



#4 RAJORSHI CHAKRABORTI

LIVE PRESS WRITING 1ST MARCH, 10 - 11.45AM

RAJORSHI CHAKRABORTI | THE BODY BOX
FRI 1 MAR | 10.00 - 11.45AM

One of my dreams last night was so vivid that while the waterfront is still quiet and the other containers are opening up, I want to grab some time to note down as much as I remember. I've been holding on to it, and am grateful for this writing opportunity this morning, otherwise I might not have noted it down. But it startled me awake at around 6am, and – combined with the excitement and nervousness about this project – I couldn't fall back to sleep.

I suppose live writing is ideal in a way to capture the rushed, surprised feeling of a dream.

Note: no real people had *anything* to do with the contents of this dream. It's only a few hours old, and I'm still figuring out WTF it comes from. I use initials to name the unreal people in what follows.

I'm wandering along a high cliff right by its edge overlooking the sea at a school picnic at what must be the nature reserve in Titahi Bay, the one with the radio mast. Feeling depressed, I've walked away from the others. Suddenly I realise I have no idea where our seven-year-old daughter L is, and, cursing myself at how incompetent I am, I rush to try to find her. Thankfully, I come across the children and other helper parents along a path leading back to the car park, and announce to one parent that I'll be giving up my coaching role in the new term (note from reality: I have no coaching role of any kind in my waking life). I wait for more parents to go past and walk with them to the car park, but each one is progressively more disapproving of me. I wonder: how can the coaching news be taken *so* badly, but then notice the mum of one of L's best friends looking very upset. I ask what is wrong but she ignores me. Someone else says L said something hurtful to her when she was only trying to look out for L while I had disappeared, and now everyone's mad at me. So, a procession of parents and children go past, all ignoring me. I say how can I be responsible when I wasn't even there. Someone replies maybe L is like that *because* you weren't there. Another parent adds, you are rarely there.

B, the one allegedly wounded by my daughter's remark, carries on with her sniffing at the car park, and the (to my mind) OTT comforting also continues. Yet no one will let me through the cordon to talk to her,

even though I've always believed we were friends. As I watch from the side, another helper dad takes the chance for a good long embrace with B and then, incredibly, gives her a peck on the lips. Meanwhile a mum suggests, clearly for my benefit, that kids repeat what they've heard their parents say at home.

In all of this, I haven't actually seen my daughter. And when I realise this, again, I finally stop hoping to placate the parents and rush off to look for her, because no one I've asked so far actually knows where she is in that massive reserve by the sea.

END OF DREAM. This is the point at which I woke up in terror about four hours ago and couldn't fall back to sleep.

PS: I just Googled the Titahi Bay radio mast to learn that it was demolished in Feb 2016, a full year before our daughter even started school! That seals it: no part of the dream could have had any relationship with anything real!

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This note was made at 10.12 a.m. during the writing up of my dream. The artist in the container to my right is drawing in people to dance alongside her at 10 in the morning on a weekday. People are doing and feeling something they wouldn't have if they hadn't been going past at just this time.

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A pigeon has come inside the container to visit (where other passers-by so far have feared to tread), just as I'm about to begin my naïve poem.

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Inspired by the artistic risks different artists at The Performance Arcade have taken, I've decided to write a naïve poem, which of course comes from somewhere within me, but hopefully people won't decide these are my only feelings on the subject.

Gosh, nothing's that emerging today under these particular conditions shows me in an especially flattering light.

NAÏVE POEM

by (certain voices within the 41-year-old) Rajorshi Chakraborti.

Last time I was in Calcutta, a big new Zara had opened in one of my childhood neighbourhoods, in which I wandered disbelievingly. (There's also an Armani not far away, and a Gucci, neither of which I've yet entered.)

Disbelievingly because, you see, the first thirty-four years of my life my state had a Communist government, And the economy hadn't been strong for years before that.

Last time I was in the Westpac Stadium to watch a cricket game with India, We had vada paos! *Here*, in Wellington, New Zealand! Tucking into the No. 1 street snack from Bombay!

One day when I switched on the TV on an earlier visit to Calcutta, unbelievably, there was Thierry Henry, speaking from the sidelines after a game at a stadium in my childhood neighbourhood, Rabindra Sarobar (!) which I drive, walk, and run past *every* day. Thierry Henry! In *my* hood! I have played football and cricket in the field directly across the street from where Thierry Henry was speaking!

Sometimes, on Facebook, really famous people have liked the same post as me, such as Salman Rushdie, with whom I share a mutual friend.

The line under such a post would read: You, Salman Rushdie, and 275 others like this.

Again, for real!

I could go on. There are many examples, but my point is –

Distances are collapsing. And hierarchies. Things, names, people once so far away from people like me are sometimes within touching distance.

I'm probably not expressing how disorientating and exciting this can be.

Tyrants are being brought down by hashtags, to add a slightly weightier point.

Surely we're in a better world.

There you go, a poem that demonstrates irrefutably with truths and nothing but truths – although possibly not the whole truth – that globalisation is working at least for some people some of the time! Now that's a good morning's work, I reckon.

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Thank you to Mia for inviting me, and to The Performance Arcade organisers for having me, and the other performers I watched and admired, and to everyone who passed by and chatted or waved. This was a memorable first-time experience, even if what I saw in the mirror is a solipsist negligent father, who gets excited about the shallowest shit.

I learnt stuff about me today :)