

From the archive: Alan Brunton's Notebook 1970-1980

The Brunton Rodwell Papers comprise 24 linear metres of material from the archives of Red Mole Enterprises as well as the accumulated manuscripts and audiovisual record of Alan Brunton and Sally Rodwell's history as producers of poetry, theatre, books and film from 1968 to 2006. One of the items that crosses most of the territory covered by Alan and Sally themselves is an a-chronological scrapbook entitled 'Notebook 1970-1980' into which has been pasted an assortment of ephemera: bus, train and ferry tickets; receipts for accommodation, meals, books, crafts, visas, postage and currency transfers; timetables, programmes, flyers, posters, labels, banknotes, bumper stickers and matchbox lids; business cards, bookmarks, clippings, photographs, a child's painting and a speeding ticket. Hindi sits alongside Chinese, Greek, Malay, Dutch, Thai, French, Laotian, Spanish, Bahasa Indonesian and English. Each A3 page is laid out with care for compositional balance and the jumps of attention its randomised contents will generate. The documentary evidence of ten years on the road is as precise and as fragmentary as any other form of memory capture. Alan Brunton, who compiled the 60 pages, acknowledged their effect as planar history when he wrote the following poem and sent it to the now-defunct Zoetropes website in 1999 as a contribution to the series of millennial lists being assembled at that time. It was published again in 2002 as #91 of the long poem *Fq*:

I am an intelligent person with sensitivity learned in the crucible of deflected aspiration. Is this foot right? Or do I lead with the left? I have a theory but I need help!

Did I ask you before? If I ever did I can't place your reply, so it must have been sometime before that day in July I lost it, what ever it was, my sense of balance?, rate of blood flow to the brain? I need help!

The days since then have been cruel but I go forward now, but towards what Alternativity?

Please help me!

Meanwhile, here's 9 places I wrote
poems (1971—1979)
and 1 I did not (guess which):

Welfare Insurance Co., 9 Shakespeare Sarani, Calcutta
 Cockatoo Restaurant, 151 Bridge Road, Bulls
 F. Parvez Book Store, 419 Chulia Street, Penang
 Miss Grace God's Messenger, (1 Flight Up), Utica Ave, Brooklyn
 Bay View Hotel, Beach Street, Labuan
 Royal Travellers Lodge, Ouparath Rd, Luang Prabang
 Romeo's Rap Parlour, 57 Mt Eden Rd, Auckland
 Charles Bath House, Broadway, Truth or Consequences NM
Hindustan Steel Fertilizer, Chungi Sitapur Road, Lucknow
 Cabin Restaurant, 11/897 Ason Tole, Kathmandu

Everything in the list is somewhere in the scrapbook but as to which place failed to produce a poem – we can only guess.

The Brunton Rodwell Papers are on temporary deposit at the University of Auckland Library's Special Collections, where they are being sorted and inventoried. A selection of digitised images from 'Notebook 1970-1980' is presented here with the permission of Ruby Rodwell Brunton to accompany the three essays on Alan Brunton's work which follow.



Michele Leggett
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