

Lists of things

I watch workers setting up street barriers at the beginning of the day and packing them up again at the end of the day.

'Footpath closed'. 'Use other footpath'.

They see me watching them through the narrow gap of window.

Don't they say all paths are open to you? Or something similar? Meaning life choices of course.

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I don't know why, but the phrase 'You will end up working at the market' was a metaphor indicating a kind of dead end in your life. In my life, when I was eighteen. This is how my parents justified our move. We packed our two suitcases in 1999 to first cross a border to Russia to then take a flight to Germany. There was (almost) no drama; we had tickets, a formal invitation, and someone would pick us up from the airport in Hannover. My mother had heard that at the Russian border, suitcases were randomly checked for valuable items or just for fun. And we had no money to pay bribes – not that we had precious things, except for our crystal glasses: my only inheritance. No one would want them, but you also didn't want anyone to mess up your tightly packed suitcase – to get stuck at the border and miss your flight. It was recommended to my mother that she write a list of our belongings: bedsheets, socks, underwear, cutlery, pans. Essentials. Some old and some new, bought with the little money we had. Following an unconscious desire to be perceived as okay on the other end. The idea of arriving somewhere without everything and having to rely on someone's help was difficult. You don't want to make anyone uncomfortable. But of course we relied on others. Like others rely on others. Like anyone else.

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Just like otherness can rely on a concept of authenticity that finds you and pins you down wherever you are; or sometimes you pin yourself down, tired, giving up. Authenticity is a sibling of originality – together they create a territory where Western thinking is at home.

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Keeping those belongings was sort of hard, psychologically. A few months later you realise how much stuff there is there. Things that were once precious to you don't really have a value anymore and there is no reasonable explanation for keeping them. Things. Isn't that why you crossed the border? To have things.

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Once the work is done the footpath is open.



Written by Ju Bavyka at Bus Projects on Wurundjeri and Boonwurrung land as a nervous reaction to the problem of autobiographical art and as an accompaniment to *Do you like it here?*