph and let you know what was wrong with that brand's representation of reality.

Unfortunately, high school photography is limited to black and white, and he was forced to plod along using his composition, good enough, but again neglecting his true talent –

colours

"Well, you can't be good at everything," he would say laughingly once he scraped into art school at Iiam.

There, they made him draw with charcoal on newsprint. He was so bad that he felt ashamed and hateful toward everyone involved with art school. He just couldn't do it.

Using the most rudimentary, pure form of representation, he could not elicit a readable image. It really tore him up inside – that wound never really healed for his whole days on earth.

He always had that nagging feeling that if reduced to the most basic medium of them all – charcoal and newsprint (like a caveman) – he was not an artist.

He scraped by with shit grades until they let him in the darkroom and he had taught the others a thing or two about what it meant to call oneself an artist.

He had graduated with offers of scholarships and bearded university professors begging

him to stay on and teach them the nature of composition.

But, no, he was done with university and all its assessments and grading one person's work against another's.

"How can you say one person's work is better than another's? And besides, some of it was shit, nothing but good mechanical reproduction skills. No, those old squares need to get into the real world and learn to look at life again."

Since graduating he had hustled a few bucks here and there and begged/borrowed/etcetera to get by. But with time he had managed to get a few proper paid gigs. This had led to more, which led to him getting frustrated that people didn't appreciate the fact that he was an artist and were just whoring him for his skills.

So, he let prospective clients know that he was an artist, and as such could not be counted on for anything... In fact, he would not guarantee that he would give them any product at all – and yes, he still expected to be paid.

Believe it or not, he really starts getting some better gigs. He is the toast of a couple of wealthy parties, photographing, all swarthy swagger and sometimes even no film in camera – and when he tells them, they love it even more and by the time he does get some photo, it is of one particular high society bum doing coke off the fake-breasts of a woman that is not his wife.

And, of course he owns all the photos, and everybody involved with him knows this. It is one of his big issues.

So the guy knows that the photo of his drug-fuelled escapades will lie forever in a filing cabinet somewhere – probably waiting for the photographer's posthumous fame.

"By then it won't matter anymore," the rich society-type tells selected people. Then,

years later, in a moment of drunken sincerity he tells his wife exactly this sentence.

By God, he is regretting that one straight away. He's trying to tell her: "I was just being facetious," but doesn't really know what he is saying or why he is saying it (burnt brain from coke probably).

But, that was later. Now someone has the photo of him and all because he had assumed there was no film in the camera, as there had been for large portions of the night.

A

gives him the photo though and it is so beautiful that he can never actually bring himself to throw it away, and is hiding it under his bed, then in his sock drawer for a number of years, then stupidly in a book he takes away on holiday one year and as mentioned: wife finds it which leads to massive fight and him saying stupid sentence. Them falling out

and having miserable holiday (they're tending to hate each other by this point anyway. He has lost all his money and her her looks – the only reasons each was with the other).

He should have hidden it better

He should have hidden it better than this in his book, which he thought was about motorbikes:

Zen and the art of motorcycle maintenance

The photographer (A) has a motorbike at one stage – someone gives it to him.

But in these days when I am still trying to get him into a manifesto he is still driving around in a beat-up old D Special Citroen. The most expensive car in the world to fix just about. And you know what – he never does fix it. Just drives around in it for six years after he got it for nothing because the suspension, starter motor and clutch were all bugged, not to mention the gearbox and the slight rust colouration in large holes on the door.

He likes it because it has a symbol on the front that is this:



It reminds him of his symbol for himself.

Nobody else would touch it with a stick. And he just beats the skeptics and drives around forever and teaches them all that everything is false, even a Citroen that should be the most expensive car in the world to fix.

Actually, make it he drives the car round the world and shows everyone (that'll teach you fuckers) and makes a twenty-first century version of Robert Frank's The Americans, except America becomes the world.

And he gets the Guggenheim Scholarship (why not) and some of Cartier-Bresson's family's money at some stage.

But no manifesto for me – eventually old and bitter.

What a flop

[ENDS]