VISUAL STORYTELLING & JOURNEYING

BY THERESA GRIEBEN

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DECLARATION —
ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

This Thesis/Dissertation/Research Project entitled *Visual Storytelling and Journeying* is submitted in partial fulfilment for the requirements for the Unitec degree of *Master of Design*.

I confirm that:
› This Thesis/Dissertation/Research Project represents my own work. To the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously written or published by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or institution of higher learning, except where made explicit in the references.

› Research for this work has been conducted in accordance with the Unitec Research Ethics Committee Policy and Procedures, and has fulfilled any requirements set for this project by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee.

Theresa Grieben
28/01/2014
Student ID: 1400422

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

Illustration is a medium that can enhance and interpret storytelling. When part of sequential art, like comics or graphic novels, it can effectively communicate ideas using specific visual conventions. This masters by research project investigates how visual conventions can convey the experience of travelling and cultural displacement. By using the form of a graphic novel I have converted my personal journey of moving from Germany to New Zealand into a visual narrative.

Previous research has helped me to identify the format of the graphic novel as a suitable medium for stories about journeying. It has also shown me the lack of academic research in that specific context; thereby my project can make a significant contribution to this field of creative inquiry.

A heuristic method has led me to generate a body of work that spans a variety of visual conventions that convey notions of travelling, displacement and cultural shift. Further visual experiments have led me to explore a range of illustrative conventions and new graphic approaches. I have identified six overarching themes that have informed my journey, namely memory, discovery, transition, freedom, knowledge and the quest for belonging. On this basis I have created a graphic novel which not only encompasses my personal story of living in New Zealand, but which also reflects these universal themes of travelling and cultural displacement in its content, structure and design. Nevertheless, the outcome of my research is subjective: it does not claim to be complete. There are many more ways to convey a travel experience visually.
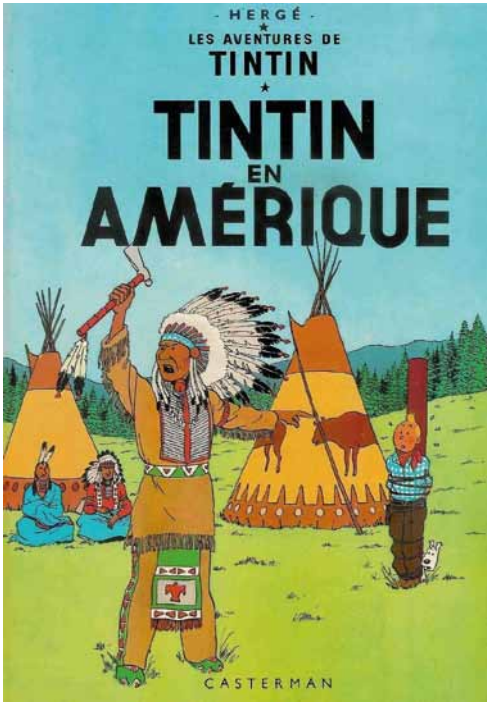
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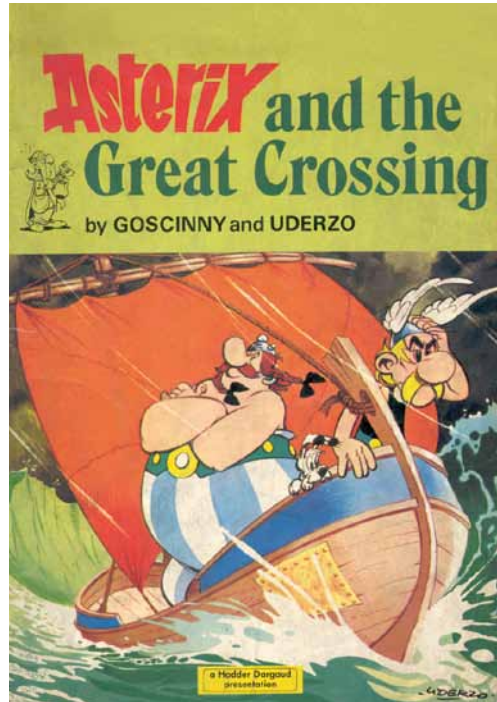
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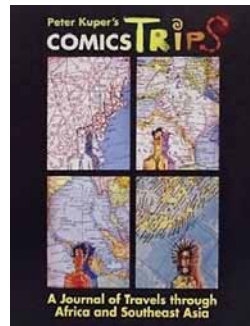
3

4

1 Hergé.
   Tintin en Amérique.
   Tournai: Casterman,
   1998. 1. Print.

2 Goscinny, R. and A. Uderzo.
   Asterix and the Great Crossing.
   London: Hodder & Stoughton,
   1976. 1. Print.

3 Kuper, Peter.
   Comics Trips.
   New York: NBM
   Publishing, 1992.
   1. Print.

4 Barry, Lynda.
   My Perfect Life.
   Scarborough: Harper
   Collins Canada, 1992.
   1. Print

INTRODUCTION

I. Graphic novel travelogues: an overview

Graphic novels are a very suitable medium for stories about journeys, as their sequenced nature aptly mirrors a travel experience and their rich images can trigger a sense of immersion in the worlds depicted. Narratives about journeying are not purely confined to just the physical movement of a body through space – there is also significant psychological journeying, together with increased self-awareness. In the field of mythology, biblical lore, and literature, there are many stories featuring journeys, often structured in a way that depicts the hero/heroine's trials and tribulations, increased self-knowledge and victorious return. For instance, the biblical story of *Jonah*, Homer's *Odyssey* with Ulysses, Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* – in all of these examples there are both external challenges encountered while travelling, together with inner journeying. One could say that the graphic novel medium, with its union of text/image, is ideally equipped to portray both inner and outer states.

In Europe, the French-Belgian art of the *Bande dessinée* ("comic book") traditionally showed a tendency towards semi-realistic depictions of foreign countries drawn in the style of the *ligne claire* ("the clear line").

The popular *Tintin* series by Belgian artist Hergé accompanies reporter Tintin and his dog Milou (English "Snowy") on adventures around the world (Figure 1). In those carefully laid out comics the colourful and detailed backgrounds are a work of art on their own. The *Asterix* series, illustrated by Albert Uderzo takes mythic, Odyssey-like sagas and integrates them within its structure: there's a repeated circular narrative within each book, starting with the peaceful village, the introduction to our heroes, adventure and conflict, then a triumphant return home (Figure 2).

The comics industry in the U.S. followed a different direction, as it was more focused on superheros and action stories. While any sort of fictional trip into space, fantasy or the future did indeed take the reader on a journey, depictions of actual real-life travels were hard to find. Illustrator Peter Kuper was one of the first artists in 1992 to publish a sketchbook-like comic about his journey around the world called *Comics Trips* (Figure 3). Since then, the graphic novel movement has seen a rapid growth, with outstanding autobiographical landmarks such as *Maus* (Art Spiegelman 1986) and *Persepolis* (Marjane Satrapi 2004). *My Perfect Life* (1992) by Lynda Barry is an example of considerable interior voyaging and reflection (Figure 4).
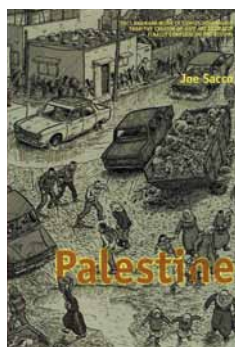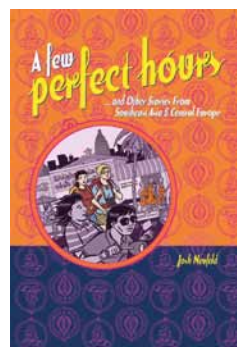
5   6   7   8

By the mid 2000's a wave of travel-related graphic novels hit the international market, amongst them Craig Thompson's *Carnet de Voyage* (Figure 5), a quirky excerpt from a sketchbook he filled during a trip to Europe, and Guy Delisle's ironical series about long term stays in Asian metropolises ruled by dictatorships, such as *Shenzhen* (Figure 6), *Pyongyang* and *Burma Chronicles*. Another important example is *Palestine* (Figure 7), in which Joe Sacco merges journeying with the documentary genre, and his graphic novels about the Bosnian conflict, *Safe Area Goražde*.

A real backpacker's adventure is being told in *A Few Perfect Hours* by Josh Neufeld (Figure 8), who dared a 18-month backpacking trip from Hong Kong to Prague in order to find those few hours of felicity that make travelling worth it. Last but not least there is the outstanding wordless graphic novel *The Arrival* by Shaun Tan, which was one of the main inspirations for my research project (Figure 9). In this surreal, yet photorealistic narrative the reader accompanies an immigrant on his silent journey to a utopian city, where he struggles to build a new life.

II. Graphic novel travelogues in New Zealand

The New Zealand comic and graphic novel scene has witnessed a strong development in the past decades, with the first graphic novel, *Hicksville* by Dylan Horrocks being published internationally in 1998 (Figure 10). The story about a Canadian writer visiting the fictional comics-lovers town of Hicksville in New Zealand mirrors the internal journey of its protagonist to find a cultural identity.

Further research revealed a rich pool of recently published graphic novels by New Zealand artists, nevertheless the only travel-related work I could find was Toby Morris' expatriate story *Alledaags: A Year in Amsterdam*, which is a funny collection of sketches depicting his everyday life in the European capital (Figure 11).

5 Thompson, Craig. *Carnet de Voyage.* Portland: Top Shelf Productions, 2004. 1. Print.

6 Delisle, Guy. *Shenzen.* Outremont: Drawn & Quarterly, 2012. 1. Print.

7 Sacco, Joe. *Palestine.* Seattle: Fantagraphics, 2001. 1. Print.

8 Neufeld, Josh. *A Few Perfect Hours.* Cupertino: Alternative Comics, 2004. 1. Print.
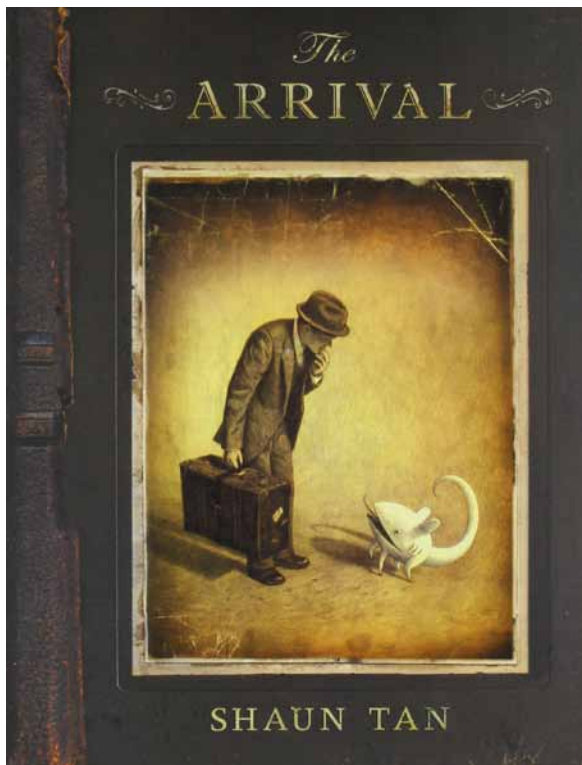
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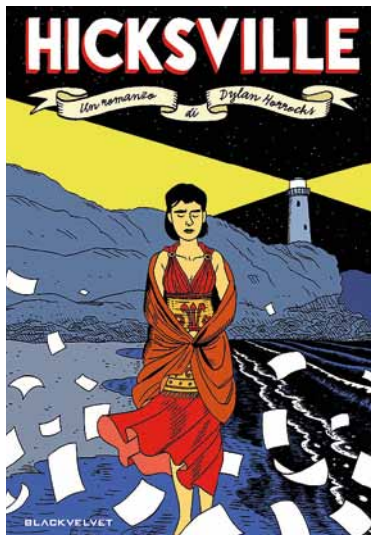
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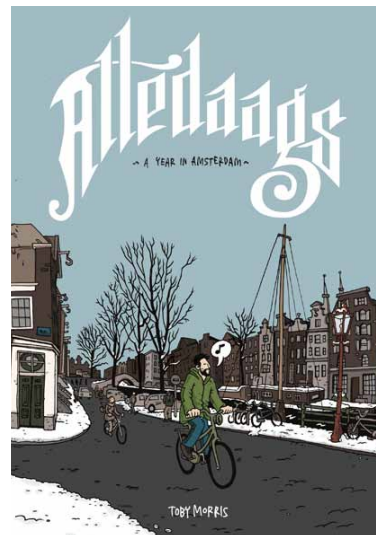
11

9 Tan, Shaun.
   The Arrival.
   New York:
   Arhur A. Levine,
   2007. 1. Print.

10 Horrocks, Dylan.
    Hicksville.
    Outremont:
    Drawn & Quarterly,
    2010. 1. Print.

11 Morris, Toby.
    Alledaags: A Year in Amsterdam.
    Amsterdam: XTOTL Press,
    2011. 1. Print.

12
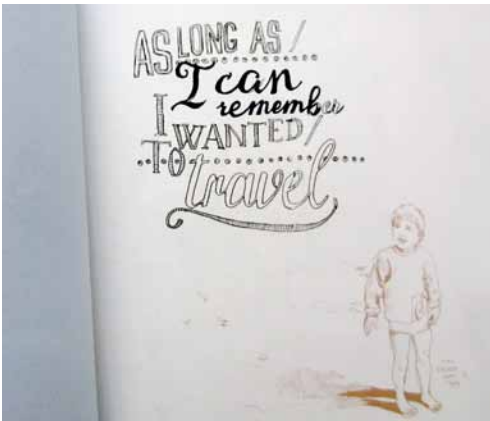
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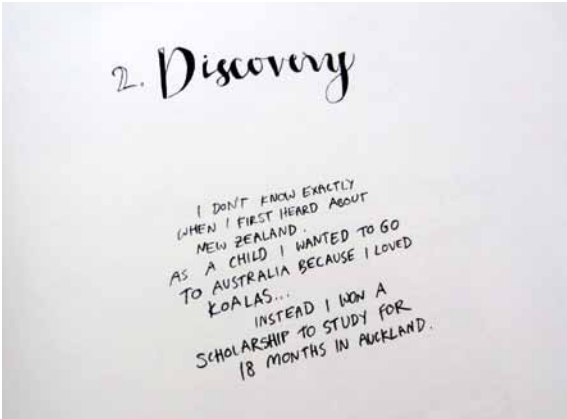
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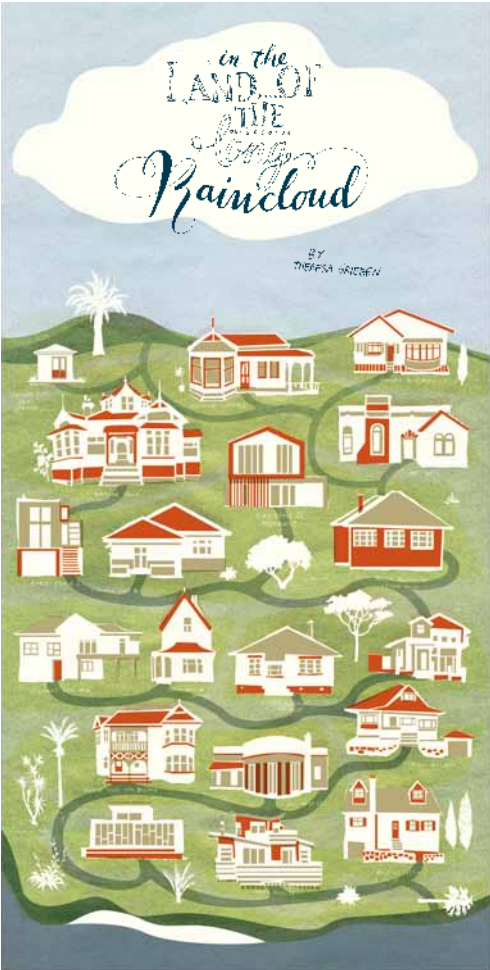
18

18 Grieben, Theresa.
In the Land of the long Raincloud.
Graphic novel alternative cover design.
2013. Digital collage.
341 mm x 165 mm.
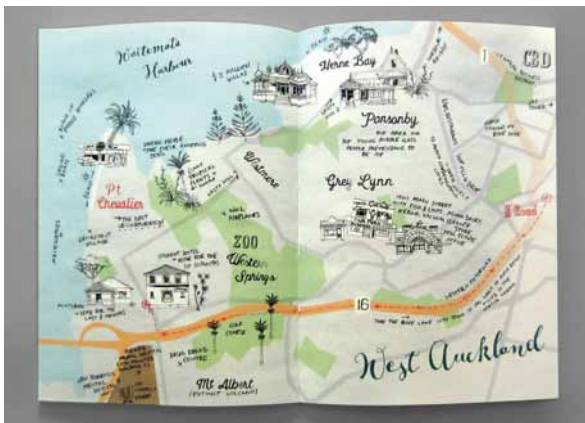
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III. Research Focus

To my knowledge there is no published graphic novel, comic or illustrated story yet about a person of German or any other nationality, travelling to New Zealand. I was not able to locate any specific academic research about how such a travel experience can be translated into and through illustration. My research question reads as follows:

Can illustration communicate the experience of journeying based on personal storytelling and how do visual conventions support this notion?

This research project aims to represent my personal account of moving from Germany to New Zealand by translating that travel experience into a graphic novel narrative called *In the Land of the long Raincloud* (Figures 12–17). It reflects different modes of journeying, from the actual physical trips I undertook in New Zealand, to the quest for freedom and the emotional inner search for a place to belong. To achieve this I have explored visual conventions that communicate notions of travelling, displacement and cultural shift. I have focused on the process of assessing and subsequently applying these illustrative conventions to visual storytelling.

12 Grieben, Theresa.
In the Land of the long Raincloud.
Graphic novel cover design.
2013. 1. Photograph by author.

13–17 Grieben, Theresa.
In the Land of the long Raincloud.
Graphic novel p. 7, 21, 30–31, 40–41, 52–53.
2013. Photograph by author.

IV. Function of a story

In *Graphic Storytelling & Visual Narrative* cartoonist Will Eisner points out that the main purpose of a story is to coherently convey abstract ideas or knowledge by dramatizing human relations or acting out fantasies. Storytellers can choose from a wealth of narrative methods, amongst them instructive, how-to, symbolic or plotless stories (Eisner 7–36). I have chosen to explore the graphic novel in the manner of a *slice-of-life* story: this approach has allowed me to focus on a range of events that have happened to me in New Zealand and to examine these events from different viewpoints. The story's impact depends on the reader's previous experience and imagination.

Slice-of-life stories often lack a coherent plot, dramatic conflict or neat ending and focus more on internal conflicts and emotions than on action. They generally have an over-arching idea that holds the story together. In the preface to *Three Plays by Brieux,* Irish playwright Bernard Shaw describes the *slice-of-life* story as follows: *"The moment the dramatist takes 'slices of life' as his material, he finds himself committed to plays that have no endings. The curtain no longer comes down on a hero slain or married: it comes down when the audience has seen enough of the life presented to it to draw the moral"* (Shaw xv).

V. Evolving narrative of the self

Reflecting on the reasons why I want to tell my story of coming to New Zealand I have considered illustrator and storyteller Shaun Tan who describes the journey of making his much acclaimed graphic novel *The Arrival* in his book *Sketches from a Nameless Land*. He observes that: *"Above all there is a governing desire to draw some kind of coherent memory from the messy, fragmented experience of life, a meaningful story that can be passed on to others"* (Tan 6).

In *The Redemptive Self*, psychologist Dan P. McAdams demonstrates that each individual accumulates a wealth of personal stories in the course of his or her life, which, according to his *life story model*, can be viewed as *"internalized and evolving narratives of the self"* (McAdams 86). Stories encompass how an individual sees him or herself both in the past and in the present, and how he or she envisions the future. In this way stories help us create a sense of purpose and unity in life. By means of personal myth, each person develops a *"narrative identity"* (Singer 437), which includes characters, settings, plot and scenes just like a traditional story (Figure 19), providing personal meaning rather than facts (McAdams 95–115).

This graphic novel not only allows me to share a part of my narrative identity but it has given me the means to find universal meaning in my individual experience of going abroad. Like Shaun Tan I wish to engage with the reader in the *"common currency of emotion"*. According to Tan, every character in a story can become familiar to us if we *"are allowed to know their feelings, and so be invited to walk for a moment in their shoes"* (Tan 10).
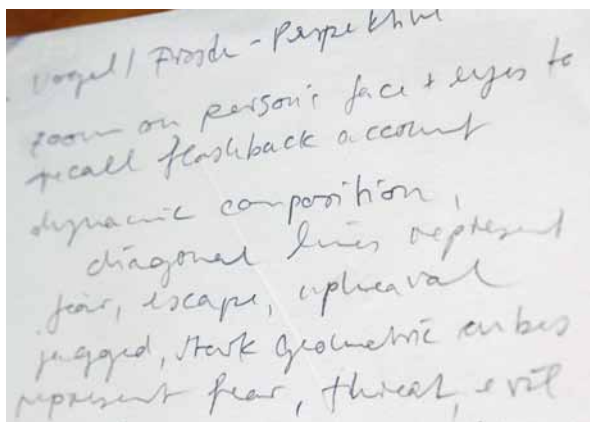
19 Tan, Shaun.
    The Arrival.
    New York:
    Arhur A. Levine,
    2007. 7. Print.

21 22

VI. Methodology

During the course of my research project I have been following a heuristic approach basing my problem solving on experience and discovery. The major learning process happened through visual experiments and trial-and-error. Since the story of *In the Land of the long Raincloud* was derived from my personal experience of living in New Zealand I had to develop it simultaneously with my visual investigations. For a long time it was not entirely clear to me what the story was about, because I hadn't yet lived through the experience. Consequently I tackled the research project by following a fragmentary strategy, which consisted of mini-projects and phases. However, this fragmentary approach mirrors the nature of travelling itself.

I started my practical research by keeping an extensive collection of visual diaries, which I used for recording my journeys around the country (Figure 25; see section 4.1 "Visual diary – a passport to the *terra incognita*"). This was followed by drawing a large panorama of K'Road as a means to chart discovery and the first impression of a foreign place (see section 2.3 "Aspect-to-aspect transition – the street as environment"). I continued by setting up a character design brief based on new friends I had found in my student hostel (see section 3.1 "Colour association with characters").

This was followed by an experimental phase of copying, distorting and overlaying my illustrations, which has led me to innovative compositions (see section 2.2 "Mental snapshots – the illustrator as *supertourist*" and section 2.4 "*The Uncanny* – a strange familiarity").

I then utilized the visual language of architectural drawings as a means to map the transient experience of living in a student hostel (see section 3 "Transition"), which was followed by an investigation into visualizing sound based on a phone call with my father (see section 6.2 "Onomatopoeia – translating sound into images").

It was only after this phase that I gained more clarity about the structure of my story. During an intense phase of project evaluation I wrote down possible story lines and characterisations for the protagonists; I designed flat plans for the graphic novel, and I mapped the entire visual research on large posters (see section 2.1 Mapping travel – time and space). From this wealth of material I derived the story, after that I finalized the layout of my graphic novel and edited and synthesized elements from my preceding research.
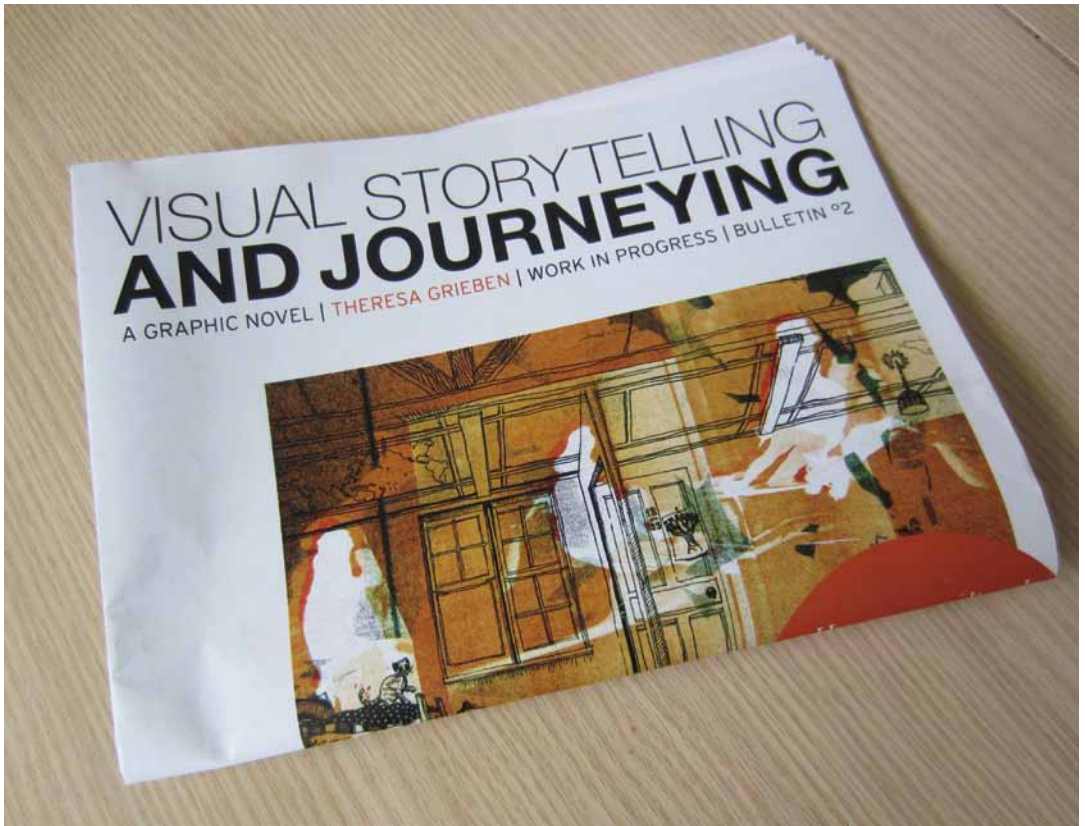
23

24

25

20–22 TePuni, Vicky.
    24 *Theresa at Unitec's Master studio.*
        Work with supervisor / note taking.
        20 March 2013. Photograph.

23 Grieben, Theresa.
    Work in progress bulletin °2.
    Publication for Master's Workshop II.
    2012. Photograph by author.

25 Grieben, Theresa.
    NZ Visual diary 1–6.
    28 December 2013.
    Photograph by author.

VII. Masters Exhibition

After 18 months of working on my research
project I had my final examination and
exhibition opening on the 6th of August 2013
at the Ironbank Building on Karangahape Road.
The venue was really appropriate because
Karangahape Road is not only the starting
point of my graphic novel, but also the
inspiration for my panoramic drawing (see
section 2.3 "Aspect-to-aspect transition – the
street as environment").

27

26 TePuni, Vicky.
    Theresa's show.
    Chapter 4 on the wall.
    6 August 2013. Photograph.

27 TePuni, Vicky.
    Theresa's show.
    6 August 2013. Photograph.

28

30

29

28 TePuni, Vicky.
    Theresa's show.
    Portraits of my Kiwi friends.
    6 August 2013. Photograph.

29 TePuni, Vicky.
    Theresa's show.
    The pop-up venue at the Ironbank.
    6 August 2013. Photograph.

30 TePuni, Vicky.
    Theresa's show.
    Postcards & prints for sale.
    6 August 2013. Photograph.

VIII. Outlook

The discussion in this exegesis will follow the chronological order of the story within my graphic novel, which is based on six major themes of travelling.

› The *first section* will discuss the role that *Memory* plays in my desire for travelling; this is complemented by an examination of drawing as a means to materialize memory, and the use of old photographs as witnesses of the past.

› In *section 2* I will investigate *Discovery* by discussing maps as a medium to illustrate travel experience, the concept of the illustrator as *supertourist*, aspect-to-aspect transitions as a means to visualize environment and visual conventions in relation to the *Uncanny*.

› *Section 3* is an all-encompassing discourse about spatio-temporal *Transition*; this is accomplished by examining visual convention such as colour associations ascribed to characters; framing and bleeds as a means to show the development of a friendship; the ability of image sequences to condense a complex event into a few images; animated props as a way to represent the passage of narrative time; the visual qualities of speech bubbles and their emotional impact on the reader; the architectural exterior and interior as a storytelling device; the notion of a building becoming a character in its own right; the everyday displayed in word-image constellations; and last but not least the concept of the reader as urban *flâneur*.

› *Freedom* is the major theme that informs *section 4*: I will demonstrate how keeping a visual diary has helped me to map my trips in New Zealand and how an epistolary approach has contributed to my research.

› *Section 5* talks about *Knowledge* by showing how indirect illustration can be used to communicate a sense of cultural displacement, as well as the concept of puppet theatre as a medium to convey narrative and teach knowledge.

› The *last section* examines *Belonging* by focusing on how onomatopoeic images can foster a sense of disconnection, followed by a personal discourse on the concept of belonging.

DISCUSSION

1. MEMORY

Memories define who we are, inform our personalities and influence our actions. They are not kept in a solidified, archival form, but rather in a constant state of flux within our minds. The visual journey traced within my graphic novel begins with a memory book that tries to capture my earliest memories of a family vacation at the Baltic Sea (Figures 32–33, p. 26–27; Figures 39–41, p. 32–35). This memory book also explores my personal associations of beaches with happiness, as this association was an important factor in my desire to move to New Zealand.

By means of a map I locate my East German origins (Figure 34, p. 27). The date, September 1989, indicates the political situation, only 2 months short of the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989. In this time of political upheaval, my father – who was then an officer in the East-German army – was sent to the Baltic Sea for his annual leave. Due to the political circumstances hardly anyone from East Germany was taking a vacation that year, so we had the beach entirely to ourselves.

At four I perceived the beach to be a magical place of freedom. Or so my memory tells me: I recall being in awe at the seemingly endless horizon and was happy to dart around the deserted seaside. Paradoxically, the desire to be free from the Socialist system, that caused so many East Germans to flee their country in 1989, allowed me to discover freedom in that very same country.

Even though our memory distorts reality and idealizes experiences, perhaps the feeling of amazement is retained and the sense of childhood awe from discovering and exploring the unknown lingers with us as we grow into adulthood? In order to explore my memories I had to ask myself: "How, can I translate this particular memory into illustration?" To try to answer this question I have devoted this section of my exegesis to an investigation of drawing as a means to materialize memory, and the use of old photographs in the drawing process as witnesses of the past.
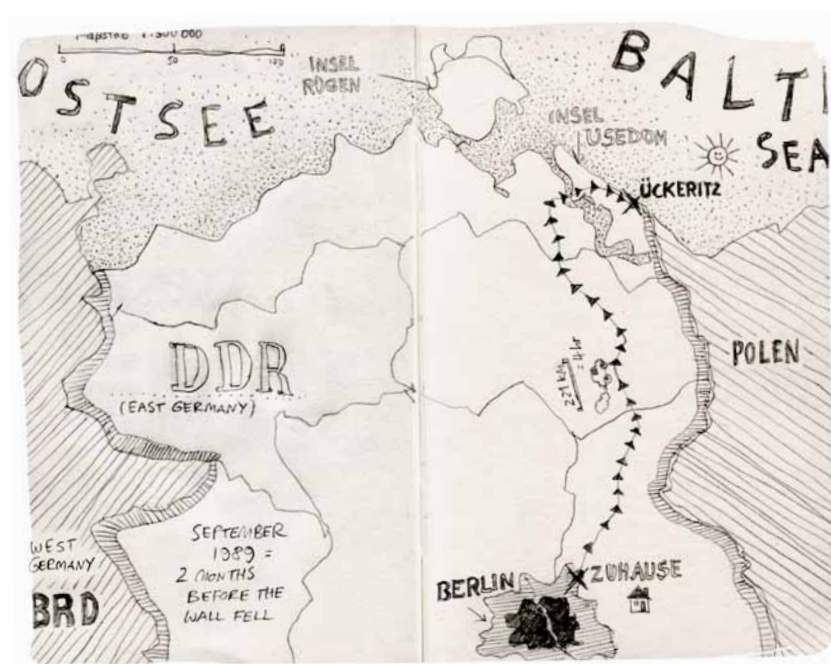

31   Grieben, Theresa.
As long as I can remember I wanted to travel.
Preliminary drawing.
2013. Pencil & Copier.
180 mm x 140 mm.

32 Grieben, Theresa.
Memory book.
Graphic novel p. 8–9.
2013. Photograph by
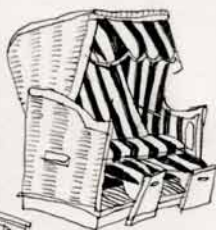author.

33

34

33 Grieben, Theresa.
    Memory book.
    Graphic novel p. 10–11.
    2013. Photograph by
    author.

34 Grieben, Theresa.
    Map of East Germany 1989.
    Preliminary Drawing.
    2013. Pencil.
    180 mm x 140 mm.

← SANDDORN
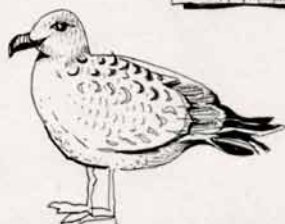
OSTSEE

BALTIC Sea

FS Greiff – Wilhelm Pick

VEB ERHOLUNG

Greifsw
Bodd

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HÜHNERGOTT

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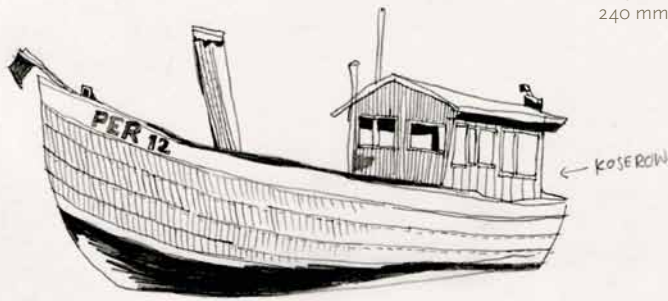
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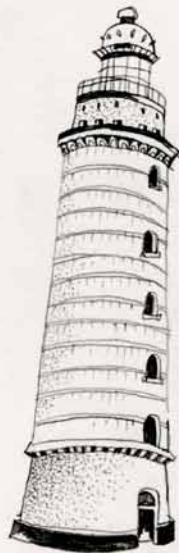
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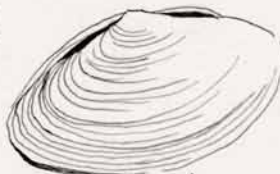
(INSEL = ISLAND)

TRABANT

KLEINE
HERZ MUSCHEL

GROSSE
PFEFFER MUSCHEL

MARIENKÄFER

1.1

DRAWING

— materializing memory

My visual investigation began by creating a series of sketches depicting scenes of me at the beach (Figure 31, p. 25), my father holding a kite (Figure 38), and the vastness of the horizon (Figure 39, p. 32–33). They are loosely based on family photographs and childhood drawings, which I revisited in order to evoke mental snapshots. In *The Extended Mind*, philosophers David J. Chalmers and Andy Clark discuss how we often resort to external objects or people in order to keep the past sorted (Chalmers 27–42).

In *The Book of Memory* Mary Carruthers highlights the dominance of the visual over all other senses:

"To help recall something we have heard rather than seen, we should attach to their words the appearance...of the person speaking as well as the appearance of the room...this underscores the insistence of Aristotle on the primacy and security for memory of the visual over all other sensory modes, auditory, tactile, and the rest" (Carruthers 122).

By means of these sketches I attempted to bring back the visual space of the beach. Comics convey past, present and future temporalities in relation to space by positioning narrative on the page, or as Hillary L. Chute puts it in her discussion of Lynda Barry's *One Hundred Demons*:

*"Placement within memory is also placement within space"* (Chute 133).

Barry's work – an account of lived childhood – uses space as an important device to express memory through the combination of text and image (Figure 36), a strategy I have adapted for my memory book, too.

I was also interested in examining how the quality of the drawn line could represent notions of the past. In observing Joe Kubert's swift sketches for his graphic novel *Yossel* (Figure 37), Brad Prager notes:

"Kubert's evident, unerased pencil markings also serve as a metaphor for the persistence of the past: it cannot be erased, nor can it be presented cleanly" (Prager 118).

He adds:

"unrefined and uninked images...images that seem to have emerged from the artist's hand only moments before their publication, offer the perception of unmediated materiality" (Prager 120).
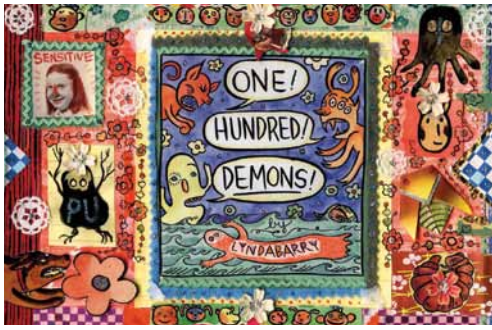
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My initial drawings had an unrefined appeal; nevertheless they remained too real and detailed to adequately depict memories of an event that happened more than twenty years ago. Consequently I ran the drawings several times through the copy machine so that they lost most of their detail but kept the essential lines. The resulting overexposed look literally mirrors the distance to the real event and thus contributes to the sense of distance I have tried to evoke in this chapter.

36 Barry, Lynda.
One Hundred Demons.
Seattle: Sasquatch
Books, 2005.
1. Print.

37 Kubert, Joe.
Yossel: April 19, 1943:
A Story of the Warsaw
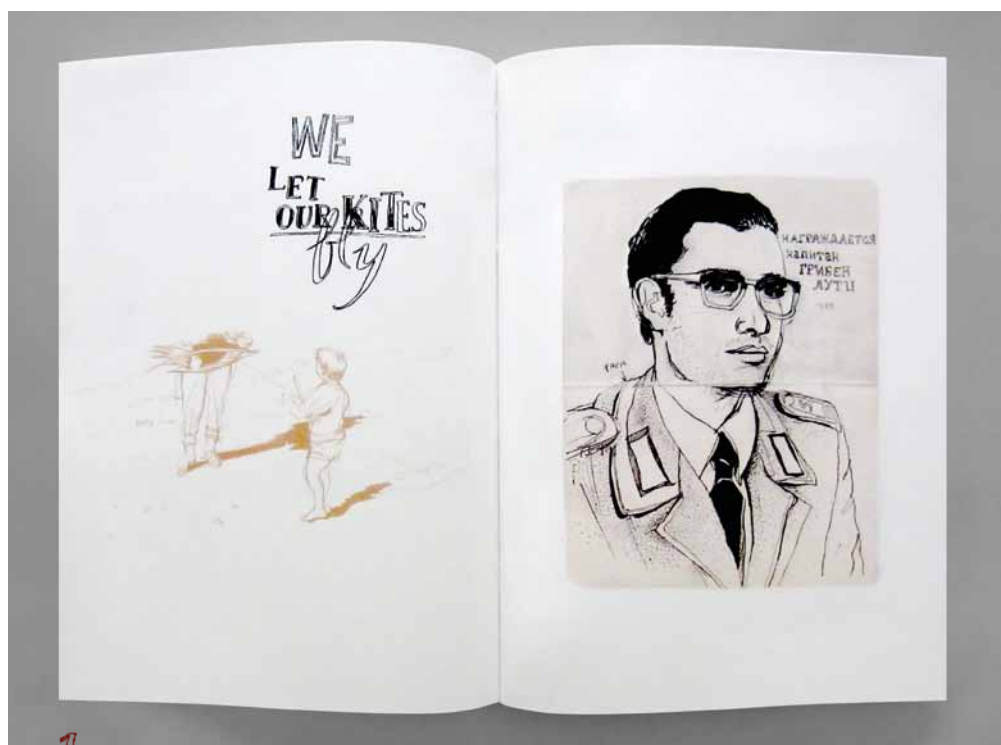*Ghetto Uprising.*
New York: ibooks, 2003.
46. Print.

38 Grieben, Theresa.
Kite on the beach.
Preliminary drawing.
2013. Pencil & Copier.
180 mm x 140 mm.

THERE WAS
SOMETHING
fascinating
ABOUT THIS
open space

WHERE THE MIND COULD wander...

...where being there MEANS happiness.

1.2 PHOTOGRAPHS
– witness of the past

In *The Grain of the Voice* philosopher Roland Barthes defines the transient nature of photography by asserting that a photograph is

> *"a witness, but a witness of something that is no more"* (Barthes 356).

It is thus impossible to freeze reality; there is no way to thwart the passage of time. Based on this concept of transience I introduce the viewer to my family through the device of portraits. By redrawing original photographs of that era of my parents and my sister I put myself into the context of my East German upbringing and the people who have shaped and influenced me (Figures 40–41; Figure 42, p. 36). Those portraits are set apart from the rest of the chapter not only by their style but also by their vertical format within the horizontally designed memory book. This strategy requires reader interaction – thus inviting the reader to pause for a moment, look closely and introduce themselves to the protagonists.
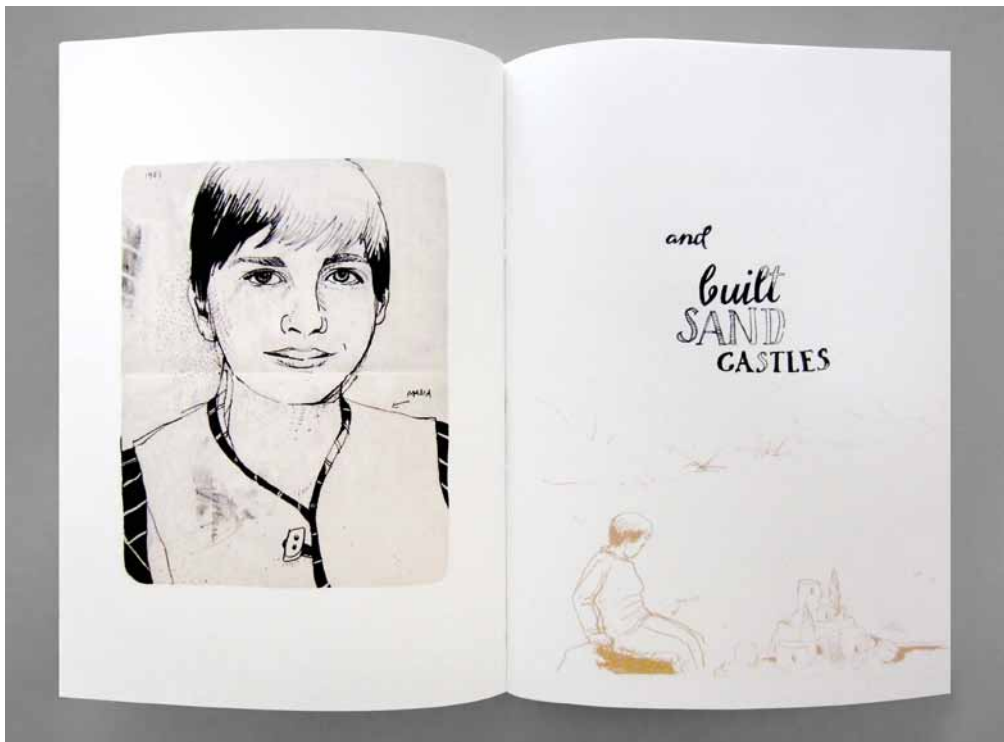
By drawing from family portrait photographs, I created an image of an image of an event that had ceased to exist the moment the photograph was taken two decades ago. Was I trying to stop the flux of time or was I simply retracing the way memory works, that by recalling a memory one re-inscribes it into the mind again, slightly altering it every time, just like redrawing an image over and over? In her book *On Photography* Susan Sontag suggests:

"Precisely by slicing out this moment and freezing it, all photographs testify to time's relentless melt" (Sontag 15).

Not only is a photograph an image, but also a trace of the real, similar to a footprint. By re-drawing old photographs of my parents I was not only trying to retrace the imprint of the real, but I was also attempting to connect to that image of the past, the beach of my memory. Cartoonist Lynda Barry puts it like this:

"an image is a place. Not a picture of a place, but a place in and of itself" (Chute 133).

40   Grieben, Theresa.
Memory book / Papa 1979.
Graphic novel p. 12–13.
2013. Photograph by author.

41   Grieben, Theresa.
Memory book / Mama 1983.
Graphic novel p. 14–15.
2013. Photograph by author.

MY SISTER
KONNI

ME

42   Grieben, Theresa.
Konni & Theresa 1989.
Preliminary drawing.
2013. Pencil & Copier.
140 mm x 180 mm.

2. DISCOVERY

Discovery is the underlying theme I wish to address here, not only the sense of temporal displacement created during a long-distance flight, but also the confusion and awe that arises when visiting an unfamiliar place for the first time. I have explored the terrain of how maps can serve to illustrate experiences of journeying and the concept of the illustrator as *supertourist* who draws mental snapshots of unfamiliar people. As a means to visualize the street as a setting for the characters to exist within, I have delved into aspect-to-aspect transitions and investigated visual conventions that seek to communicate uncanny notions of the street as a place that both strange and familiar at once.

43 Grieben, Theresa.
*Finding my way
around Auckland.*
Graphic novel p. 33.
2013. Pencil.
240 mm x 330 mm.

FROM GERMANY

1. Berlin — — — 1:40 hrs — — → **2.**

+1 G.m.T.

Sunday,
February 19th,
2012, 12:35pm

SANDWICH

3. Los Angeles ← — — 14 hrs — — ←

BROWNIE CAKE

WORST CAPPUCCINO
OF MY LIFE

Rocky
Mountains

−1 G.m.T.

BUTTER

BEURK!

FLE

DRESSING   CUCUMBER

18 hrs →

Tropic
of Cancer

−9 G.m.T.

EAU PUR
CRISTALINE
POTABLE

CHICKEN
RICE

"DINNER"

South Pac

−12 / +12 G.m.T.

ORANGE

London
0 G.M.T.

BLOODY MARY

DESSERT ?

"DINNER"

BREAD

CREAM'D CORN

PASTA

Atlantic
-3 G.M.T.

"LUNCH"

9 hrs

Newfoundland

FRUITS

"BREAKFAST"

ROLL

JAM

CHEESE

ORANGE JUICE

EGGS, BACON, FRITTER

FISCHSALAD   BEEF

30 hrs total

TO
TO NEW
ZEALAND

4. Auckland
Tuesday,
February 21th,
2012, 07:15am

PANCAKES & SAUSAGES

MORE JAM

YUK!

"BREAKFAST"

cific
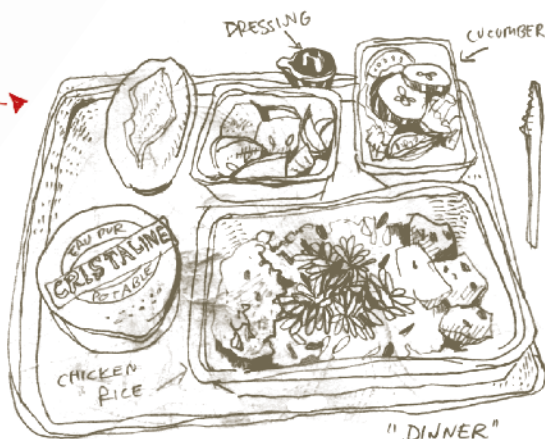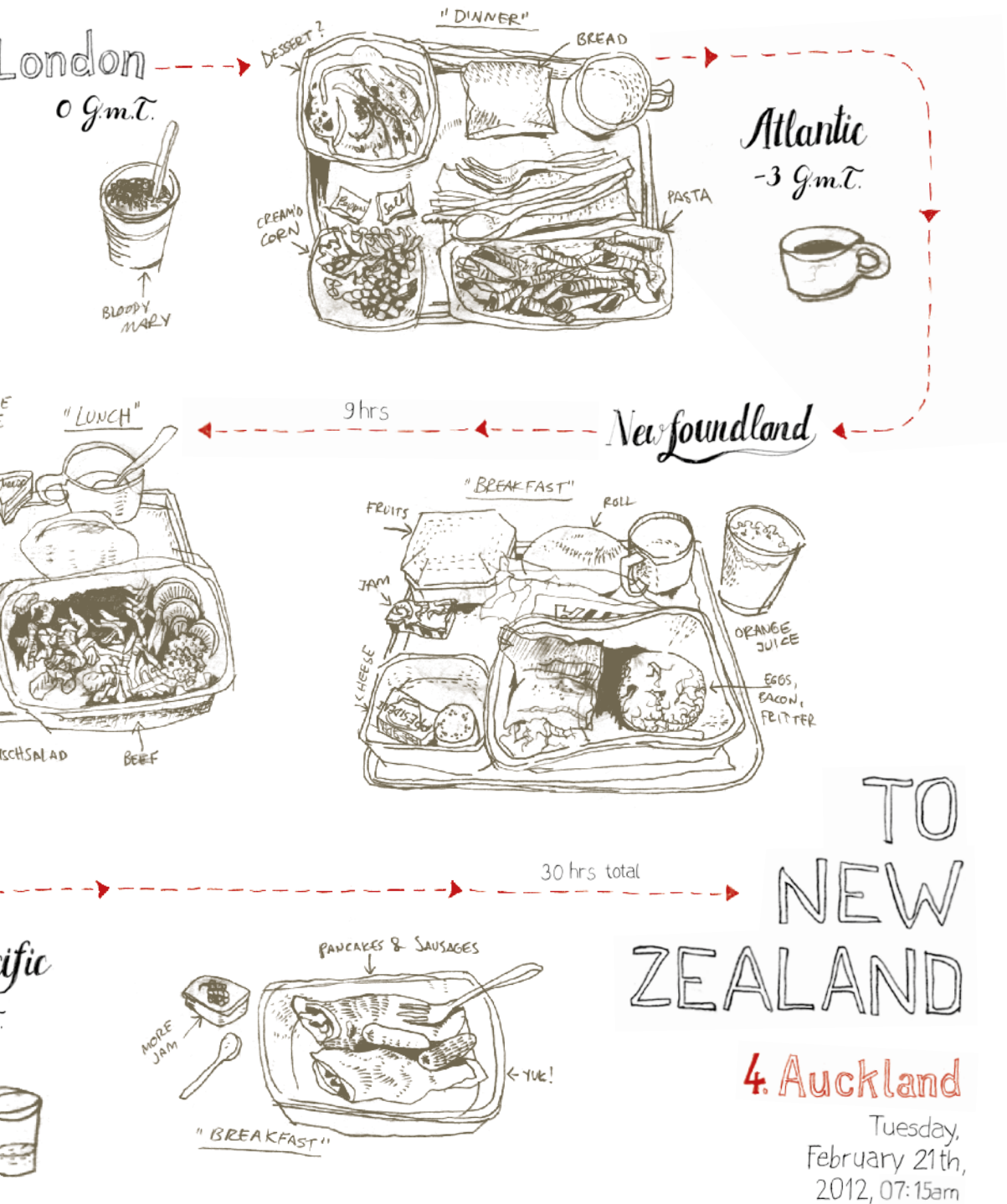
2.1 MAPPING TRAVEL
—time and space

I have explored the map as a visual metaphor for the passage of time as well as for its ability to offer the reader a way to navigate my subjective perceptions. Literary scholar Franco Moretti argues that stories themselves are connected to topography in such a way that they can be visualized through maps. Just like maps they are constructed around specific places, times and characters (Moretti 5).

Maps may represent any real or imagined space; they can be used as a symbolic depiction highlighting relationships between people, objects, and themes. They can tell stories, generate moods, and characterize local scenes (Figure 45). In *Atlas of Emotion* professor of visual studies Giuliana Bruno suggests:

> *"The map creates an itinerary for the one who travels with it, or who navigates its landscape in the travail of (interpretive) life"*
> (Bruno 225).

In this way my graphic novel works as a cumulative map too: It aims to record and subjectively interpret my experience of living in New Zealand in all its visual wealth.

A specific example is the map I created in order to chronicle my flight to New Zealand (Figure 44, p. 38–39). During this flight I not only moved through space, but also through 12 different time zones, following the daylight from East to West. When the plane crossed the international dateline the clocks went forward 24 hours, catapulting the passengers into the next day. What's more, I left on a Sunday noon in winter and arrived on a Tuesday morning in summer. Mapping both the data and my personal perceptions (the temporal and the emotional) enabled me to contemplate visually the paradoxical nature of long distance travel.

I have furthermore referred to maps as an intentional strategy throughout my entire research project by using them as a visual device to chart, record and reflect on my experience (Figure 46, p. 42–43). Maps have helped me to win clarity about ideas that were too abstract to articulate in any other way. During the research phase I have resorted to maps as a way to gain an overview of my collected material; to lay out a flat plan of my story; and to understand relationships between characters and places (Figure 47, p. 44–45; Figures 48–50, p. 46–47).

45

45 Lee, Vic.
    London Map (Detail).
    In Robert Klanten, Sven Ehmann,
    Hendrik Hellige, Antonis Antoniou.
    A Map of the World. Berlin: Gestalten
    Verlag, 2012. 52–53. Print.

Waitematā Harbour

£2 MILLION VILLAS →

STAND UP x PADDLE BOARDERS

x SAILING BOATS

← BEACH →

WHERE PEOPLE TAKE THEIR ANNOYING DOGS

GIANT TROPICAL PLANTS + ← SWAMP

NASTY HILL ↑

Westmere

SURF SHOP

Pt Chevalier

→ THE BEST NEIGHBOURHOOD!

x RETIREMENT VILLAGE

x WW2 AIRPLANES

x KITESURFERS

STUDENT HOSTEL = HOME FOR THE 1st 10 MONTHS

ZOO

Western Springs

STAY

FLATSHARE = HOME FOR THE LAST 8 MONTHS

GOLF COURSE

FORMER MENTAL HOSPITAL (NOW HAUNTED BUILDING 1) x

DRUG REHAB x CENTRE

Mt Albert (EXTINCT VOLCANO)

NEW FORENSIC MENTAL HOSPITAL x YAY!

UNI CAMPUS + STUDIO

← BEACH

Herne Bay

NASTY HILL 2

Ponsonby

HIP AREA FOR
HIP YOUNG MIDDLE CLASS
PEOPLE PRETENDING TO
BE HIP

Grey Lynn

LYNN BUTCHERS

Fresh Fish & Chips
SEAFOOD MARKET

CIVIC

MINI MAIN STREET
WITH FISH & CHIPS, ASIAN DAIRY,
KEBAB, VACUUM CLEANER
STORE,
REAL ESTATE
OFFICE

HARBOUR BRIDGE

BARS, RESTAURANTS

TO AVOID CONDESCENDING LOOKS — DRESS NICELY

SHOP TILL U DROP

1

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

CBD

SKY TOWER →

AVOID
TAKING MY
BIKE HERE
(TOO MUCH POLICE
AROUND)

K'Road

WESTERN MOTORWAY

IF YOU WANT TO AVOID BEING
KILLED IN THE
NORMAL TRAFFIC

16

→ TAKE THE BIKE LANE INTO TOWN

West Auckland

46 Grieben, Theresa.
From Karangahape Rd to Pt Chevalier.
Graphic novel p. 40–41.
2013. Pencil & digital colouring.
240 mm x 330 mm.

Studio

MY 2ND
HOME
– BUILDING 202 –

Ko te manu e kai ana i te matauranga, nona te ao.

YOU ARE MY FAVOURITE GERMAN!

Theresa
FROM: BERLIN/GERMANY
STUDIES: GRAPHIC DESIGN
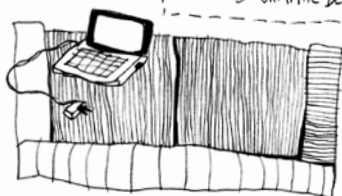
Vicky + Deane
FROM: GISBORNE/AUCKLAND
STUDY: PHOTOGRAPHY (BOTH)

Meeting Room

I will miss having you around to share food = stories - troubles and just simply this Master's Space!
Love Juliana

Desks

Juliana
FROM: PAPUA NEW GUINEA + FIJI
STUDIES: INTERIOR DESIGN

47 Grieben, Theresa.
Studio friends.
Graphic novel p. 78–79.
2013. Pencil & digital collage.
240 mm x 330 mm.

CONTENTS OF THE BOX

6. MAP of the changes at home/my family:

7. TRADING CARDS:
Auckland characters and friends + statement

9. PATTERNS
e.g. as book end paper, to wrap the box

8. TEATOWELS / POSTCARDS

10. BLOCK OF POST-ITS with doodles: words I've learnt

THE RHINO

CLARA

5. BOOKLET
Student Hostel Life

1. MAIN BOOK
comic panel sequence

THERESA BOOK

THEMES:
BEACH
CURIOSITY
PARADISE
A. VS. B.
DISCOVERY
FREEDOM
KNOWLEDGE
DEVELOPMENT

2. VISUAL
TRAVEL DIARY

Family visit, South Island, Northland...

layout experiments   fold outs

4. PANORAMA: K'Rd

3. PASSPORT: Stamps from NZ beaches/towns

HOME

NEW ZEALAND

Juliana (NZ)

Family
(Germany)

Theresa

Jen (NZ)

Auckland

Helen (NZ)

Vicky (NZ)

SETTING

KIWI
FRIENDS

The Hostel

Dietlind
(Germany/NZ)

INTERNATIONAL
FRIENDS

Stefan
(Austria)

Juanjo (Mexico)

Clara (France)

Ksenia
(Russia)

Philipp
(Germany)

Alejandro
(Mexico)

Carlie (U.S.)

Manager
(Australia)

Swedish Guy

THERES

50

2.2
MENTAL SNAPSHOTS

—the illustrator as supertourist

NEEDS SHAMPOO

1st WATER FOR ONLY $5 AT THE AIRPORT

30 HR· SLEEP DEPRIVATION + HUNGRY!

GERMAN WINTERJACKET + SCARF (OUTSIDE TEMPERATURE: +25°C)

MAP FROM THE TOURIST· INFO AT THE AIRPORT

CARRY-ON· LUGGAGE CONTAINING MY LAPTOP & BOOKS

BOOTS FROM MY TRIP TO RUSSIA

51   Grieben, Theresa.
     *Portrait of myself arriving in
     Auckland (February 21, 2012).*
     Graphic novel p. 29.
     2013. Pencil.
     240 mm x 165 mm.

In her book *On Photography* literary critic Susan Sontag observes:

"The whole point of photographing people is that you are not intervening in their lives, only visiting them. The photographer is a super-tourist, an extension of the anthropologist, visiting natives and bringing back news of their exotic doings and strange gear" (Sontag 42).

Accordingly, the third chapter of my graphic novel starts with a layout of interesting characters I remember seeing when I first arrived on Auckland's Karangahape Road (abbreviated K'Road; Figure 53, p. 50–51). Like every stranger I walked along the unfamiliar street with my eyes wide open, overwhelmed by the wealth of new impressions, taking mental snapshots of the people around me as if I were a photographer. These mental snapshots were later turned into drawings.

By using clear lines and laying the figures out as if on a table I am displaying them for examination. The viewer may recognize features of the depicted characters and compare them to his own experience, but mainly he is invited to look at them like a visitor in a museum would gaze at curious specimens. My intention was that the reader is seeing what I see, which opens up all sorts of individual perspectives, just as photographs are proof of what someone sees but at the same time an evaluation of the world (Sontag 88).

The underlying message is a notion of multicultural diversity: Auckland is a melting pot of people from all sorts of nationalities. I am just another foreigner in a city that is, to a large degree made up of immigrants. Each person has his or her own story to tell about New Zealand, just like me.

In a series of extra drawings (Figures 54–57, p. 52–59) I pushed the concept of mapping the unknown world of New Zealand further. I collected different specimen of New Zealand fish, birds and butterflies as well as architecture (West Auckland shops). I labelled and displayed each figure next to the other, creating an overview that works like a souvenir.

I originally came up with the idea when I browsed through a range of tea towels in a New Zealand souvenir shop – up until then it hadn't occurred to me how diverse and popular they are. Accordingly, my drawings could also function as real printed tea towels – this reflects yet again the idea of the supertourist. Even though the tea towel drawings haven't made their way into the graphic novel, they were still a valuable tool for my investigation.

52 *Good Food from New Zealand*
Vintage tea towel. NZ Design reg. no 8891. 28 January 2013. Photograph by author.

People
on K'Rd

STREET ARTIST

LADY GAGA

SHOPPING
QUEEN

MINNIE

PERFORMER

GERMAN
TOURIST

LOTS OF
SEAGULLS

HAPPY · JUST · BUMMIN'
AROUND

GRAFFITI

ASIAN
KID

West Auckland SHOPs

GREY LYNN,
GREAT NORTH ROAD

Fresh
SEAF

PT CHEVALIER,
GREAT NORTH ROAD

Pharmacy Point

THE GENTLE BARBERS

0800PIZZA

COME IN

CIVIC

KEBAB

PT CHEVALIER ROAD

WESTMERE,
WEST END ROAD

HOME ROAST

Rolls

Sandwich

FRUITS & FLOWERS

come in

QUESNE

chic shoe

GREY LYNN,
RICHMOND ROAD

OPEN
7 DAYS

Bakery
Yummy!

BURGER

SMORGASBORD

PONSONBY,
JERVOIS ROAD

SUR
SHOP

PASADENA,
GREAT NORTH ROAD/
PREMIER AVENUE

PT CHEVALIER,
GREAT NORTH ROAD

Bank

$ $

h Fish & Chips
OOD MARKET

NORFOLK
PINE

GREY LYNN,
GREAT NORTH ROAD/
SURREY CRESCENT

LYNN BUTCHERS

GREY LYNN,
GREAT NORTH ROAD

GREY LYNN,
RICHMOND ROAD/
WARNOCK STREET

GREY LYNN,
RICHMOND ROAD

Reader

HARVEST WHOLEFOODS · organic

s chic

NIKAU PALM

TAKE AWAYS SUNDAY 7DAYS DAIRY Cafe
WOK NEWS TV Guide
ICE

PT CHEVALIER ROAD/
WAKATIPU STREET

PT CHEVALIER BEACH,
RAYMOND STREET

54 Grieben, Theresa.
West Auckland shops.
Tea towel design.
2013. Pencil.
240 mm x 330 mm.

HAKE ↘

SQUID ↙
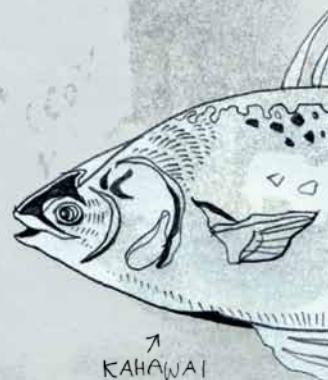
KAHAWAI ↗

New
Zealand
SEALIFE

SCALLOP
SHELL ↓

RAM'S
HORN SHELL
↓

DOSINIA
SHELL ↘

SCREW
SHELL

CRAYFISH ↗

SPIRAL
BABYLON ↑

TOHEROA
SHELL →

HOKI

ORANGE
ROUGHY

SEAHORSE

JOHN DORY

PENION
SULCATUS

LITTLE
BLUE PENGUIN →

TAKAHE →

KIWI →

KAKAPO →

PUKEKO →

KEA ↗

New
Zealand
BIRDS
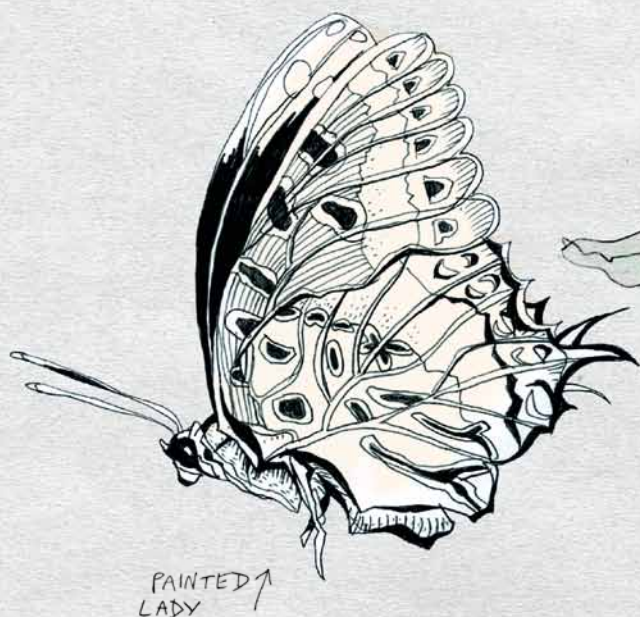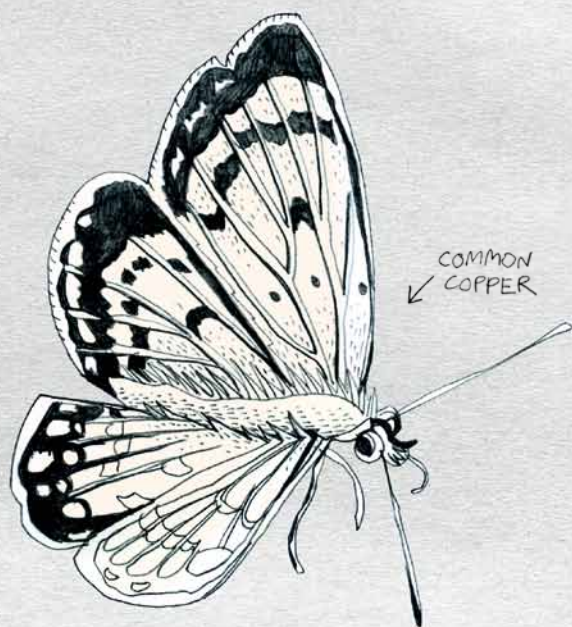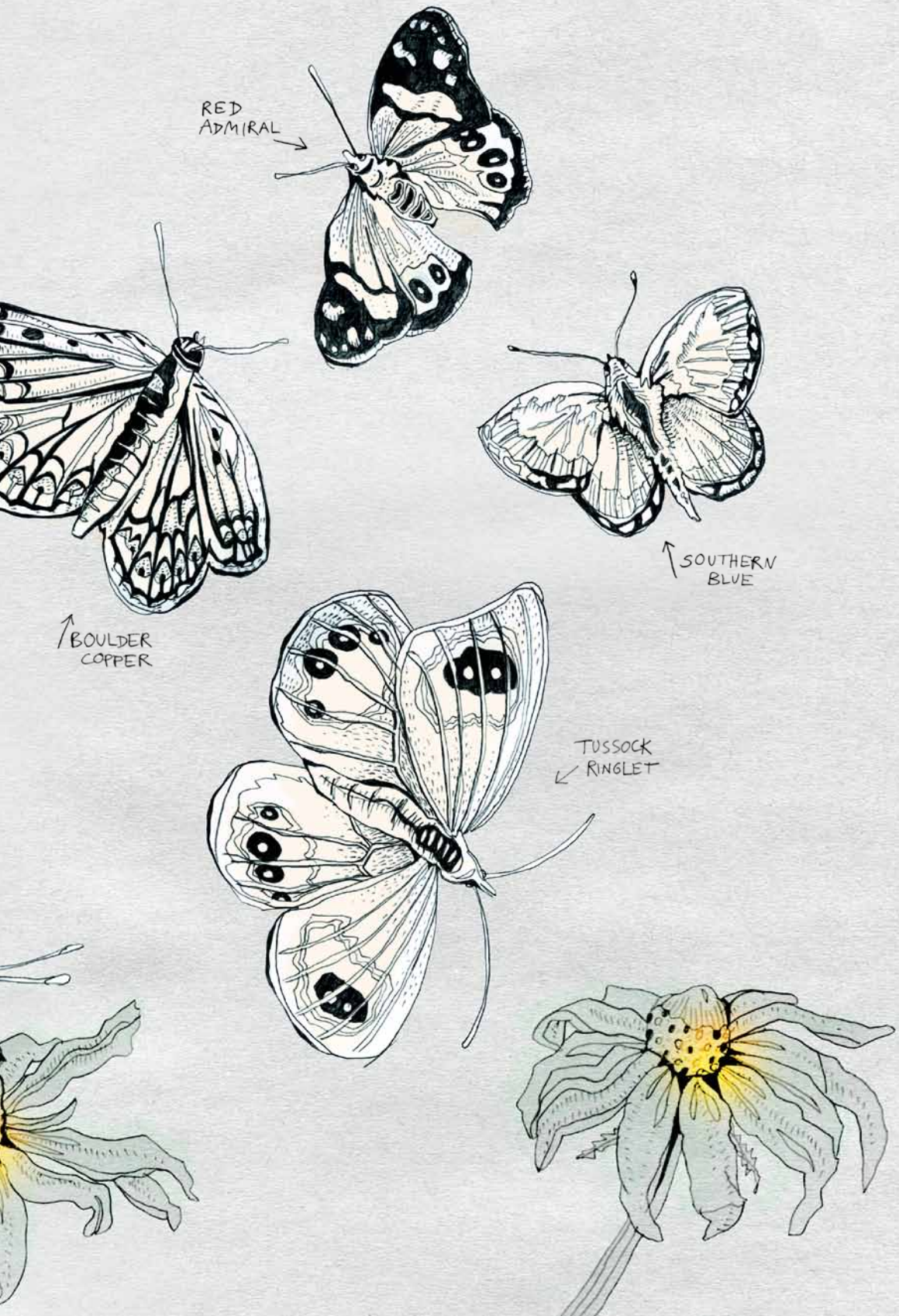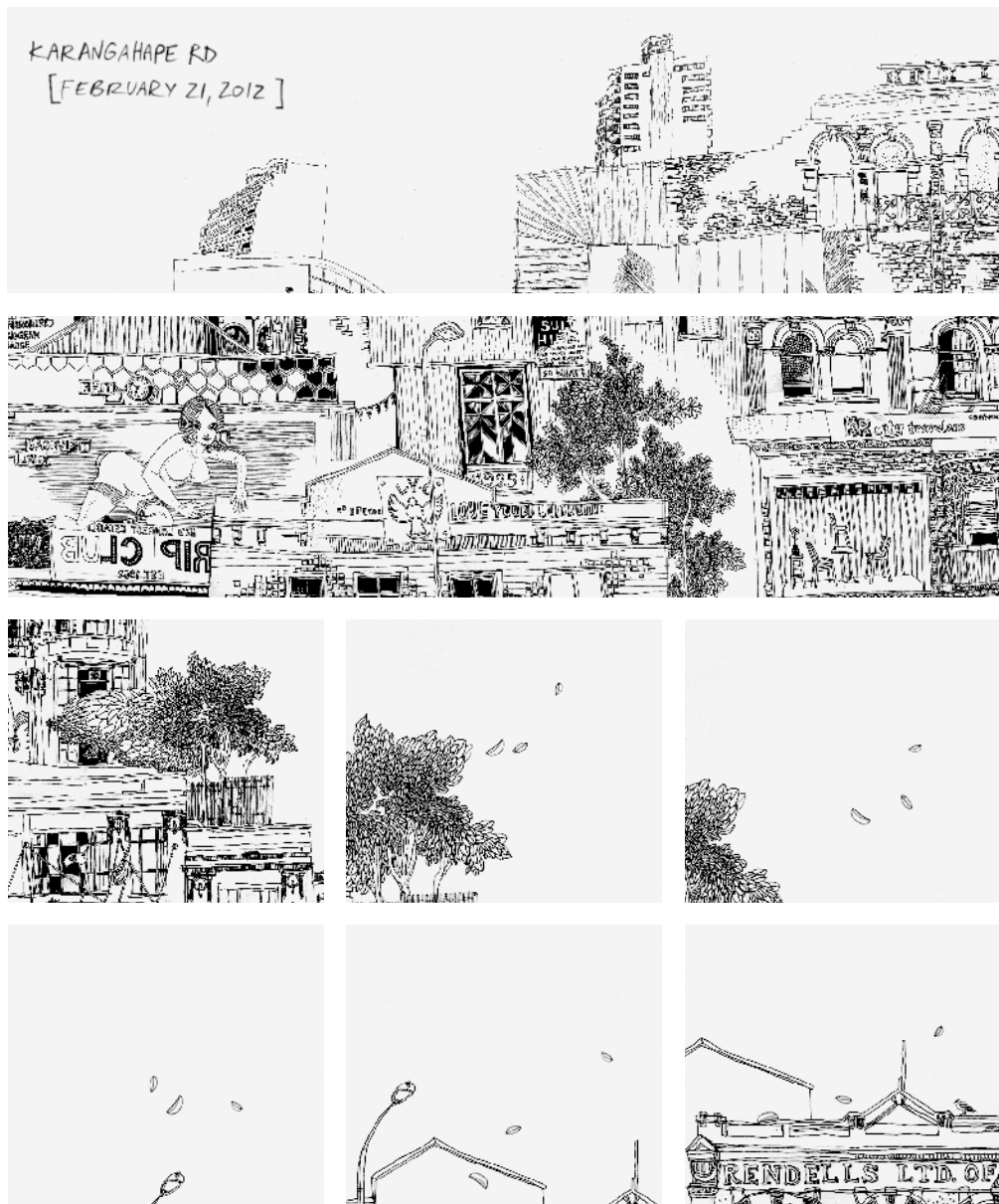
GREY
WARBLER

WHITE HERON

TUI

KINGFISHER

FANTAIL

New
Zealand
BUTTERFLIES

COMMON
COPPER

PAINTED
LADY

FOREST
RINGLET

57 Grieben, Theresa.
New Zealand butterflies.
Tea towel design.
2013. Pencil & digital colouring.
240 mm x 330 mm.

RED
ADMIRAL

BOULDER
COPPER

SOUTHERN
BLUE

TUSSOCK
RINGLET

2.3

ASPECT-to-ASPECT TRANSITION

—the street as environment

Referring back to Chris Ware's notion that buildings can have a character just like a person (see section **3.7 "Building as character"**), I have brought the street to the fore. This evokes the impression of wandering through the scene and recreates the mood of the place; in order to achieve this I have made use of what cartoonist Scott McCloud classifies as *aspect-to-aspect transition* in his book **Understanding Comics** (McCloud 166). In this approach the reader has to assemble a single moment from fragmented views of an environment (Figure 58).

By dividing the streetscape into separate panels I invite the reader to ponder on the images and thus form a personal relationship with the environment before the action sets in (McCloud 166–167). What is more, the silence of these panels produces a certain immediacy and timelessness, which allows the reader to linger and appreciate the drawings as environments the characters exist within rather than as mere backgrounds (McCloud 164). In **Introduction to Picturebook Codes** William Moebius states that:

> *"Framed, the illustration provides a limited glimpse into a world. Unframed, the illustration constitutes a total experience, the view from within"* (Moebius 150).

I made use of this phenomenon by placing a fully detailed panorama of K'Road (Figure 59, p. 62–65) after the opening sequence of silent panels. It is devoid of any people because here again, the street is the main protagonist. In this panoptic drawing approach I am showing everything at once, which creates an all-embracing experience. Referring to the point I made in section 2.1, the K'Road panorama is a map: It is my personal attempt to collate the sheer amount of visual information that the streetscape offers, such as the contrast between different styles of architecture; the simultaneity of a motorway overpass and trees growing out of windows; the abundance of shop signs, billboards, murals, cafés, art galleries, op-shops, strip clubs and Asian supermarkets all crammed into one space.

59 Grieben, Theresa.
K'Road Panorama.
Graphic novel p. 36–37.
2012. Pencil.
3000 mm x 900 mm.
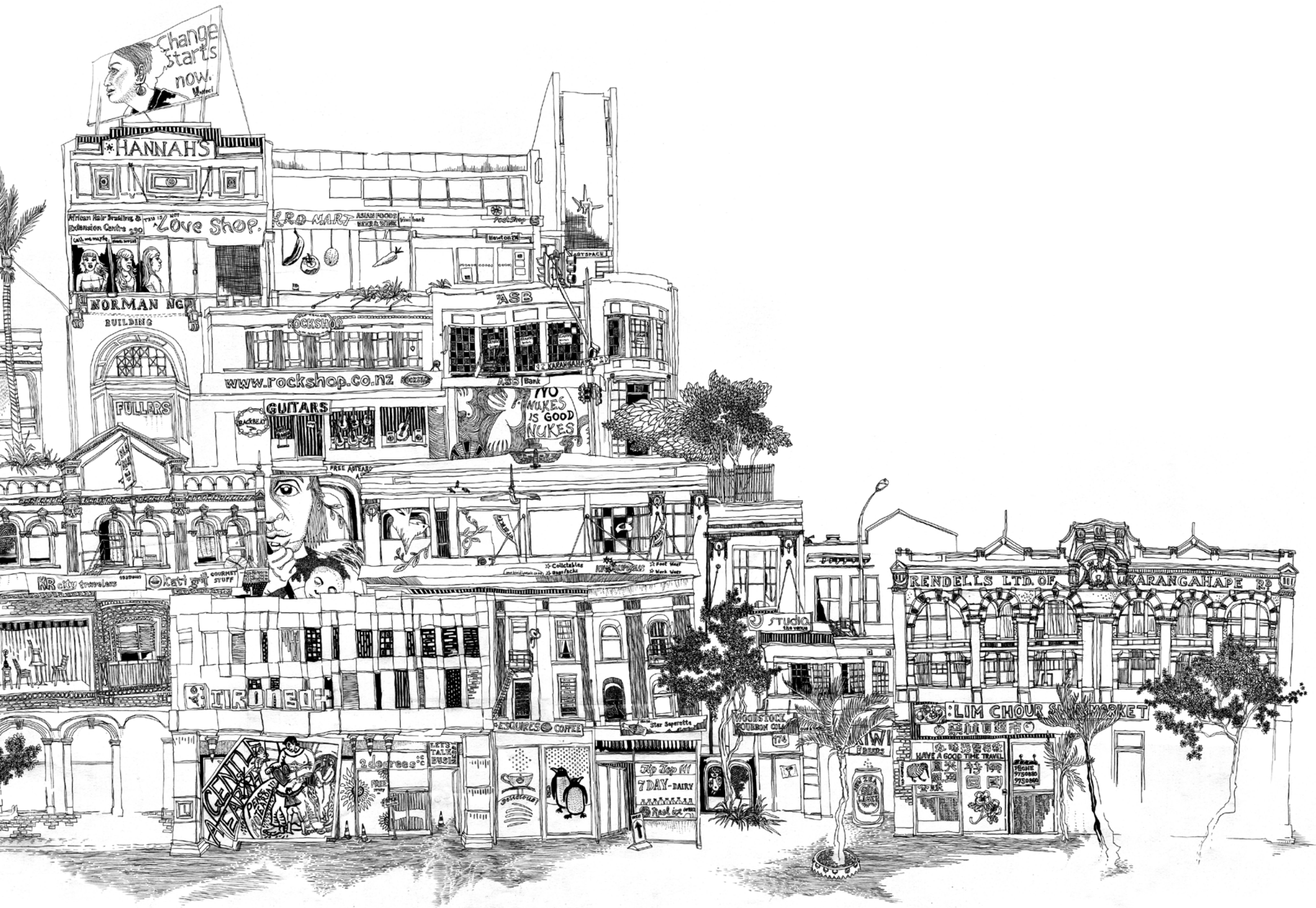
2.4 the
UNCANNY
—a strange familiarity

Since my artistic aim for the panorama was to depict the visual richness of the streetscape in its entirety, I attempted to look at the street with what Shaun Tan labels the *innocent eye* (Tan 5). By drawing this abstracted reality I am searching for strangeness in the familiar. This uncanny notion of knowing a place while seeing it for the first time aptly mirrors my state of consciousness on finding myself a stranger: I do not yet belong to the new place but accept it in the absence of a full understanding, the viewer does this with me. In *The Uncanny* psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud supports that influence of the author:

> *"The story-teller has this license among many others, that he can select his world of representation so that it either coincides with the realities we are familiar with or departs from them…He has a peculiarly directive influence over us; by means of the states of mind into which he can put us and the expectations he can rouse in us, he is able to guide the current of our emotions"* (Freud 155, 158).

Due to the paradoxical nature of being simultaneously attracted to, yet repulsed by an object, an uncanny feeling can create cognitive dissonance. We find ourselves in a situation where we do not know how to differentiate between bad and good; this is a signifier of fear. Alfred Hitchcock employed this sinister association of anxiety in his films by using simple, everyday objects who may suddenly lose their familiar side. While my panorama of K'Road does not actually convey a sense of anxiety, it is nevertheless a bizarre constellation of fragmented depictions of real life buildings that are so familiar to most Aucklanders, it can cause a cognitive dissonance to see them in this new context.

While working on the K'Rd panorama and developing the characters I have also gone through a rich phase of explorative testing related to *The Uncanny* (Figures 61–65, p. 67–69). Even though these experiments in their entirety are not used for the graphic novel, they have played an important role in locating new visual language for my research project. By trying to capture the strangeness in the familiar, I have discovered new graphic approaches such as distortion, overlay, and repetition. Amongst others, these devices have informed the image sequence *Carlie's Dilemma* (see section **3.3 "Time and Sequence – condensing a complex event"**), which contains the distorted silhouettes of inhabitants moving through a house during a day.

Despite uncanny qualities, the K'Road panorama also shows a notion of diversity and liberty. It is dense and organic, whilst being inviting and full of opportunity.

60 Tan, Shaun.
   The Arrival.
   New York:
   Arhur A. Levine,
   2007. 36–37. Print.

61 Grieben, Theresa.
   K'Road bustle.
   Experiment.
   2012. Pencil & digital collage.
   420 mm x 270 mm.

60

In *Sketches from a Nameless Land* Shaun Tan describes the process of developing the utopian city of *The Arrival*, calling it an *"arbitrary world."* This city *"might appear to be a confusing assemblage of bizarre architecture, mystifying symbols, strange vehicles and other less distinct forms, but that's true of any city to a foreign eye. And like a real city – beyond all its chaotic detail – there is an underpinning logic"* (Tan 20).

The reader is invited to seek out the underpinning logic that lies behind K'Road and follows me on my journey of discovery. At the end of the chapter the main character – me – is hopping on a bus towards West Auckland, on the way to a hostel, my new home away from home (Figure 66, p. 70).
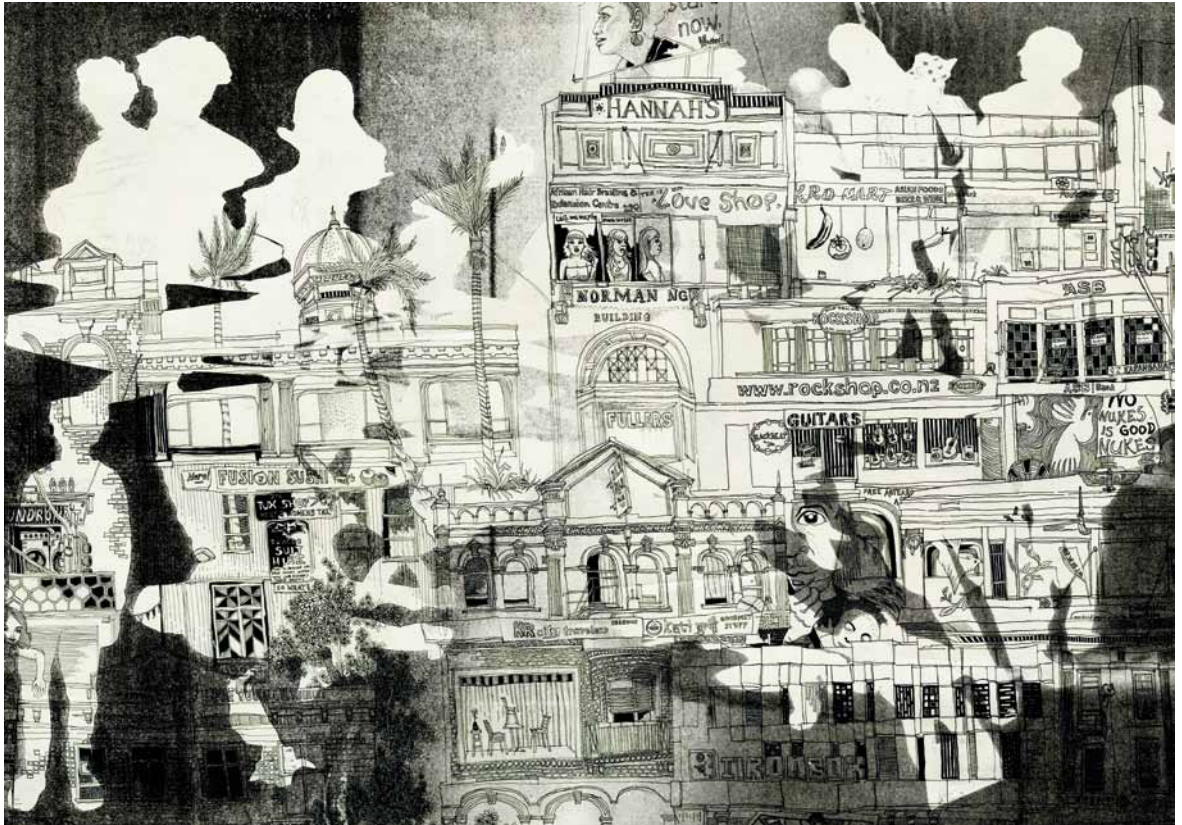
62 Grieben, Theresa.
    Too many new people.
    Experiment.
    2012. Pencil & digital collage.
    900 mm x 800 mm.

64 Grieben, Theresa.
    People passing by.
    Experiment.
    2012. Pencil & digital collage.
    297 mm x 210 mm.

65 Grieben, Theresa.
    Familiarity sets in.
    Experiment.
    2012. Pencil & digital collage.
    600 mm x 240 mm.

63 Grieben, Theresa.
It takes time to adjust.
Experiment.
2012. Pencil & digital collage.
900 mm x 800 mm.
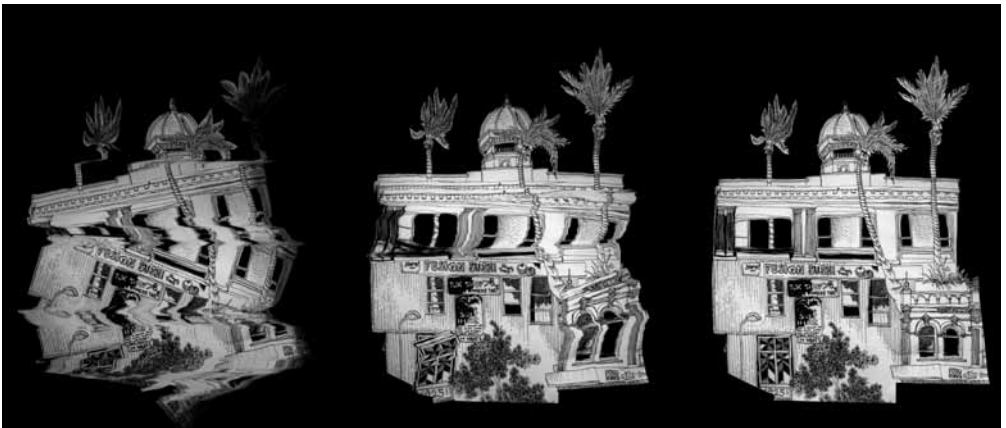
3. TRANSITION

During my first 12 months in New Zealand I lived in a student hostel close to campus. Most of the international flatmates had come to New Zealand on a short-term exchange and were much more interested in fun than seriously immersing themselves within the host country. The international group stuck together for studying and trips; this meant that they were insulated from culture shock. The hostel seemed to work like a decompression chamber, separating us from the real world outside. We were in a state of transition.

This sense of spatiotemporal transition is the overarching topic in this section. While the preceding section examined an entire foreign street as part of the discovery experience, I will now investigate in greater detail the possibilities of conveying this sense of transition by using a single house, that is to say my student hostel, as the major visual medium.

Amongst the visual conventions that are examined are colour associations ascribed to characters; framing and bleeds as a means to show the development of a friendship; the ability of image sequences to condense a complex event into a few images; animated props as a way to represent the passage of narrative time; the visual qualities of speech bubbles and their emotional impact on the reader; the architectural exterior and interior as a storytelling device; the notion of a building becoming a character itself; the everyday displayed in word-image constellations; and last but not least the concept of the reader as urban flâneur, who becomes the casual spectator of hostel life.

3.1 COLOUR
association with characters

Referring to the method I have used to depict people on K'Road in chapter 2 (see section **2.2 "Mental snapshots: the illustrator as supertourist"**), I have decided to illustrate my international flatmates in a similar manner. Their characters, too, are displayed for individual perusal, giving the viewer time to build up a personal connection before the story sets in (Figure 67).

During this phase of character development I decided to explore the idea of associating a colour with every figure drawn. In *Words about Pictures* Perry Nodelman classifies the conventional meaning of colours into two kinds: Firstly the culture-specific meaning which is generally an arbitrary agreement between those who utilize it, such as the green–yellow–red of a stoplight. Secondly the emotional meaning, which can strongly affect the mood of images. Reflecting on this the most common associations among the basic colours are red with warmth and intensity; yellow with cheerfulness; green with hope or envy; blue with harmony, confidence or melancholy; brown with earth and nature; grey with detachment or bleakness; and orange with excitement and defiance. Some of these associations might stem from our basic notions of sunlight, water and fire. Nodelman concludes:

"Since those associations do exist, artists can evoke particular moods by using the appropriate colours" (Nodelman 60–61).

Exploring this idea I illustrated my international flatmates by displaying their individual statements in characteristic colours. Each colour is thus a subjective representation of the feelings I have towards that person or the typical character traits I associate with them. The aggressive neon orange of the hostel manager clearly speaks of my disapproval of her, while the jagged, distorted letters of her cry have onomatopoeic qualities (for further discussion see section **6.2 "Onomatopoeia: translating sound into images"**). Opposed to this, the blue of my friend Philipp represents his loyalty towards me. Clara's light magenta reflects her individuality and ambivalence, while Alejandro's yellowish green stands for his humour and optimism.

ALEJANDRO   PHILIPP

STEFAN   CARLIE

CLARA   HOSTEL MANAGER

67 Grieben, Theresa.
Friends to keep (colour palette).
Graphic novel p. 43–45.
2012. Pencil & digital colouring.
240 mm x 330 mm.
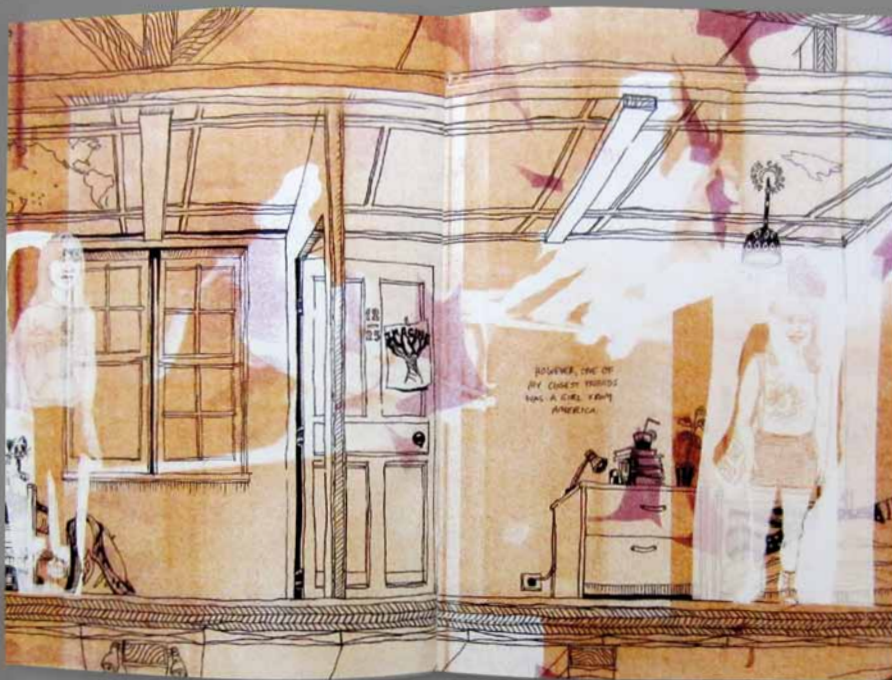
3.2 FRAMING AND BLEEDS

—insight into friendship
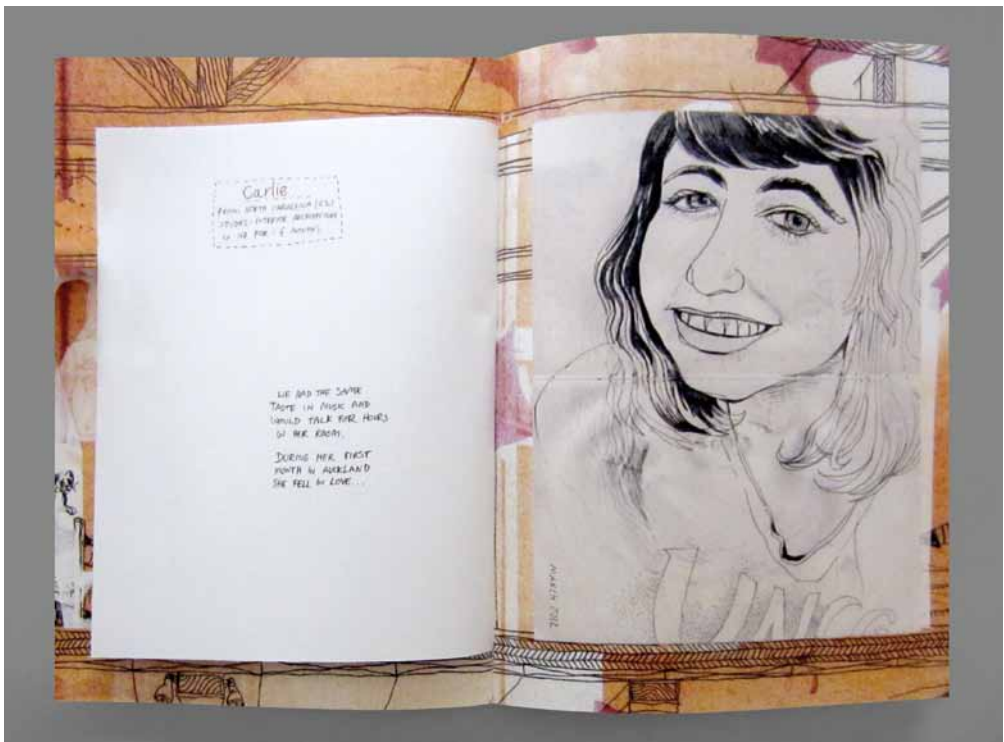
69

While I am showing a rather scant overview of my other friends, I have chosen to illustrate in greater detail my close friendship with Carlie, an international student from North Carolina.

Her importance can be seen in a number of illustrative devices. A full page drawing of her room denotes the depth of our friendship, her room being a private space inside the hostel, which is ostensibly a very public space, with others regularly moving through it. I deliberately removed the panel borders from the room allowing it to bleed to the edges of the page. In *Making Comics*, cartoonist and comics theorist Scott McCloud observes:

"Bleeds tend to open up a scene, not just because of the increased panel sizes, but also because they're no longer fully contained by the panel border and can 'bleed' into your world, or perhaps because we're conditioned by the panel-as-window experience – and if a window frame has passed beyond our peripheral vision, it usually means we're through it" (McCloud 163).

The reader is thus drawn into my private view of the friendship.

An orange hue, which is generally associated with warmth and positivity has also been employed to reveal this emotional connection. The viewer is furthermore invited to discover a real life portrait of Carlie hidden behind her silhouette. It might be easily missed in the reading process, but thereby mirrors a lesson of friendship: It takes time to find it, but in the end it is worth it.

68–69 Grieben, Theresa.
Carlie's room.
Graphic novel p. 46–47
including hidden portrait.
2013. Photograph by author.

PT CHEVALIER
MORNING   NOON   EVENING   NIGHT

70 Grieben, Theresa.
    Carlie's Dilemma: the four
    seasons (colour palette & excerpt).
    Graphic novel p. 48–55.
    2012. Pencil & digital colouring.
    100 mm x 114 mm.

3.3 TIME and SEQUENCE

— condensing a complex event

In the sequence *Carlie's Dilemma* I examined how illustration can disregard laws of time and place by condensing her failed love story into four simple images on the page. The hostel, a centre of constant passage of people, a momentary home for travellers, seemed to me a very suitable backdrop to communicate that notion of temporality and loss.

The layout of the sequence reflects this idea. It is separated into four full-page elevations and represents the four major stages of her relationship, as well as being divided into two layers of time (Figures 71–74, p. 78–79). These consist not only of the actual four months of her romance, but also the four times of a day (morning, noon, evening, night). The division into four months is the most obvious one, since I annotate it in the lower left corner of the pages, while also showing a tree gradually losing its leaves, which represents the passage of the seasons (Figure 70). The times of the day are being communicated by means of a changing colour scheme.

This colour palette had been derived from a series of photographs I had taken during the course of a day in Auckland. The colour scheme is subjective – it does not aim to show an objective overview of daylight colours, it rather tries to capture fugitive moments of my visual impressions.

The four images also contain transparent clouds of distorted silhouettes that seem to move through the house like the people that inhabit it: They rise in the morning, roam the street at noon, return home in the evening. Opposed to this, the night sky merely shows some indefinable shapes that float like ghosts in the air. They seem to be the reverberation of a person passing by or a dream not quite seized. Here I am drawing inspiration from experiments with distortion and overlay; see section 2.4 *"The Uncanny* – a strange familiarity"*.

Carlie's DILEMMA
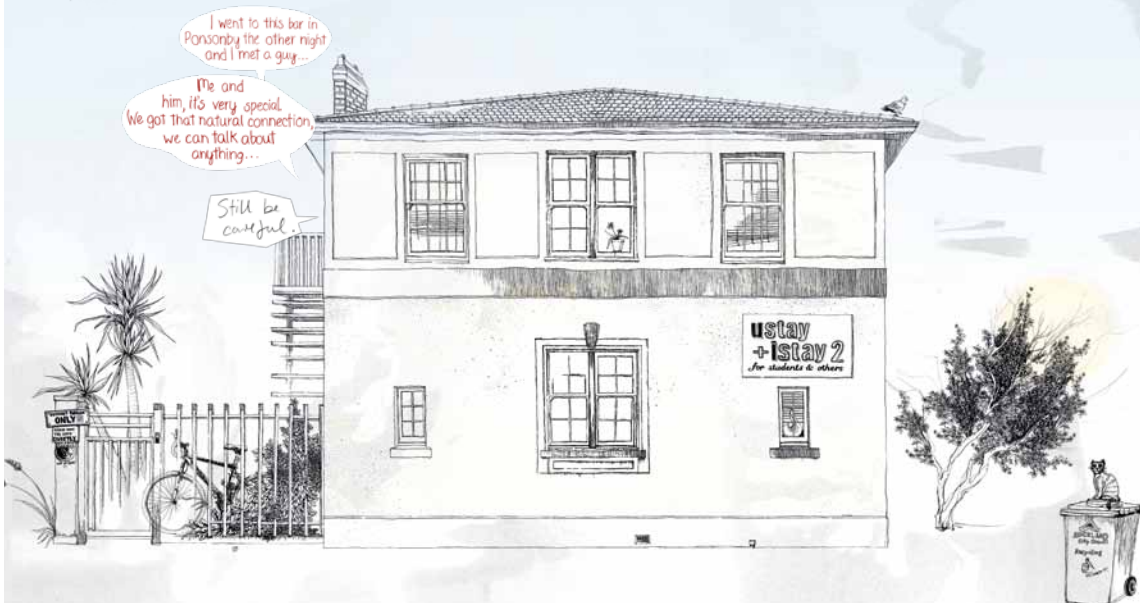
1st MONTH

3rd MONTH
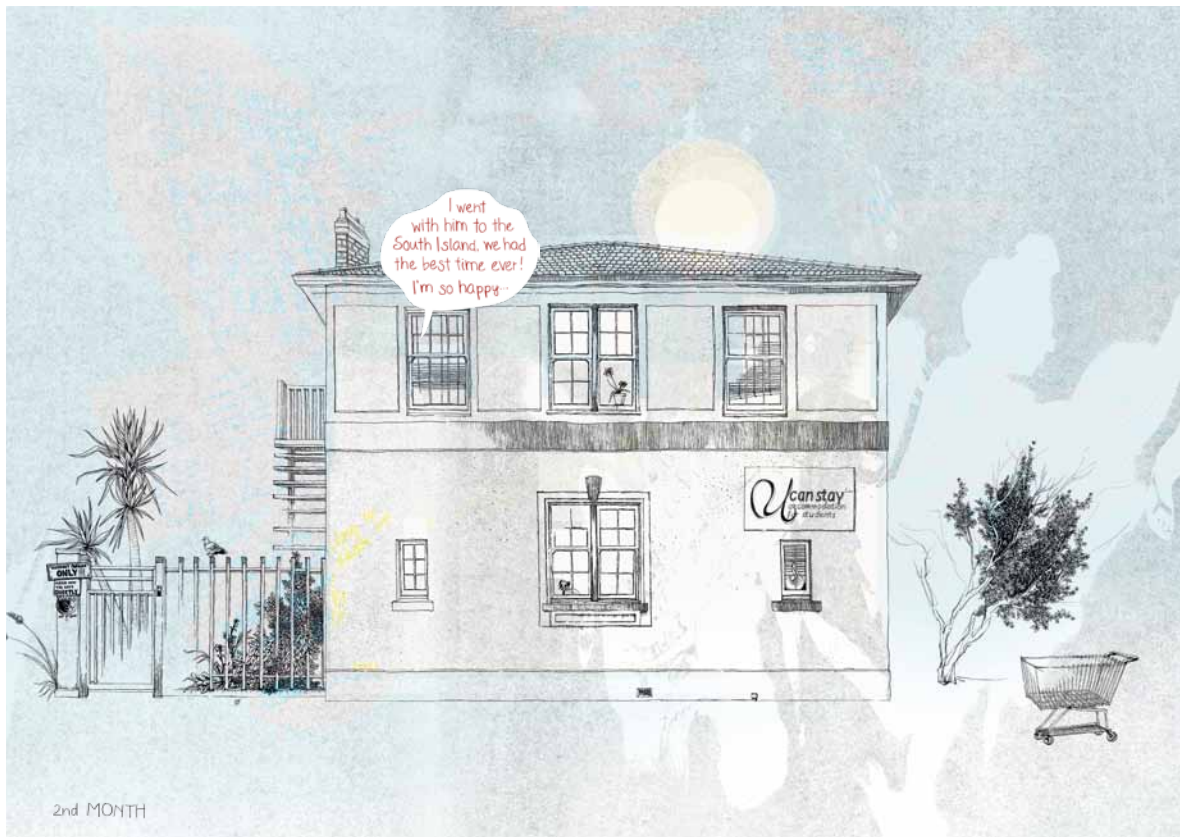
72
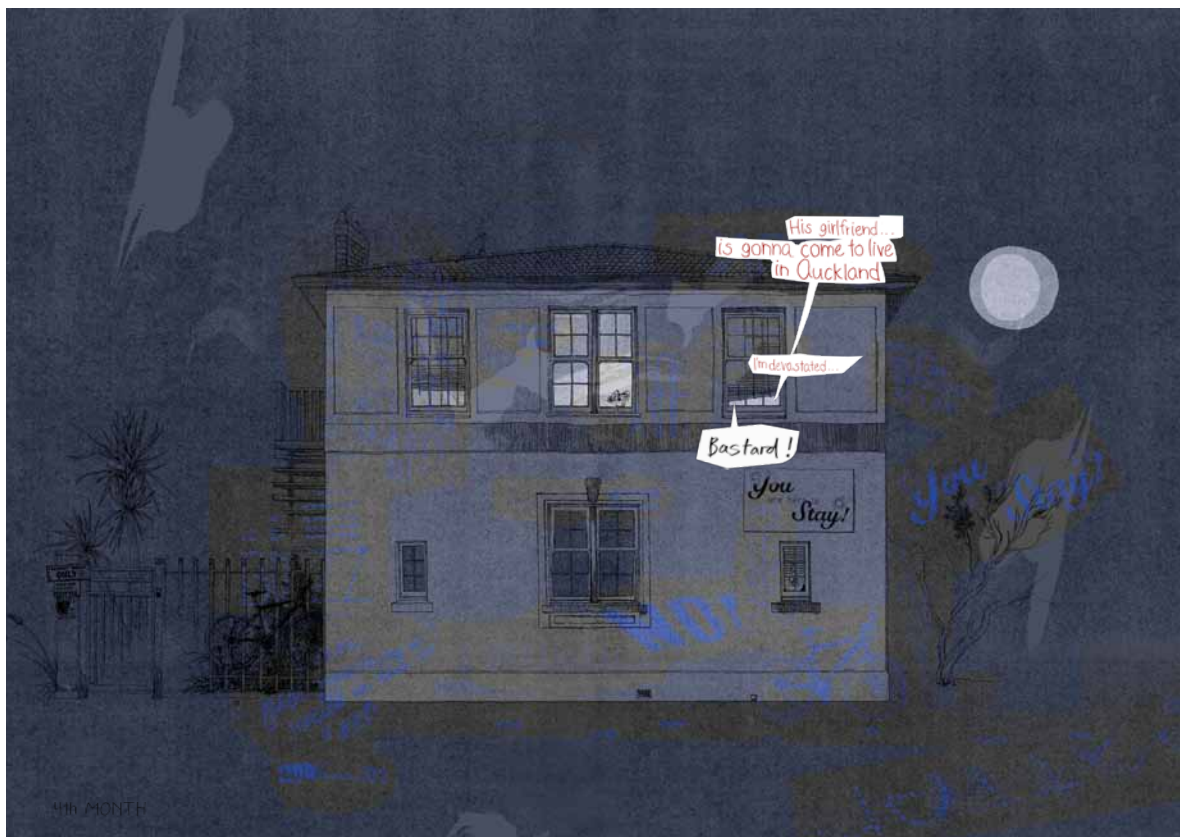
74

3.4
ANIMATED PROPS
— representation of narrative time

The passage of time is also indicated by additional props, which include a shopping cart, a rubbish bin, my bicycle, a cat and a pigeon. While the everyday objects are suggestive of bustle, the cat functions as the eyes of the manager. She watches with an attentive gaze the activity of the street and the whereabouts of the hostel tenants. There is also a potted plant positioned at the windowsill of the central upstairs window. It grows from humble beginnings to full blossom, later to a wilting bloom and finally to a sadly faded flower barely recognizable to its former appearance. In this way the natural decay aptly mirrors Carlie's emotional state.

The hostel sign changes over the course of the months, too. There is a certain irony to the series of slogans, which cheerfully invite to stay while referring to a place that is, after all, a temporary address. This weird repetition of the same message might arouse an uncanny feeling of helplessness: Sigmund Freud compares this phenomenon of unintended recurrence with wandering in a dark room,

"looking for the door or the electric switch, and collide time after time with the same piece of furniture" (Freud 140–141).

(For further discussion see section 2.4 "*The Uncanny* – a strange familiarity".)

71 Grieben, Theresa.
Carlie's Dilemma: 1st month.
Graphic novel p. 48–49.
2012. Pencil & digital colouring.
240 mm x 330 mm.

72 Grieben, Theresa.
Carlie's Dilemma: 2nd month.
Graphic novel p. 50–51.
2012. Pencil & digital colouring.
240 mm x 330 mm.

73 Grieben, Theresa.
Carlie's Dilemma: 3rd month.
Graphic novel p. 52–53.
2012. Pencil & digital colouring.
240 mm x 330 mm.

74 Grieben, Theresa.
Carlie's Dilemma: 4th month.
Graphic novel p. 54–55.
2012. Pencil & digital colouring.
240 mm x 330 mm.
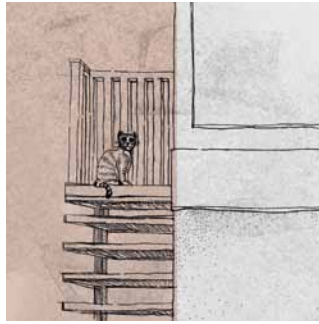
75 Grieben, Theresa.
*Carlie's Dilemma:
hostel cat (excerpt).*
Graphic novel p. 48–53.
2012. Pencil & Digital
Colouring. 84 mm x 42 mm.

76 Grieben, Theresa.
*Carlie's Dilemma:
potted plant (excerpt).*
Graphic novel p. 48–55.
2012. Pencil & Digital
Colouring. 84 mm x 84 mm.
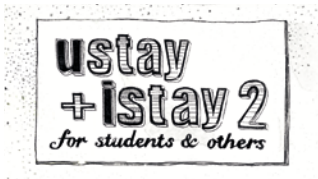
77 Grieben, Theresa.
*Carlie's Dilemma:
hostel sign (excerpt).*
Graphic novel p. 48–55.
2012. Pencil & Digital
Colouring. 84 mm x 48 mm.
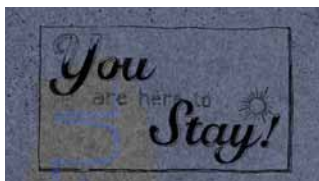
3.5
SPEECHBUBBLES
— emotional impact

The use of dialogue in sequential art can have a strong impact. I investigated through illustration the technique of compression, which, as Scott McCloud describes it,

"makes use of the written word's ability to reduce big chunks of time and information down to a few tiny words" (McCloud 131). Carlie's story is broken down to a mere 11 phrases. These phrases nevertheless manage to communicate the essence of the events (Figure 78).

The shape of the speech bubbles is a strong visual device, too: While Carlie's word balloons are gently curved and balanced during months 1 and 2, they deteriorate gradually during month 3 and end up being torn and jagged in the last month. This reflects once again her emotional landscape. The viewer learns about her severed feelings not only by reading her dialogue but also by subconsciously absorbing the appearance of the balloons surrounding it. In *The Aesthetics of Comics* art writer David Carrier observes:

"When we read the contents of balloons, our first concern may be with the meaning of the words they contain. But since comics are also a visual art, we are concerned as well with the strictly visual qualities of balloons. We contrast elegantly shaped and awkward-looking balloons and are aware of the visual qualities of the chosen type, which we read in the ways we read handwriting for signs of someone's character" (Carrier 30).

78   Grieben, Theresa.
*Carlie's Dilemma:
speech bubbles (excerpt).*
Graphic novel p. 48–55.
2012. Pencil & Digital
Colouring.
280 mm x 86 mm.

David Carrier compares the speech bubble with Descartes' concept of the pineal gland, which the latter claimed to be the *"principal seat of the soul"*, where intellect and body connect, just like a character in a comic is connected with his voice. The word balloon is an implement, which is used to depict invisible phenomena like speech or thought. It is separated from the comics figure just like the mind is separated from the body (Carrier 28–40). By using only word balloons and omitting the figures I have demonstrated how much can be visually communicated about the characters without actually showing them.

The style of handwriting can hint at the character's personality, too, which is subject to the study of graphology. Despite being commonly employed in Europe, graphology has generally been classified as a pseudo-science (see Barry L. Beyerstein's comprising analysis of the genre, *The Write Stuff*). Nevertheless, it is legitimate to assume that there are regional differences in writing, which can mirror the attitudes of its people.

While I use my own handwriting without much modification, I chose a rounded, cheerful style for Carlie's dialogue, which seems to allude to her American roots. According to journalist Jennie Cohen, children in the United States are taught to write in a style that is strong and individual, while cursive is on the decline in favour of printing or keyboard typing (Cohen, *"A Brief History of Penmanship on National Handwriting Day"*).

Additionally, I used Carlie's subjectively assigned colour, a darkish orange-red, for her dialogue. This allows me to indicate the person that is speaking in the absence of any visible figure. My own dialogue stays black just like the usual narrator's text – in this artwork I do not associate a particular colour with myself, since I intend to communicate the feelings I have towards others rather than towards myself.
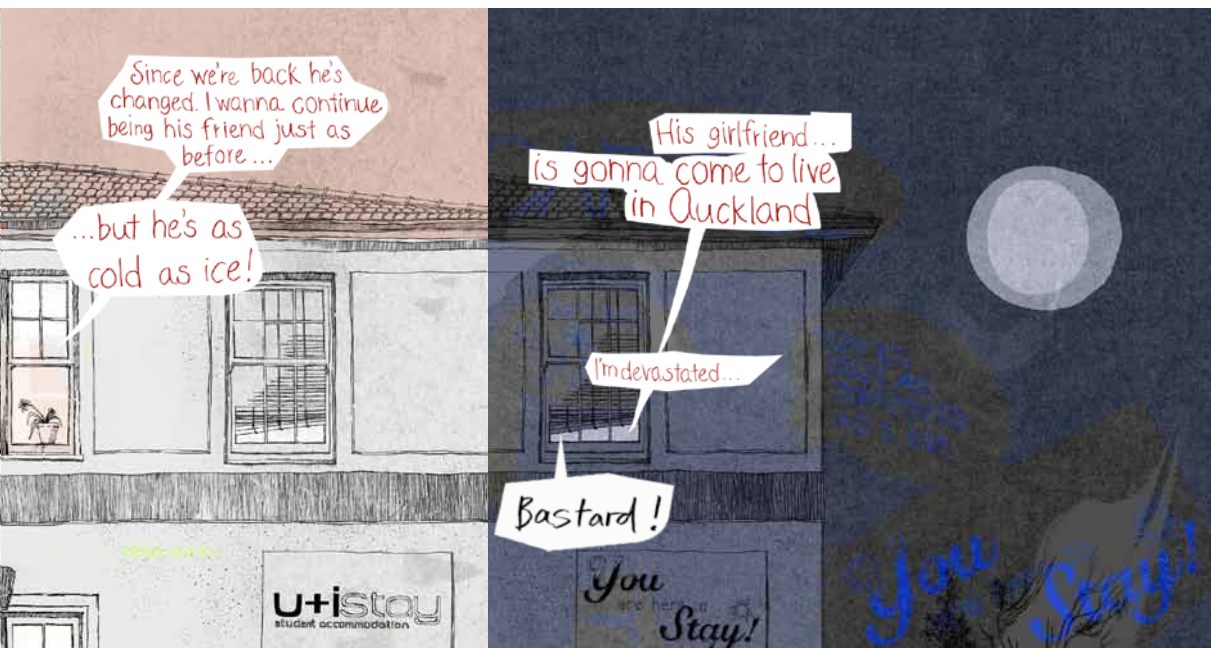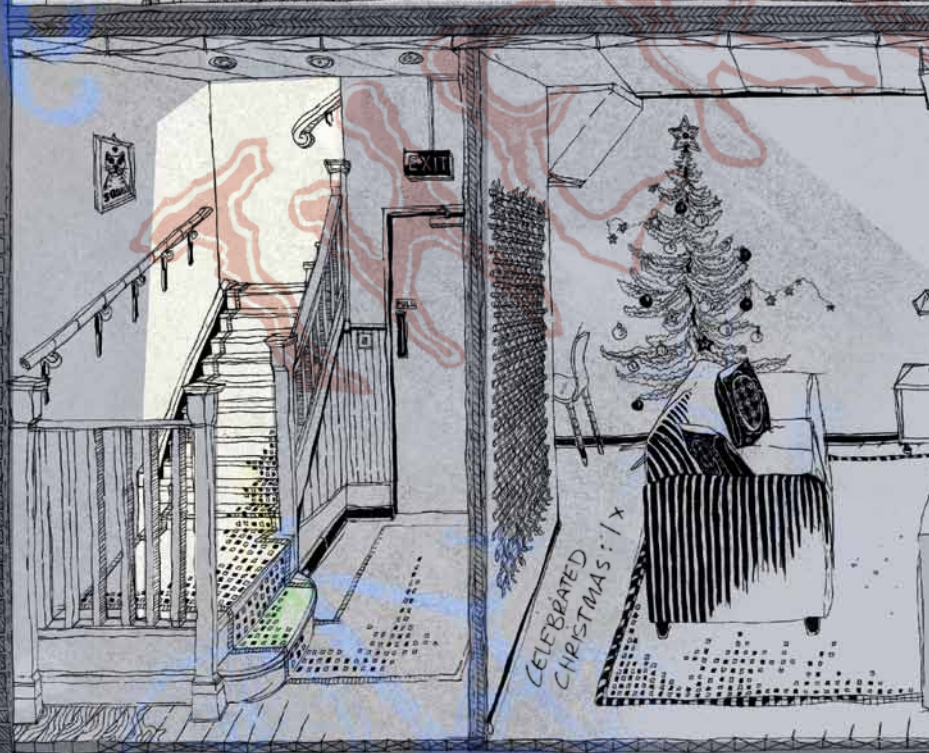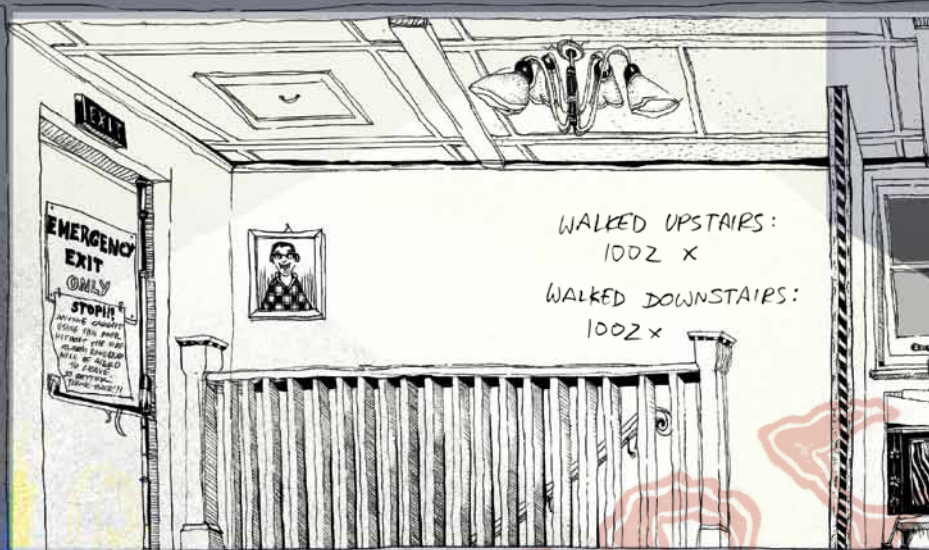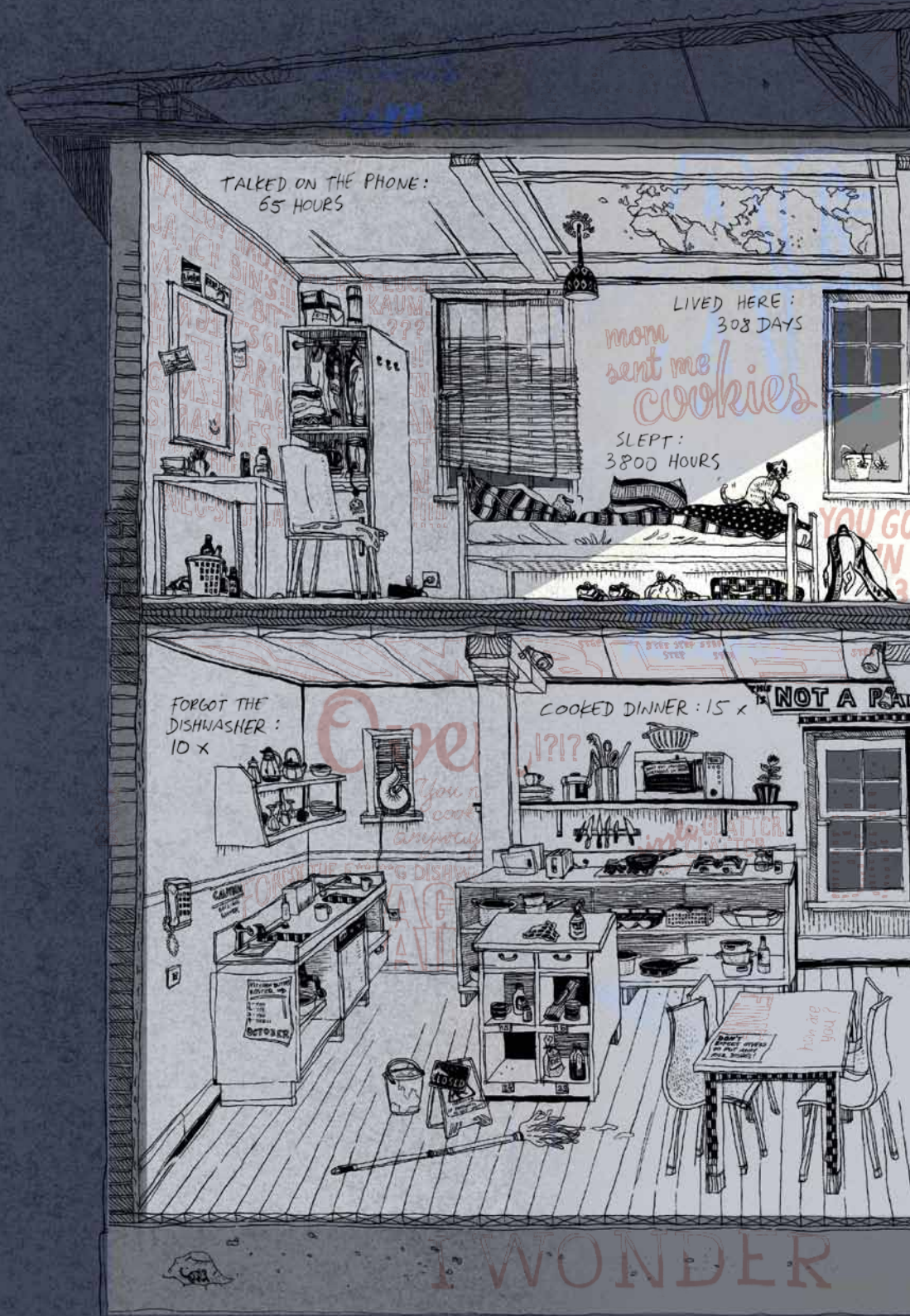
EXIT

EMERGENCY
EXIT
ONLY

STOP!!!
ANYONE CAUGHT
USING THIS DOOR
WITHOUT THE DUE
ALARM ENDORSE
WILL BE ASKED
TO LEAVE
IS BOTTOM
THINK TWICE!!!

WALKED UPSTAIRS:
1002 ×

WALKED DOWNSTAIRS:
1002 ×

EXIT

EXIT

CELEBRATED
CHRISTMAS : 1 ×

SHOWERED:
308 ×

CLEANED:
0 ×

WATCHED TV:
1 ×

WATCH
ME

TOTAL RENT
SPENT:
$ 7260

DON QUIXOTE

79
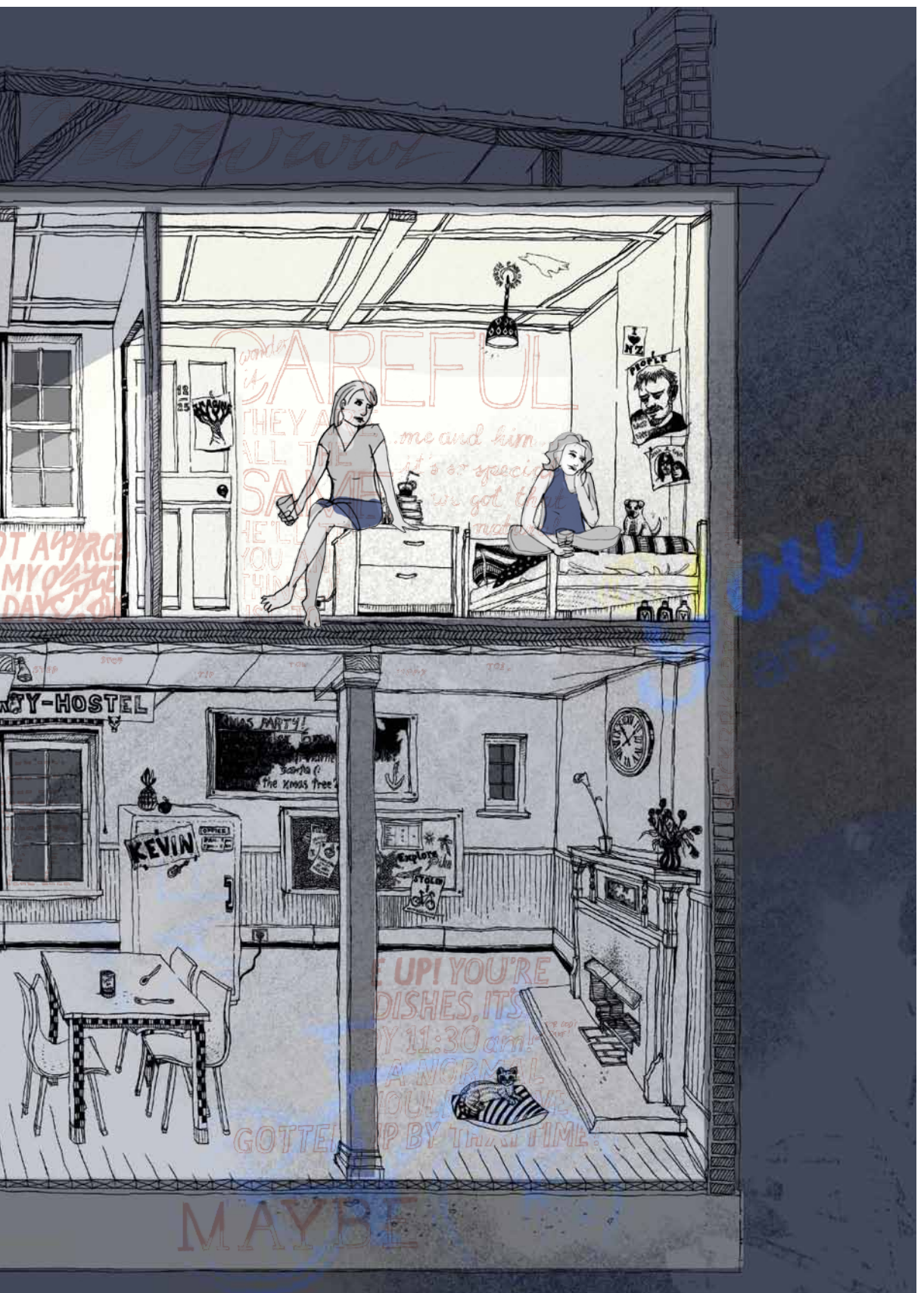
81

82

83

79 Grieben, Theresa.
Hostel interior by night I.
Graphic novel p. 56–57.
2012. Pencil & Digital
Colouring.
240 mm x 330 mm.

80 Grieben, Theresa.
Hostel interior by night II.
Graphic novel p. 58–59.
2012. Pencil & Digital
Colouring.
240 mm x 330 mm.

81 Grieben, Theresa.
Hostel shadows I.
Experiment.
2012. Pencil, Copier &
digital colouring.
240 mm x 330 mm.

82 Grieben, Theresa.
Hostel shadows II.
Experiment.
2012. Pencil, Copier &
digital colouring.
240 mm x 330 mm.

84

3.6 the
ARCHITECTURAL
exterior and interior
— a narrative device

The sequence *Carlie's Dilemma* furthermore plays with the notion of the exterior and the interior as a means to convey narrative. It uses the visual device of architectural elevations to show the outside of the building during the onset of the story, which eventually opens up to disclose its "guts", that is to say the rooms and its inhabitants, for the narrative climax (Figures 79–80, p. 84–87). The architectural structure of the hostel makes the rooms seem like comic panels while the walls might function as the gutter. The viewer is free to wander from room to room (or panel to panel) and linger as long as he or she pleases.

The colour mood of the hostel interior is not unlike *In the Night Kitchen* by illustrator Maurice Sendak (Figure 84), where the choice of the predominant blue does contribute to the surreal appeal of the setting. It feels like floating through a dream in a place, which is at once strange and familiar.

Here again the reference to Freud's *Uncanny* becomes apparent: Who hasn't had the impression when getting up in the middle of the night, that the house, so banal and reassuringly familiar during daytime, can seem to be quite the opposite at night? Shadows are lurking in the corners; a penetrating silence and a faint sense of the daily activity are oddly suspended in the air. In a series of accompanying experiments I have tried to capture this phenomenon by overlaying the shapes of the hostel inhabitants with colours and inverting them (Figures 81–83).

83   Grieben, Theresa.
Hostel shadows III.
Experiment.
2012. Pencil & Copier.
240 mm x 330 mm.

84   Sendak, Maurice.
In the Night Kitchen.
New York: Harper Collins.
Page unknown. Print.

3.7 BUILDING as character

Inside the hostel rooms bits of transparent dialogue display the traces of every day conversations, their echoes linger in the air or are etched into the walls, faintly present but impossible to grasp. The building seems to breathe, the life within it transpires through its walls (Figures 79–80, p. 84–87). In an interview with Debbie Millman, comic book artist Chris Ware notes:

> "It sounds crazy but if you start thinking about a building it can almost seem like a living organism through time" (Ware, *Design Matters*).

He concludes that if a building itself is like an organism, it becomes a character just like its inhabitants; in fact it is the major character of his latest publication *Building Stories*. One exemplary panel shows a full elevation of a Chicago brownstone house, which is meditating on the 98 years of its existence by counting up the number of events that have occurred during its life span (Figure 87). The brownstone house concludes that it is lucky to still be alive because it hasn't yet given way to the inevitable uniformity of gentrification (Ware, *Design Matters*).

In the case of my student hostel, gentrification is not a problem anymore. In fact, it had already been renovated when I moved in. The polished look of its new design is comfortable but I assume that the building has lost most of its character.

Traces of its former interior are modestly retained by the old-fashioned mantelpiece in the kitchen and the uncertain darkness of the attic. The fixtures and patterned wallpaper in the bathroom, and the old fashioned lamp above the staircase do not actually depict the real interior but rather show what I imagined them to be before the house was redesigned (Figures 85–86). Here I am drawing inspiration from photographs I found in *The New Zealand Villa: Past and Present* by architectural historian Di Stewart. I wanted the reader to relate to the hostel as a building that has an interesting past rather than just being a backdrop to my story.

85–86 Stewart, Di. *The New Zealand Villa: Past and Present.* Auckland, London: Penguin Books, 2002. 70, 72. Print.
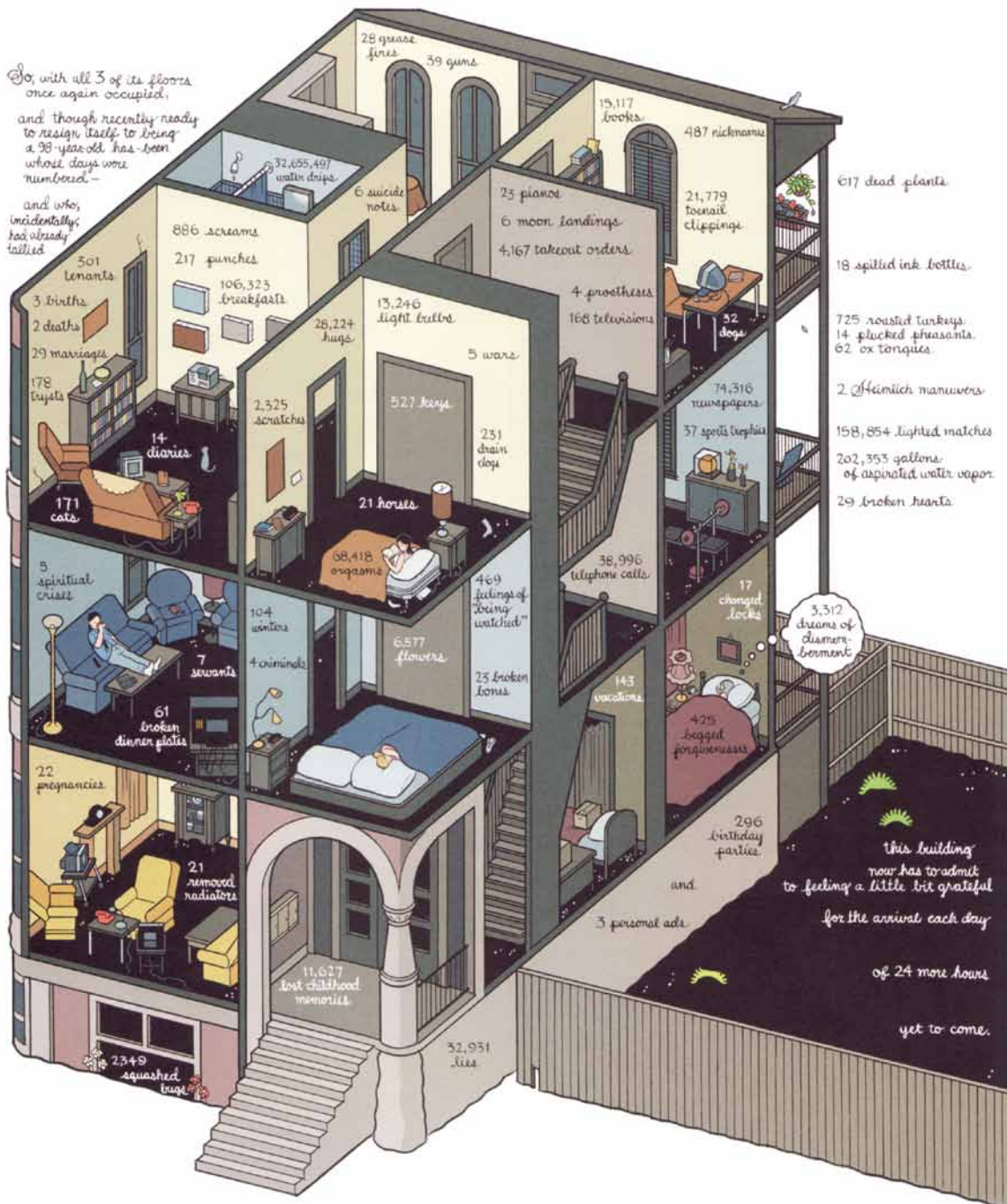
87 Ware, Chris.
September 23rd, 2000.
In *Building Stories.*
New York: Pantheon
Books, 2012. 7. Print.
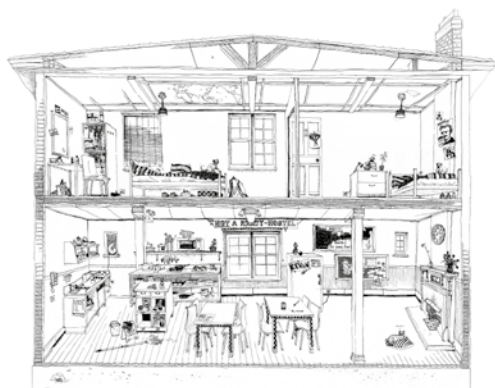
88
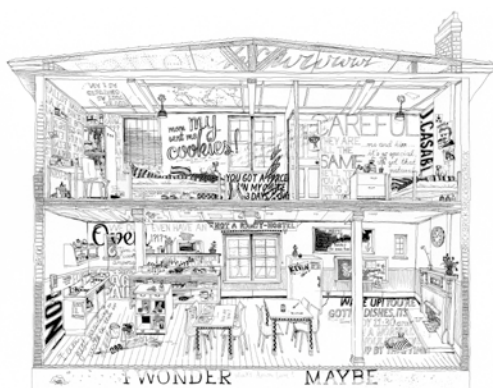
89

Last Sunday, they had a beauty day. Doing their fingernails and hair   WHAT A NIGHTMARE

ONE OF THE GIRLS STUDIES 'BEAUTY' CAN YOU ACTUALLY STUDY THAT?
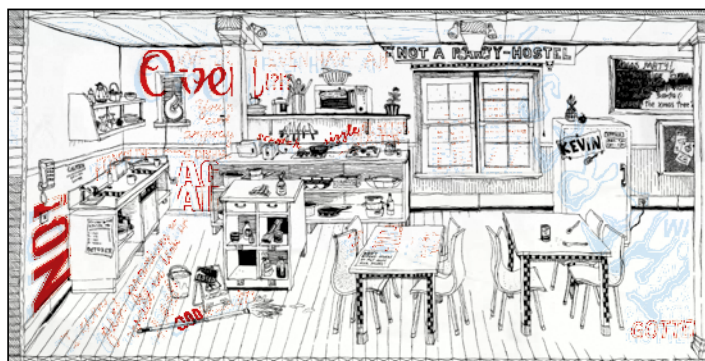
No wonder they're like that...   WHEN I COOK THEY SAY IT WILL MAKE ME FAT

BUT IT JUST WON'T

90

88 Grieben, Theresa.
Hostel interior.
Preliminary drawing.
2012. Pencil.
547 mm x 440 mm.

89 Grieben, Theresa.
Hostel interior & sounds.
Preliminary drawing.
2012. Pencil.
547 mm x 440 mm.

90 Grieben, Theresa.
Beauty girls.
Layout experiment.
2012. Pencil & Digital
Colouring.
240 mm x 330 mm.

3.8
the EVERYDAY
— a word-image constellation

In *The Book of Hours and Constellations* poet Eugen Gomringer uses the term *constellation* to describe a reading process, which requires the reader to actively engage in order to bring the various elements of a text together.

In an attempt to capture the mark I left on the hostel I follow Chris Ware's example by annotating the various daily occupations I observed in the 10 months of my stay (Figure 91). I thereby add an additional layer to the narrative: the reader must assemble the overall meaning from the juxtaposition and layering of words and images.

In a series of layout experiments I push this concept further (Figures 88–90). I create an immersive reading experience that is similar to the fragmented, layered nature of real life. The composition of the image is thus not so much a linear series of panels but rather a *constellation*, where the text can be read in any order. Moreover, the daily occupations speak of reality in an immediate way: life is a constant succession of repetitive habits, no matter where you go in the world.
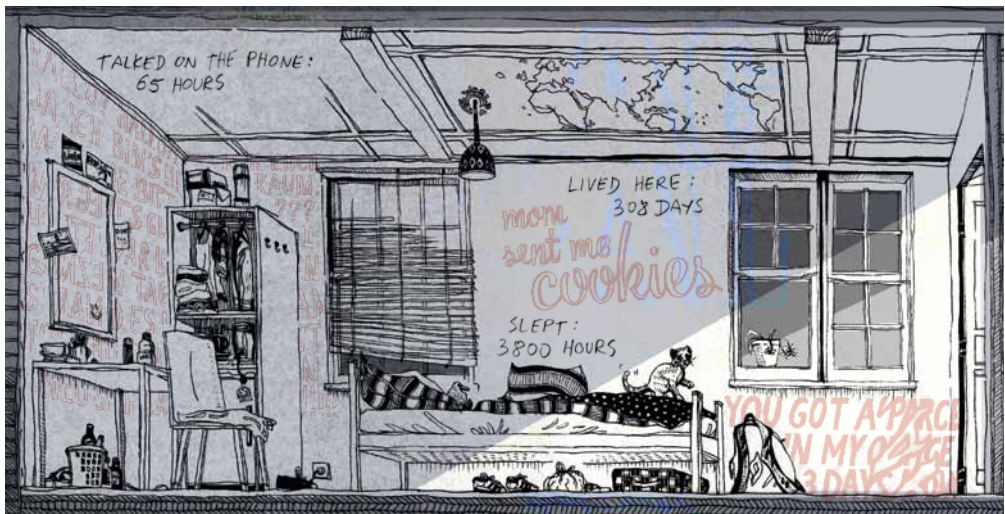
91

91   Grieben, Theresa.
     My hostel room by night (excerpt).
     Graphic novel p. 58.
     2012. Pencil & Digital
     Colouring.
     150 mm x 70 mm.

3.9
The reader as urban FLÂNEUR

In *The Arcades Project* philosopher Walter Benjamin (by referring to Charles Baudelaire's poetry) introduced the term of the *flâneur*, a symbolic urban wanderer who observes the diversity of the cityscape by strolling the streets and arcades (Benjamin 416). The reader of my book is invited to become a *flâneur*. Passing by the hostel one initially stops to catch the bits of dialogue emerging from the building (see the sequence *Carlie's Dilemma*; Figures 71–74, p. 78–79), only to be invited to examine the hidden wealth of human life after opening up the final interior elevations (Figures 79–80, p. 84–87).

The nightly atmosphere adds to this intimate contemplation: It is only at night that one might walk past a house and see a room dimly lit, and inevitably turn the head to get a glimpse of what might be going on behind the curtains. Chris Ware suggests:

"Who hasn't tried when passing by a building, at night to peer past half-closed shades and blinds, hoping to catch a glimpse into the private lives of its inhabitants. Anything... the briefest blossom of a movement, maybe a head bobbing up...seems somehow more revealing than any generous greeting or calculated cordiality. Even the disappointing diffusion of a sheer curtain can suggest the most colourful bouquet of unspeakable secrets" (Ware 52).

Carlie returned to America at the end of the first semester. The chapter ends with a full page view of her room, which is empty except for her silhouette (Figure 92–93, p. 95–96). The image reflects the transient nature of living in a hostel by showing the imprint Carlie has left on the place, which might vanish with the passage of time, whereas the imprint in the memory lasts. Precedent experiments have led me to this concept (Figure 93): I investigated distortion as a means to communicate the stages of my friendship with Alejandro, from the first vague impression to a precise picture of his character. The clear imprint in my memory eventually fades again when he returned to his home country.

The overall colour mood has changed, too: My perception of Carlie's room has now deteriorated to a cold grey blue in the light of her absence. The room appears the same in its structure but doesn't feel right anymore, because the source of its life has gone. It has lost the meaning I had attached to it.
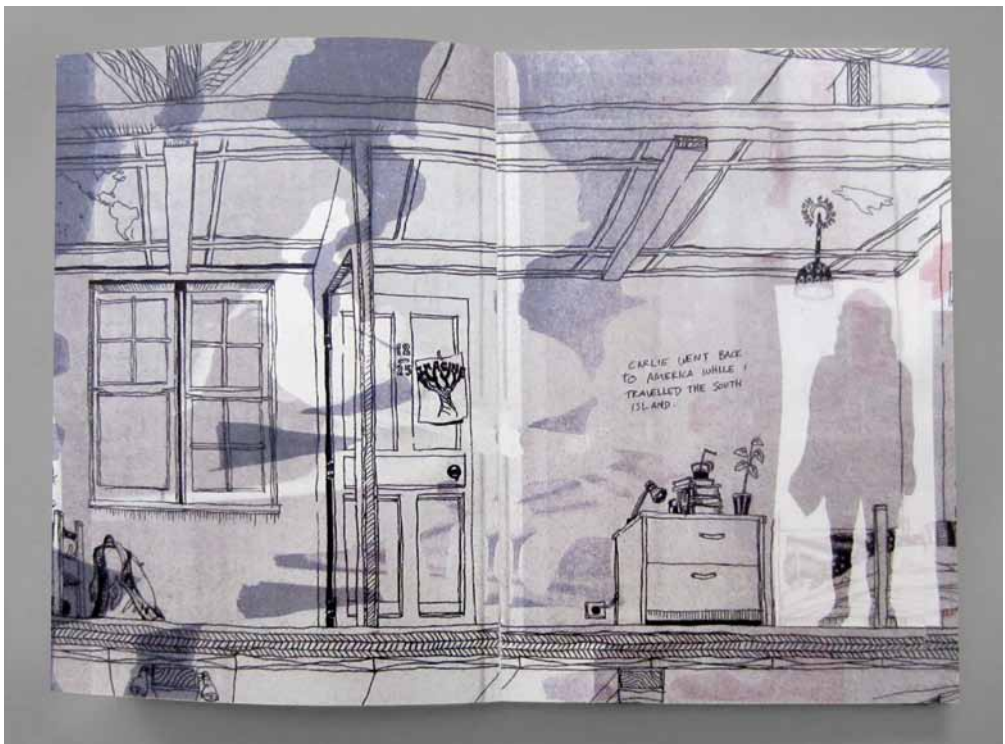
92

93

92 Grieben, Theresa.
    Carlie is gone.
    Graphic novel p. 60–61.
    2013. Photograph by author.

93 Grieben, Theresa.
    Getting to know Alejandro.
    Experiment.
    2012. Pencil & digital collage.
    600 mm x 240 mm.

SHE LEFT A
MESSAGE UNDER THE
DOOR OF MY ROOM.

imagine
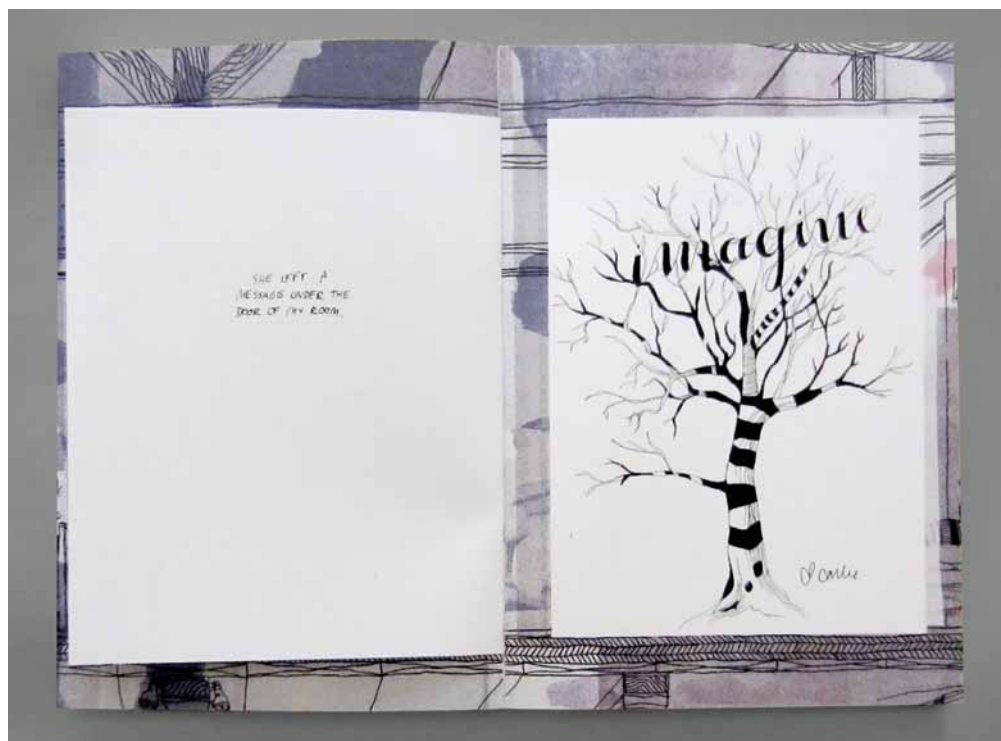
♡ carlie

94 Grieben, Theresa.
Carlie is gone.
Graphic novel p. 60–61
including hidden drawing.
2013. Photograph by author.

FREEDOM

Travelling is the major topic of this research project; whereas the preceding sections dealt with my sense of discovery and transition in New Zealand, the current section focuses mainly on methods to visualize the trips I took around the country and the feeling of freedom I gained from it. Firstly, I will illuminate how keeping a visual diary has helped me to map my travel experiences. Secondly, I will explain why epistolary novels are suited for travel narratives and how this approach has contributed to my research.

95 Grieben, Theresa.
My life in Auckland.
Graphic novel p. 65.
2013. Pencil & Collage.
240 mm x 165 mm.

I ALSO WELCOMED MY FIRST *Visitors:*
Mama & Konni

MAMA →

MY SISTER KONNI →
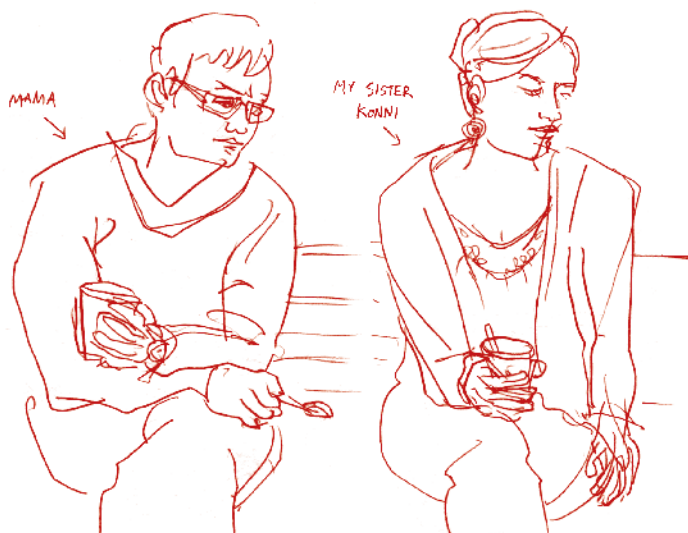
I HAD PROMISED THEM A WONDERFUL BEACH VACATION, A GET AWAY FROM THE GERMAN WINTER... BUT AFTER MONTHS AND MONTHS OF SUNSHINE... IT STARTED TO RAIN THE EXACT DAY THEY ARRIVED.

WE WENT ON A TRIP... THE RAIN FOLLOWED IN OUR WAKE.

ARMAGEDDON!
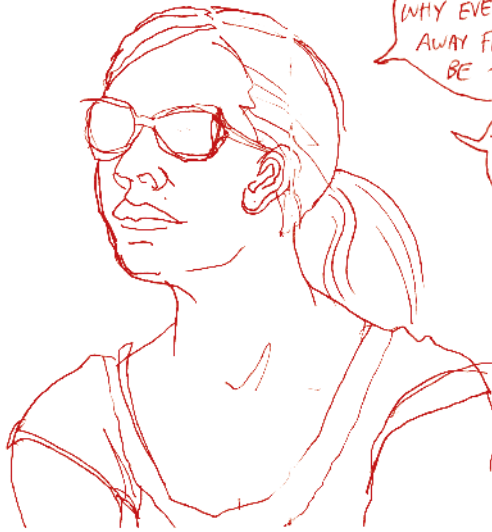
96 Grieben, Theresa.
    My first visitors I.
    Graphic novel p. 84–85.
    2013. Pencil & digital colouring.
    240 mm x 330 mm.
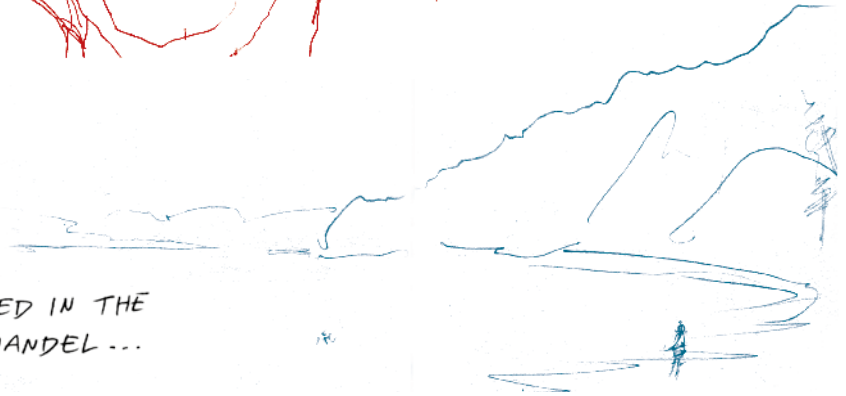
IT FINALLY STOPPED
RAINING IN TAUPO, WHERE I WANTED
TO DO THE TONGARIRO CROSSING ...

RUAPEHU

TONGARIRO
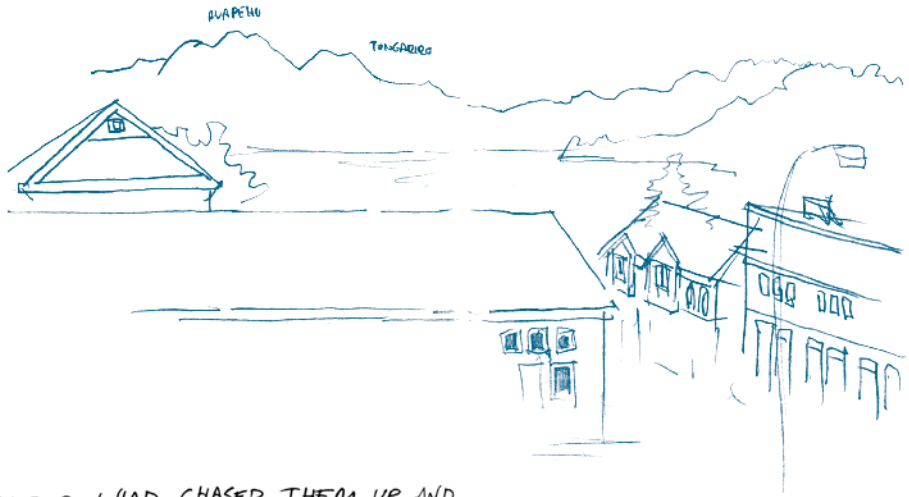
... BUT AFTER I HAD CHASED THEM UP AND
DOWN RANGITOTO IN RECORD-BREAKING
40 MINUTES (ONLY BECAUSE I WAS
AFRAID TO MISS THE LAST FERRY BACK!)
KONNI OUTRIGHTLY REFUSED TO EVER
SET FOOT ON A VOLCANO AGAIN.

NEVER AGAIN
WILL I CLIMB A
VOLCANO !!!

MUTTER

SO WE WENT TO WAIHEKE ISLAND
INSTEAD, STILL HOPING FOR SOME
BLISSFUL DAYS AT THE BEACH.

THAT WAS EPIC FAIL !!

WE COULD ONLY FIND A HOSTELROOM FOR 2 PEOPLE SO I SNEAKED MY MOM IN AND SLEPT ON THE FLOOR, BUT WE GOT CAUGHT AND KICKED OUT THE NEXT MORNING...
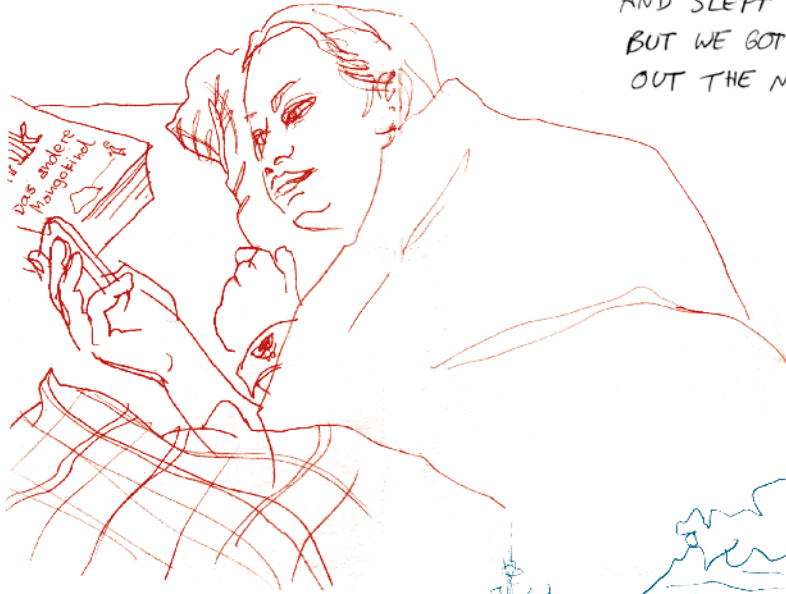
WE STILL HAD A FANTASTIC DAY AT THE BEACH AND EVEN SAW ORCAS ON THE FERRY RIDE BACK.
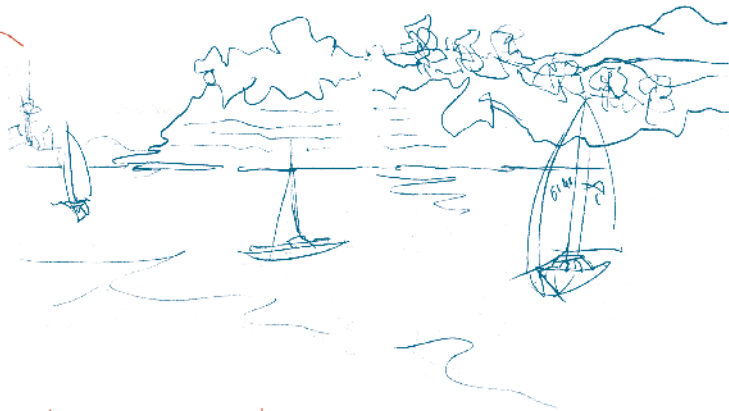
AFTER 2 WEEKS THEY LEFT... IT HAD BEEN SO NICE TO HAVE MY FAMILY AROUND...

... SUDDENLY I WAS ALONE AGAIN.

97 Grieben, Theresa.
My first visitors II.
Graphic novel p. 86–87.
2013. Pencil & digital colouring.
240 mm x 330 mm.

4.1 VISUAL DIARY
— a passport to the "terra incognita"

Drawing is akin to telling a story: the Greek word *grapho* means to write as well as to draw. By drawing the unknown environments of my journeys I settle into them, a notion that anthropologist Michael Taussig calls a
"dialogue with one's surroundings" (Taussig, 30).
In *I Swear I Saw This* he defends the field-worker's notebook as a tool to familiarize oneself with the strangeness of the world:
"You are making your own passport to the terra incognita" (Taussig, 30).
By keeping a visual diary I have endeavoured to create my own portrait of the *terra incognita* of New Zealand; I used it like a photographer would use a camera to take snapshots of everyday curiosities, travelling environments and people I met on the road.

Referring to her video-installation *Bordering on Fiction* (a documentary about the transition from summer to winter across Germany, Poland, and Russia), Belgian artist Chantal Akerman announces:
"I would like to make a grand journey. I'd like to shoot everything. Everything that moves me. Faces, streets, cars going by and buses, train stations and plains, rivers and oceans, streams and brooks, trees and forests. Fields and factories and yet more faces. Food, interiors, doors, windows, meals being prepared" (Halbreich and Jenkins, 17–18).
Like Akerman I am designing a diaristic map that incorporates my travel surroundings.

Some of the diary drawings have found their way into my graphic novel, too. The sequence *My first visitors* combines imagery, dialogue and narration into a brief visual account of the two weeks I spent with my mother and sister when they visited me in New Zealand (Figures 96–97, p. 98–101). Another mini project was to collate my sketchbook drawings into visual categories based on recurring interior and exterior motifs. Amongst these categories are cafés & bars, kitchens, chairs, windows, beds, wallpapers, vehicles, exteriors & nature (Figures 98–130, p. 103–109). By accumulating these snapshots the visual diary guards the memory of a journey in an ever-changing life. It is also a way to remember what it was like to be me; a medium to keep in touch with my former self. In *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*, author Joan Didion concludes that
"It's a good idea, to keep in touch, and I suppose that keeping in touch is what notebooks are all about" (Didion 119–120).

The key word "touch" also relates to the tactile and multi-media nature of notebooks. Drawing from life is very different to drawing from one's imagination – one almost touches the contours of the model while drawing. Notebooks might contain fleeting impressions in time, inner thoughts as well as observational drawings, annotations that display specific dates, the indexical image of thumbprints, food smears, and spilled tea. Notebooks lodge a range of experiences on the surface of the pages and thereby retrace the nature of life.

98
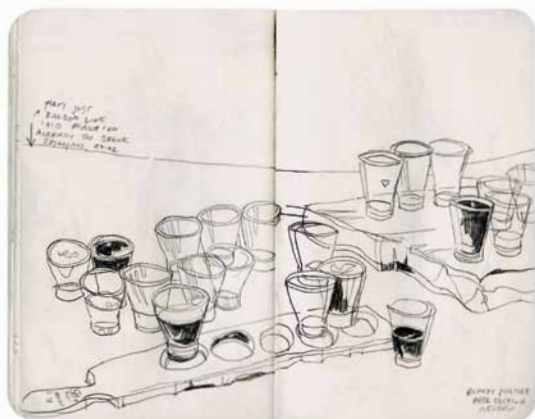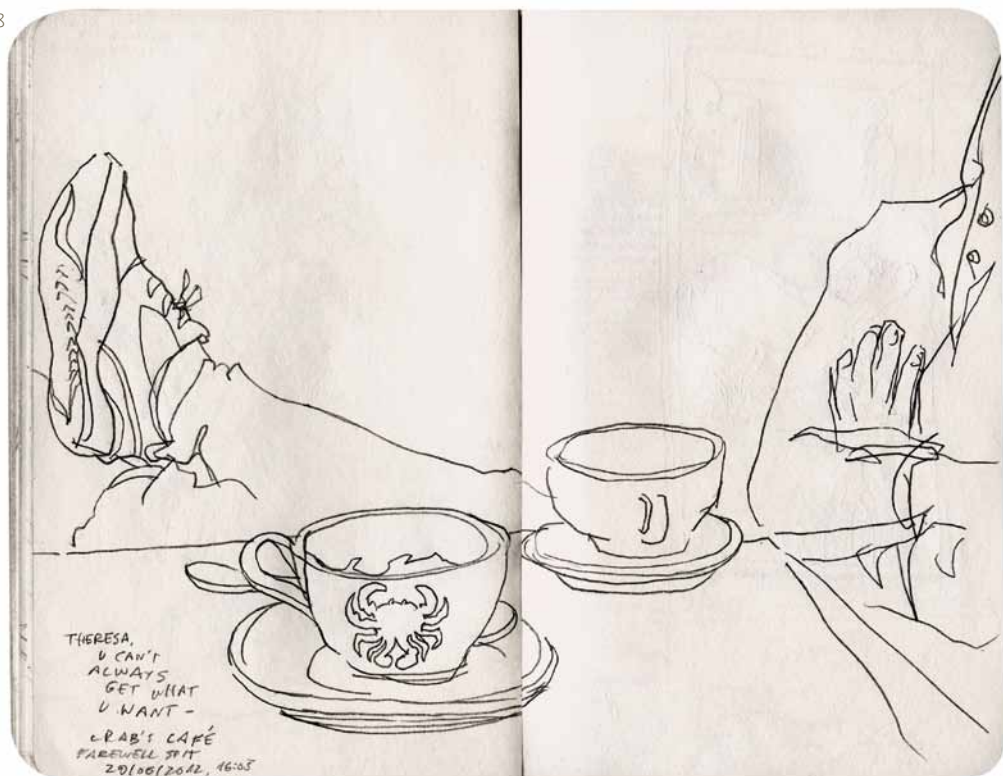
99–101
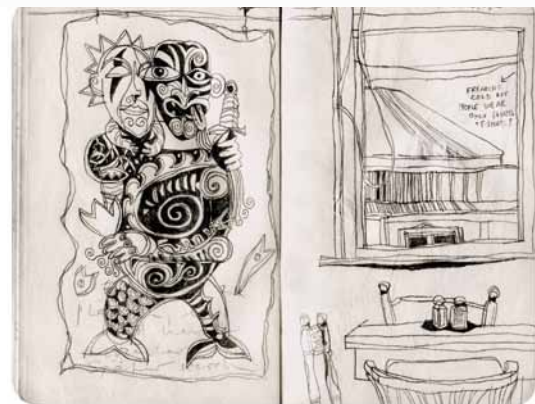
98–101 Grieben, Theresa.
Category 1: cafés & bars.
Visual Diary 2012–2013.
Pencil. 180 mm x 140 mm.

THE KUIA &
THE SPIDER (1981)
10/10/2012, 01:22

103–105
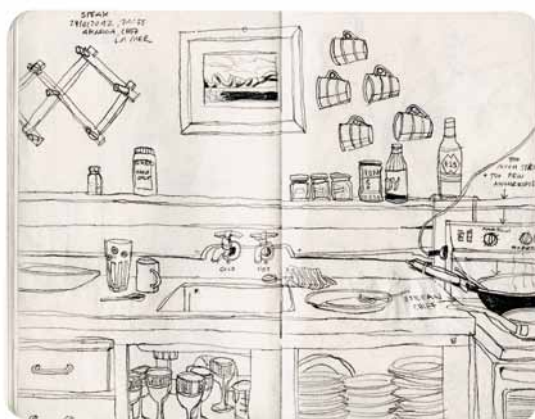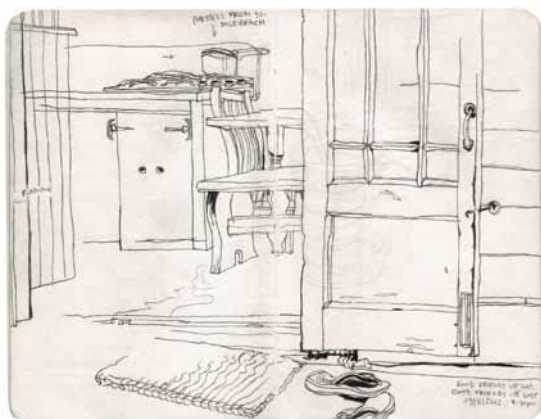
102–105 Grieben, Theresa.
Category 2: kitchens.
Visual Diary 2012–2013.
Pencil. 180 mm x 140 mm.
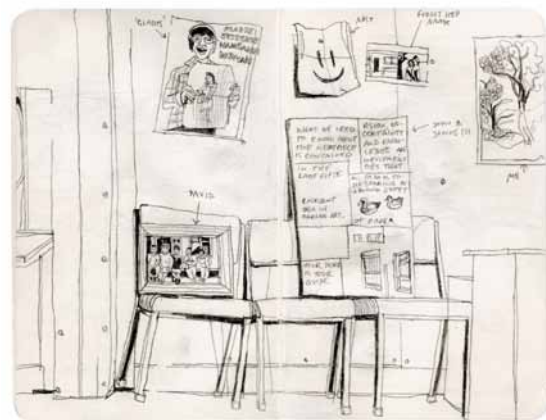
106–109

106–109 Grieben, Theresa.
Category 3: chairs.
Visual Diary 2012–2013.
Pencil. 180 mm x 140 mm.

110–112
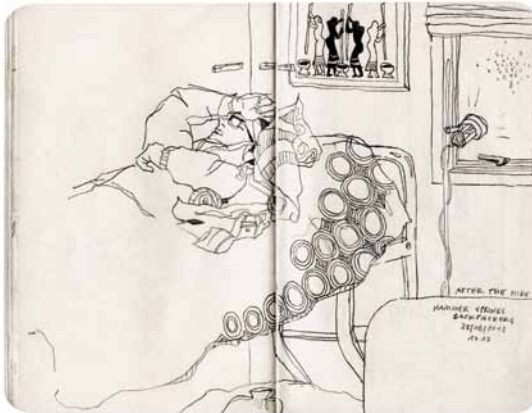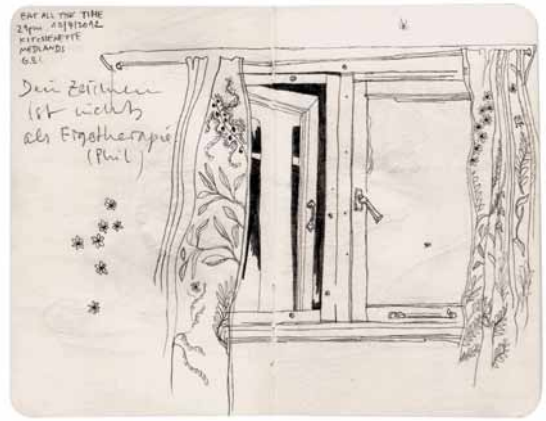
113–115

110–112 Grieben, Theresa.
Category 4: windows.
Visual Diary 2012–2013.
Pencil. 180 mm x 140 mm.

113–115 Grieben, Theresa.
Category 5: beds.
Visual Diary 2012–2013.
Pencil. 180 mm x 140 mm.
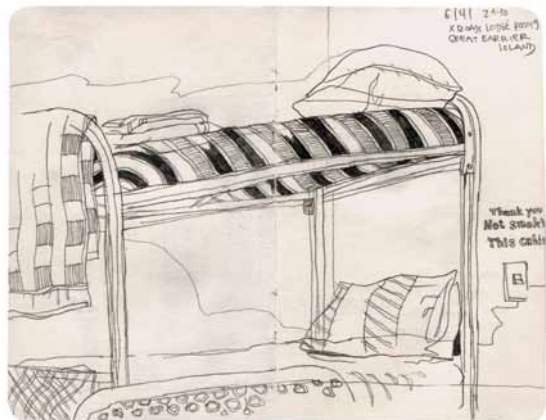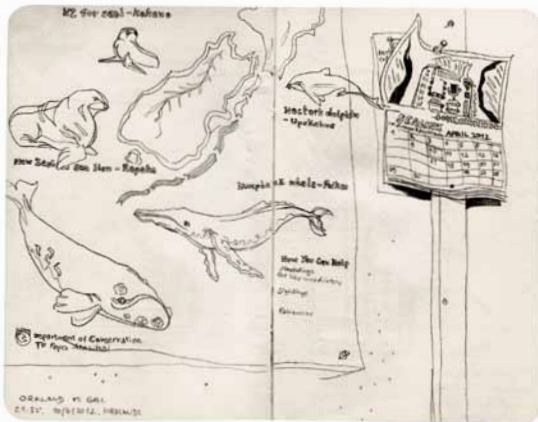
117–119

116–119 Grieben, Theresa.
Category 6: wallpapers & patterns.
Visual Diary 2012–2013.
Pencil. 180 mm x 140 mm.

120–125 Grieben, Theresa.
Category 7: vehicles.
Visual Diary 2012–2013.
Pencil. 180 mm x 140 mm.

126–130 Grieben, Theresa.
Category 8: country & exterior.
Visual Diary 2012–2013.
Pencil. 180 mm x 140 mm.

NATALIE
AND
HER
WETSUIT

A DAY AT
PIHABEACH
14/9/2012
14:52

BETTER THAN
NOTHING
CANNIBAL BAY
STEELING BBO

AT THE BUS STOP...
THE FEELING GOT SORER
14/9/2012 14:4
14/9/2012 GB/

NO WHALES
SO FAR
25/09/2012
12:13

GRAYFISH

KAIKOURA
SEAFOOD BBQ

Ask
about
our

Seafood
Platters
Best

Potato
Wedges

MORNING
QUEEN CHARLOTTE
TRACK
29/09/2012
12:15

IT'S
ACTUALLY
DEAD

4.2 EPISTOLARY NOVEL
—documenting a journey

An epistolary novel describes a novel written as a series of letters and other documents. By imitating real life and offering various viewpoints, the epistolary novel can attribute a higher degree of credibility to the narrative. It allows the reader to project him or herself into each character's position, which builds intimacy. Literary theorist Ruth Perry claims that the writing in such epistolary novels often follows a stream of consciousness: instead of logically structuring their thoughts the characters

"talk to themselves, reflect, think out loud – on paper" (Perry 128).

In that way, the epistolary approach is closer to the fragmented, unsorted mechanisms of actual thinking. Philosopher György Lukács asserts that epistolary novels generally deal with the adventures of the self: a soul that seeks challenges in order to find self-approval and eventually itself (Lukács 89).

In a fusion of perspectives, which refers to philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer's concept of *Horizontverschmelzung* ("fusion of horizons", Gadamer 305), I have looked at a four-way conversation between my travelling companions and myself. The discussion takes place on Facebook and is concerned with

finding a way out of our car infringement problem. The epistolary novel approach used in this instance fosters the reader's participation in the story. In *States of Sympathy* philosopher Elizabeth Barnes suggests:

"One's apprehension of another's experience is understood to be achieved through the mediating influence of one's own emotions… [the reader] must imagine how the other feels; this can only be accomplished by projecting onto the other person what would be one's own feelings in that particular situation" (Barnes 5).

Pulling the reader into the story through this approach I have incorporated a facsimile envelope from the New Zealand police. Like me the reader can pull out the official document and thus take part in my experience (Figures 132–133).

Even though the epistolary approach is not evident in every chapter of my graphic novel, it has informed my decision making throughout the course of this research project. I have collated listings such as *List of new words* (Figure 133), *List of things forgotten, Auckland vs. Berlin* (Figures 134–135, p. 114). I have also collected postcards from my family and friends overseas. (Figures 136–141, p. 114).

133 LIST OF NEW WORDS

CUTSY	— SÜSSLICH
STAG NIGHT	— JUNGGESELLENABSCHIED
GIBBERISCH	— KAUDERWELSCH
RANT	— WORTSCHWALL
OP-SHOP	— ZWEITE-HAND-LADEN
YOU CALL THE SHOTS	— DU HAST DAS SAGEN
SNEAKY	— HEIMLICH
NAUGHTY	— UNARTIG
THE NAKI	— TARANAKI
PUG DOG	— MOPS
LOLLIE	— ANY KIND OF CANDY
TO PASH	— RUMKNUTSCHEN
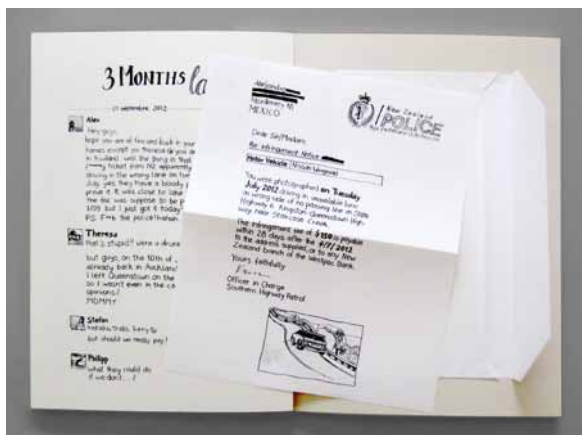
ROSTER	— PUTZPLAN
EX-PAT	— AUSWANDERER
DINGHY	— SCHLAUCHBOOT
TRUNDLER	— SHOPPING CART
CHILLY BIN	— ZUM BIER KALTSTELLEN
TO CRINGE	— ERSCHAUDERN
BUGGER OFF	— VERPISSEN
ARVO	— AFTERNOON
BUSTED	— AM ARSCH, ERWISCHT
HILLBILLY	— HINTERWÄLDLER
KUMARA	— SWEET POTATOE
POHUTUKAWA	— NZ X-MAS TREE
TO BE STOKED	— AUS DEM HÄUSCHEN
WETA	— NZ GIANT CRICKET
GLEN	— SMALL VALLEY
ZINE	— STREET ART PUBLICATION
PUKEKO	— NZ SWAMPHEN
CHUR	— HI, SWEET AS, CHEERS
WINNER	— TOTAL LOSER
SINGELISH	— NOT QUITE SINGLE
BACHING	— USING A BACH
GRANNY FLAT	— HÄUSCHEN IM GARTEN
FANTAIL	— NZ BIRD
CHOICE	— TOLL
BOGAN	— PROLL
MULLET	— VOKUHILA
KAI MOANA	— SEAFOOD
WHITEBAIT	— TINY YUMMY FISH
BUZZY	— INTERESTING
AWNING	— MARKISE
HARDCASE	— WITTY PERSON
MR. 4-SQUARE	— MASCOT OF SUPERMARKETS

LIST OF THINGS FORGOTTEN:

- WHAT EURO COINS LOOK LIKE
- MY OWN GERMAN MOBILE PHONE NUMBER
- HOW IT FEELS TO WEAR WINTERCLOTHES
- HOW TO ACT IN RIGHT-SIDED TRAFFIC

BERLIN VS. AUCKLAND

- INHABITANTS: 3,54 MILLION VS. 1,46 MILLION
- AREA: 891 KM² VS. 560 KM²
  - 0 VOLCANOES VS. 50 VOLCANOES
- CARS PER CAPITA: 289/1000 VS. 578/1000
- MY MONTHLY LIVING COST: 400€ (600$) VS 1000$ (600€)
- MILK: 0,45€ (0.7$) VS. 2$ (1.30€) per litre
- DÖNER KEBAB VS. FISH & CHIPS
- APARTMENTS VS. BUNGALOWS
- GRUMPY BUSDRIVER VS NICE BUSDRIVER

134 Grieben, Theresa.
List of things forgotten.
2013. Pencil.
90 mm x 40 mm.

135 Grieben, Theresa.
Berlin vs. Auckland.
2013. Pencil.
90 mm x 70 mm.

136–141 *Postcards from friends.*
Indonesia, USA, Fiji,
Ghana, Germany, Spain.
2012–2013.
Photograph by author.

5.
KNOWLEDGE

Travelling can foster a greater degree of insight, and can also help to find one's place in the world. Drawing from a series of personal conversations with my colleague Dietlind, a German expatriate living in New Zealand for 20 years, I have created a chapter that considers the reasons that led her to leave Germany. I am questioning whether she is content to stay in New Zealand, and indirectly, whether this would be an option for me too?

On coming to New Zealand Dietlind experienced a cultural shift, but this did not change her intrinsically. Even though she has travelled through time and space, in her heart she will always be German. This is manifested in a series of hand puppets she has created, which function as her *alter egos* (Figure 142–146, p. 114–120). She uses them as a medium to express observations about the people around her, but also as a means to deal with her German identity. In a way I am very similar to Dietlind: just like her I have been raised with a German sensibility, like her I am travelling in

order to find a place where I belong, and like her I am making artwork in order to deal with my dislocation. Nevertheless there is a subtlety at play here: we are both German, but not quite the same, since she was born in West Germany and I was born in East Germany. Whereas she has chosen to leave her country of birth for good, I can never return to mine, not because I left it, but because it does not exist anymore. In that way I will always be a traveller (for further discussion see section 6.3 "Leaving and belonging").

In the section "Indirect Illustration" I will demonstrate how indirect illustration can be used to communicate a sense of cultural displacement; following this I will focus on the concept of puppet theatre as a means to convey narrative and to teach knowledge.

AS THE MONTHS WENT BY I IMMERSED MYSELF MORE &
MORE IN THE KIWI CULTURE, SLOWLY FORGETTING WHAT
IT'S LIKE TO LIVE IN GERMANY. WHAT IF I STAYED FOR GOOD?
I MET OTHER EXPATRIATES...

Dietlind

my colleague at Uni

"I'M FROM SOUTH GERMANY BUT
I'VE BEEN LIVING IN NEW ZEALAND
   FOR 20 YEARS.
I PREFER TO
SPEAK ENGLISH,
EVEN BETWEEN
  THE TWO
  OF US..
WHEN I VISIT
GERMANY
IT TAKES
ME.
  QUITE A
WHILE
TO GET
BACK INTO
  THE
  LANGUAGE."

"I WORK AS AN ARTIST & GRAPHIC DESIGNER.
MY LATEST PROJECT IS A SERIES OF HANDPUPPETS I CALL
dede puppets. THEY ARE ARE COLLATED FROM
OLD SNIPPETS OF "ZEIT"-MAGAZINES
THAT I KEEP RECEIVING FROM GERMANY. THEIR
CHARACTERS ARE BASED ON MY GENERAL OBSERVATIONS
OF PEOPLE AROUND ME.
IT'S FUNNY THAT, NO MATTER WHERE
YOU ARE IN THE WORLD, YOU BASICALLY
ALWAYS MEET THE SAME TYPE OF
PEOPLE."

DIETLIND 20/04/2013 19:33
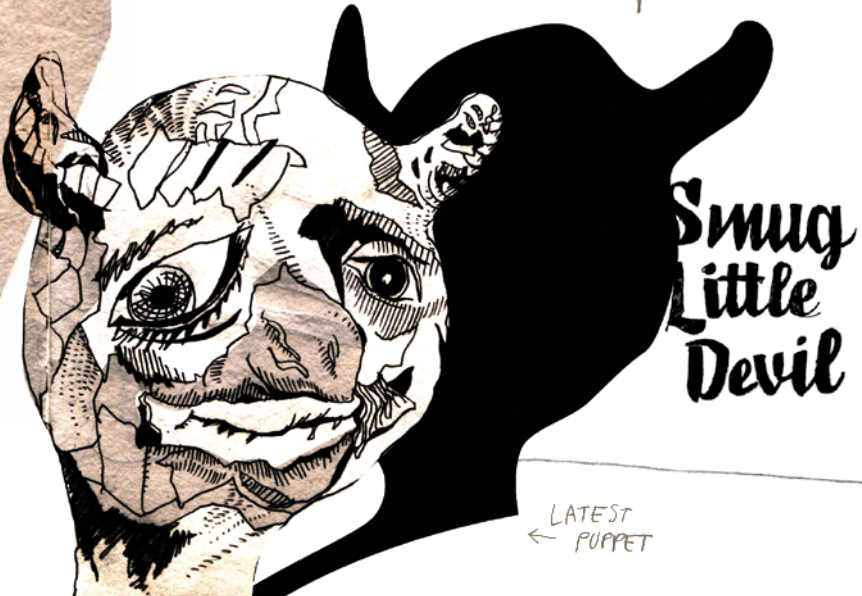
Hello.

Smug
Little
Devil

← LATEST
PUPPET

5.1
INDIRECT ILLUSTRATION
— conveying cultural displacement

Dietlind's portrait (Figure 142, p. 114–115) lies horizontally on the page as an exploration of what Shaun Tan calls *"indirect illustration"*, the artist's struggle to find a metaphorical representation for a specific idea rather than a literal depiction (Tan 5). I have decided to use this view of Dietlind as a visual metaphor for the cultural shift she has experienced in transplanting her life. Like any other immigrant, she is *"not quite one thing or another"* (Tan 35). Dietlind's monologue also employs metaphor, as it is not Dietlind that speaks, but a series of hand puppets she has created (Figure 143). Even though the speech bubbles are attached to the puppets, the reader knows that it is Dietlind's voice.

I have again employed colour as a visual indicator in this chapter. Dietlind's text is set in a brown hue, since I subjectively associate this colour with her personality (for further discussion see section 3.1 "Colour association with characters").

Her portrait, too, displays a reddish brown, which fills her clothing and the shadows in her face. Her latest puppet, *Smug Little Devil* has the same hue, while his shadow is as black as her hair. Her portrait and the puppet overlap as well, but instead of obscuring each other they are blending into one another. All these devices work together to convey the notion of the puppet as an extension of herself.

143   Grieben, Theresa.
Foxy Lady, l'Artiste & Cash Cow.
Graphic novel p. 94–95.
2013. Pencil & digital colouring.
240 mm x 330 mm.
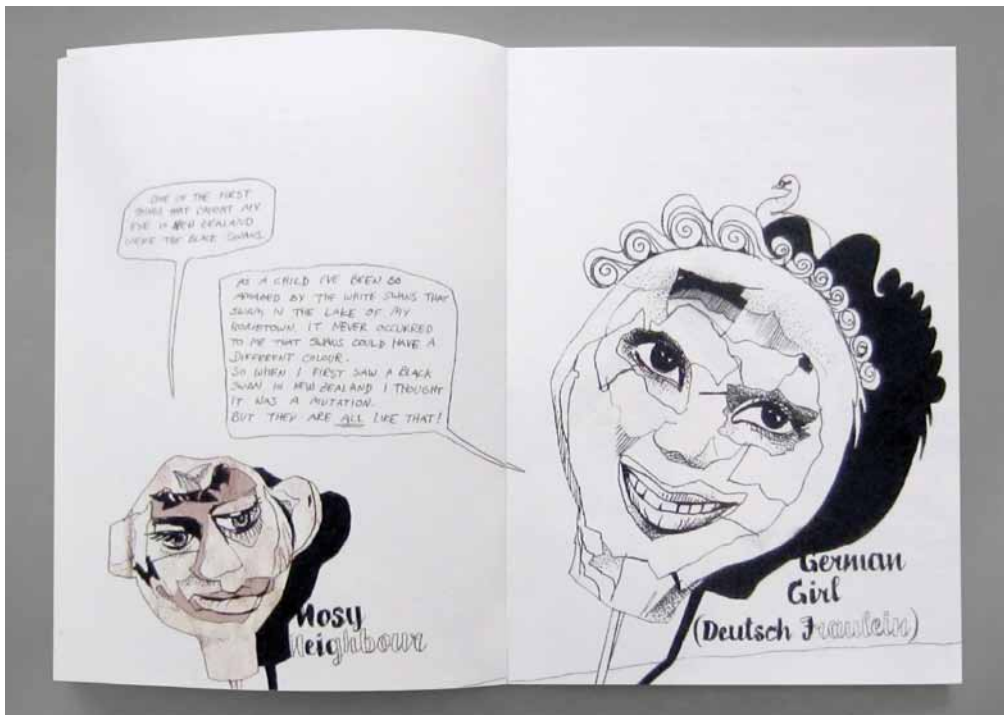
144
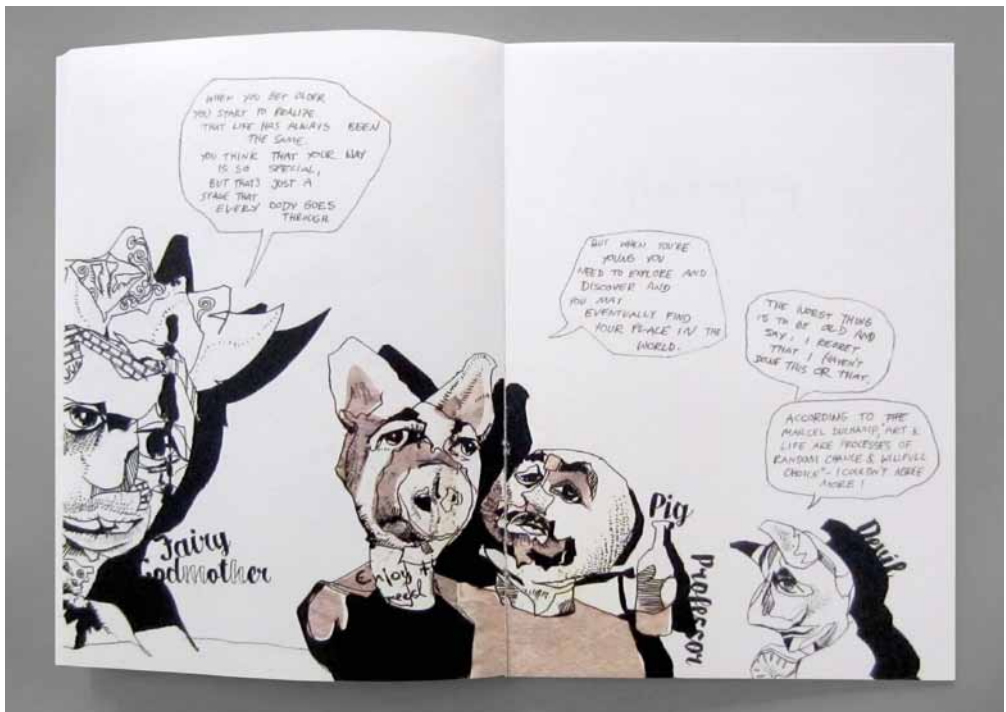
145

144 Grieben, Theresa.
     Nosy Neighbour & German Girl.
     Graphic novel p. 96–97.
     2013. Photograph by author.

145 Grieben, Theresa.
     *Fairy Godmother, Pig,
     Professor & Devil.*
     Graphic novel p. 98–99.
     2013. Photograph by author.

PUPPET THEATRE 5.2
as narrative tool

I have used the page as a theatrical stage, in which Dietlind functions as subject, social commentator, narrator, and puppet creator at once. In *Strip Teasers* by Roger Sabin, cartoonist Chris Ware discusses the proximity of comics to theatre:

"By synthesizing the visual mechanics of written language with the effects of seeing, a comic strip 'fools' you into the illusion of 'theatre' by letting you think you're 'watching' an event transpire, when you're actually reading it" (Sabin 41).

Like traditional puppet theatre Dietlind uses stereotyped characters as narrative tools. These characters are based on real-life observations of the people around her. In that way her approach is similar to my own character development: like Dietlind I am studying the people in my environment. Whereas she is making puppets, I translate my observations into illustrations. My character design employs a certain stereotyping, too, which is manifested in the depiction of the hostel manager, the happy-go-lucky hostel friends (see section 3.1 "Colour association with characters"), the German tourist, and the Maori performer from K'Road (see section 2.2 "Mental snapshots – the illustrator as *supertourist*").

In *Graphic Storytelling & Visual Narrative* cartoonist Will Eisner validates that method:

"Comic book art deals with recognizable reproductions of human conduct. Its drawings are a mirror reflection, and depend on the reader's stored memory of experience to visualize an idea or process quickly. This makes necessary the simplification of images into repeatable symbols. Ergo, stereotypes" (Eisner 17).

Like any figure rooted in mythology a puppet's traditional function is to teach, establish behavioural models, or convey religious ideas. As we flip through this sequence in the graphic novel we get to know *Smug Little Devil*, an equivalent for the British *Punch* (Figure 142, p. 114). The name *Punch* is an anglicisation of the Italian *Pulcinella*, a puppet rooted in the *Commedia dell'Arte* of the 17th century. Like a devil he is hook-nosed and has a cunning and boastful personality, which relates to the *Lord of Misrule* and *Trickster*. *German Girl* resembles the British *Judy* (Figure 144). She is the wife and counterpart of *Punch*, while *Fairy Godmother* is not unlike the common character of *Grandmother* (Figure 145). All together they are humorous and astute in their observations about society and the course of life in Germany and New Zealand.

The art of puppetry also influenced artists and writers from other disciplines. In his famous essay **The Puppet Theatre** Heinrich von Kleist marvels at the apparent simple-mindedness of puppets, praising it as a sign of grace and purity. Opposed to this, the human consciousness and the capacity for thought leads to paralysing self-doubt. Unlike puppets or animals, we cannot act out our feelings in an unimpeded way, because our ability to think literally gets in the way. The only resort lies in the sole pursuit of wisdom and knowledge: if we ceaselessly strive for more self-awareness, we might end up being able to act as harmoniously and confidently as a puppet in a play (von Kleist 411–416).

Dietlind's thoughts are not unlike Kleist's: At the end of her monologue she concludes that the quest for knowledge is an essential part in our life journey (Figure 146). The distorted shadows of the figures allude to Plato's **Allegory of the Cave**: like the prisoners in the cave we are tempted to think that the shadows are real, but with open-mindedness we become aware that they are not (Plato 1–51). Those who aspire to become wise gain a truer sense of reality, as wisdom eventually helps us find our place in the world.

146 Grieben, Theresa.
Devil.
Graphic novel p. 99.
2013. Pencil.
100 mm x 48 mm.

6. BELONGING

The final chapter of my graphic novel illustrates a phone call I am making to my father at the end of my stay in New Zealand, in which he asks me to come home (Figures 148–149, p. 122–123). It exemplifies our clashing world views: his pragmatic attitude as opposed to my idealistic approach to life. He is very down-to-earth and has trouble relating to my decision to go abroad. Why would I want to live in a foreign country, when I have everything I need at home? He seems to be more concerned about my financial security than about the idealistic benefits that come with travelling: a broadened horizon, new knowledge, and a higher self-confidence. Opposed to this I am reluctant to relate to such profane issues as a proper job and settling down. I prioritise the quest for freedom, the joy of discovery, and the development of the self, even if that leads to unrealistic plans.

Following this main conflict I investigate how illustration can map a transitional state. I have focused on how the use of onomatopoeic images can foster a sense of disconnection. I conclude with a personal discourse on the concept of belonging, which also constitutes the end of the graphic novel.
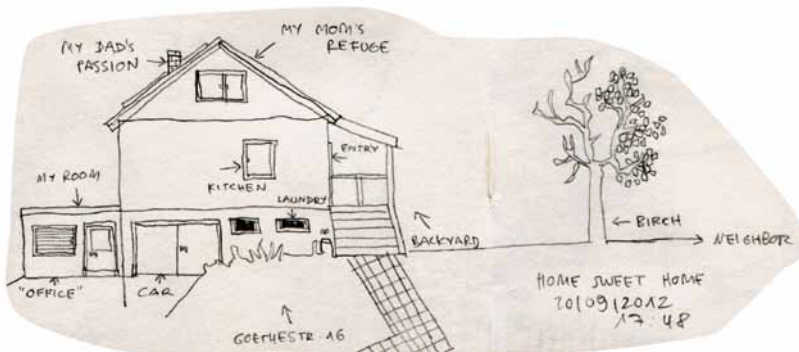
147 Grieben, Theresa.
Home sweet home.
Preliminary drawing.
2012. Pencil.
48 mm x 100 mm.
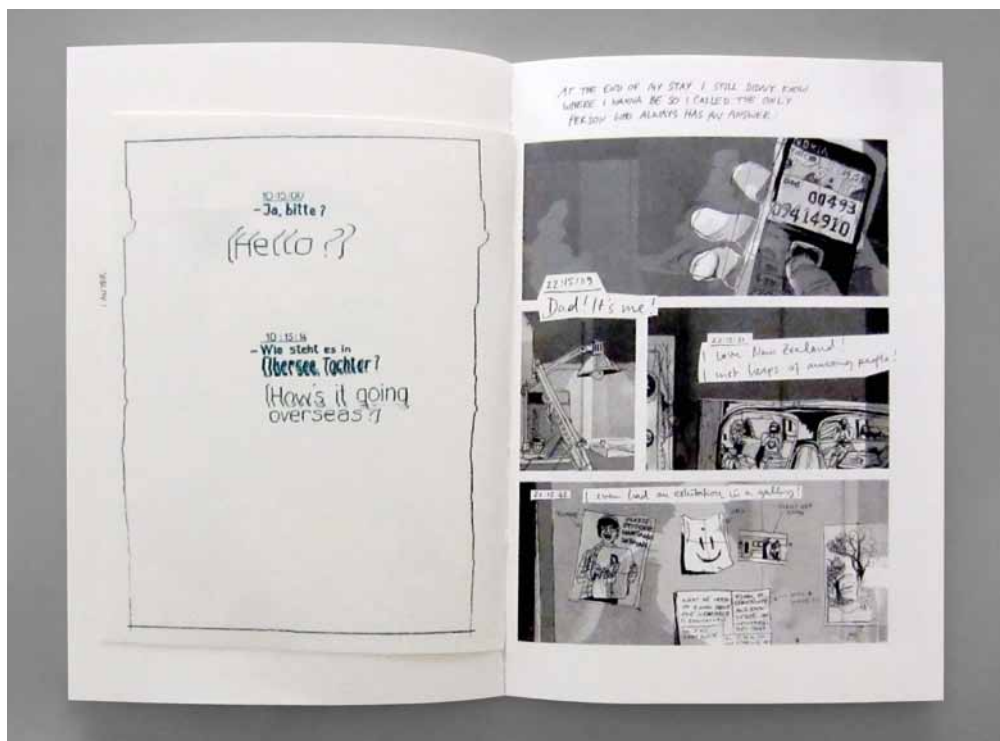
6.1 MOBILE MAPPING
— in transito

The layout of the chapter (Figure 148) mirrors the spatial and idealistic gap between us: my father's disembodied voice, in his attributed colour, occupies a frame on the left side, whereas my dialogue is displayed in a sequence of panels on the right page (for further discussion see section 3.1 "Colour association with characters"). The voice of my father is given a face by means of a hidden portrait underneath his dialogue, which also highlights his current work as lawyer: a profession typically concerned with rules and laws (Figure 149). Nevertheless the portrait invites the reader to form a personal relationship with my father, which may help to better understand his point of view as well as my connection to him.
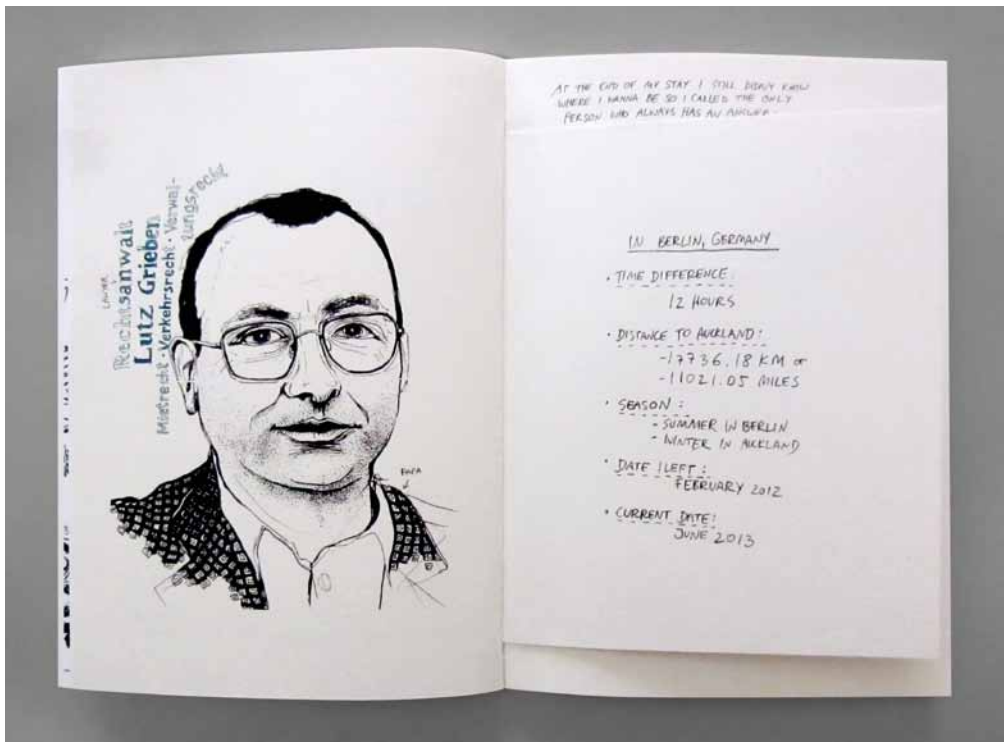
149

There is an ambivalence at play here, which shows the idealistic distance but also the emotional closeness between father and daughter: behind all his pragmatism, my father just wants the best for me. The mutuality of the two opposed places, time zones and attitudes is furthermore expressed by the use of image-word combinations. Drawing from this important quality of comics, cartoonist Chris Ware points out:

"You're always at one point in writing. As you read, you can't be simultaneously in two places, the way you can be in a comic, with a word and a picture" (Groth 161–162).

My dialogue takes the reader through a succession of places that have become the centre of my everyday life in New Zealand (Figures 150–152, p. 124–125). These framed interiors have an ephemeral, surreal appearance; they seem to be filled with distorted shapes. Once again this mirrors my own state of transition: I visually communicate my nomadic disposition and the temporality of my stay in New Zealand. In *Sketches from a Nameless Land* illustrator Shaun Tan validates this by suggesting:

"Connections made to a new place can be deeply felt without being clearly articulated, much like a composition of nebulous colours, shapes and textures on canvas" (Tan 10).

148–149 Grieben, Theresa.
Calling Home.
Graphic novel p. 102–103
including hidden portrait.
2013. Photograph by author.

By drawing these locations I am also constantly redrafting them, which, according to Giuliana Bruno, constitutes an attachment to a place without the desire to dominate it. This space of the passenger is called *transito,* a mobile map (Bruno 86). In **Nomadic Subjects** feminist theoretician Rosi Braidotti supports this concept:

> *"The nomad has a sharpened sense of territory but no possessiveness about it. She also has multiple places – called home – where she can rest up"* (Braidotti 65).

My journey is opposed to the circular voyage of origin and return which my father advocates: the idea of the *domus,* the home to which the voyager wishes to return conflicts with the female traveller's notion of dislocation (Bruno 86). Italian feminist critic Paola Melchiori observes:

> *"Women who leave are not nostalgic. They desire what they have not had, and they look for it in the future. The desire does not take shape as 'return' but rather as 'voyage'. Nostalgia is substituted by dislocation"* (Melchiori 22).
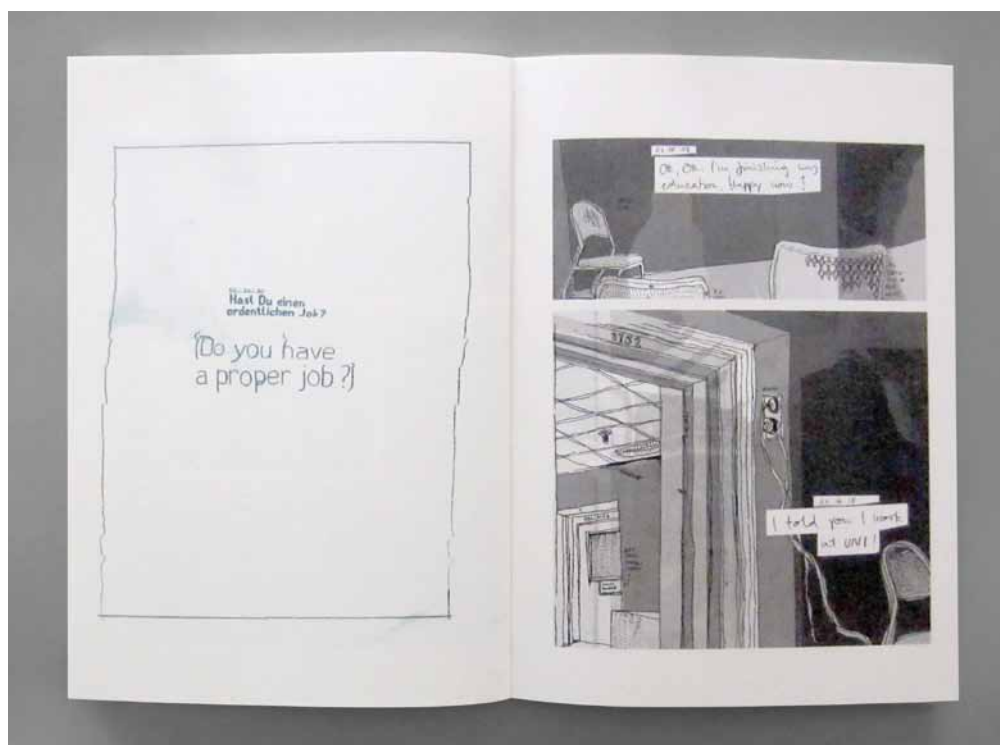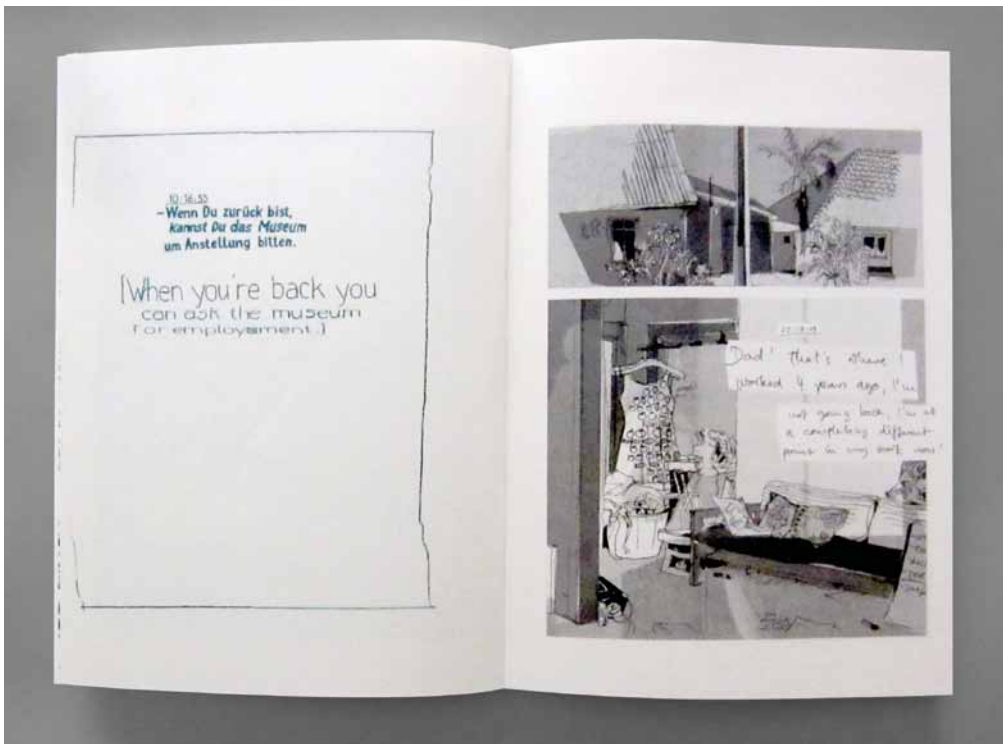
151
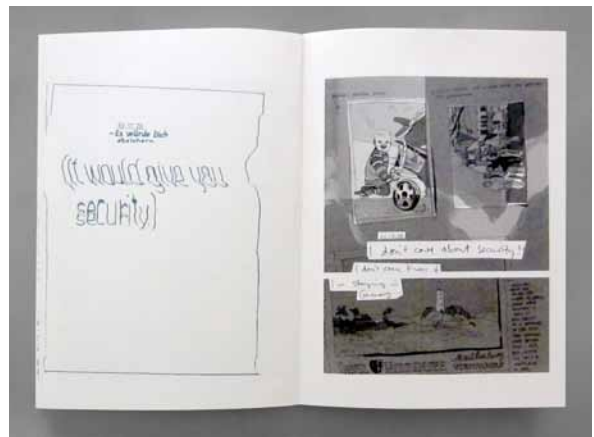
152

150   Grieben, Theresa.
      Calling Home.
      Graphic novel p. 104–105.
      2013. Photograph by author.

151   Grieben, Theresa.
      Calling Home.
      Graphic novel p. 106–107.
      2013. Photograph by author.

152   Grieben, Theresa.
      Calling Home.
      Graphic novel p. 108–109.
      2013. Photograph by author.

6.2 ONOMATOPOEIA
– translating sound into images

Onomatopoeia tries to get closer to the actual sound of the word – instead of the usual division in English and other languages between the appearance of an object and its name (artists such as Magritte have interrogated how the words for things are often arbitrary. A sign such as the word "cat" has no relationship to its referent, the animal. The use of onomatopoeia endeavours to capture the actual sound of a being or object – e.g. "the buzzing bee". This is closer to languages such as Chinese, where apparently the signifier for "tree" actually resembles a tree.

The distance between me and my father is illustrated by the visual manipulation of his dialogue, which, according to Will Eisner's dictum, *"reads as an image"* (Eisner 10). Just as far-distance phone calls can get disturbed or unclear, the voice of my father is being warped, fragmented and repeated (Figure 153). What is more, his text is set in *DIN*, a German typeface mainly used for official signs, rules and classifications, which relates to his character. This points to comics theorist Gene Kannenberg Jr.'s notion of the *metanarrative*: He observes that texts, when being formally presented or manipulated,

> *"can convey metanarrative information such as sound/tone of voice, characterization, pacing, and thematic resonance"* (Kannenberg Jr. 173).

Consequently it is important to recognize the lettering design as a contributing factor to the narrative. He furthermore refers to David Scott's notion of *"spatial texts",* which emphasizes the materiality of a word as signifier. The viewer must devote his entire visual, but also his aural attention in order to fully understand the impact of the words. (Scott 116, 123). Cartoonist Scott McCloud concludes:

> *"the variations of lettering styles, both in and out of balloons, speak of an ongoing struggle to capture the very essence of sound"* (McCloud 134).

Onomatopoeia is thus a literary device which stimulates the reader's imagination. Sound and visuals are merged into a powerful combination, which makes the story more memorable.

LEAVING and
6.3 BELONGING

At the end of this chapter – the end of my graphic novel – I show a self-portrait as a cat, referring to myself as a *rolling stone* – someone who is unwilling to settle for long in one place (Figure 153, p. 126). It is an open ending: I will come home, but only for a while, as I continue to struggle with my own sense of belonging.

Living in a foreign country sooner or later poses a dilemma: What does it mean to leave my social safety net in order to put myself deliberately into a place where I do not know anyone? What is the value of relocating to a country where everyday life can turn into a challenge, but where continuously facing those challenges can lead to personal growth? Ultimately, is it worth it to leave my newly found friends, my "substitute family", in order to go back to my original family? My friend Thomas told me:

"Everywhere you go in the world you are leaving a part of yourself with the new friends you meet. This is something you cannot share with the people at home".

But yes, I can! Creating this graphic novel is my personal attempt to share the *"parts of myself"* that I have left in New Zealand, the struggle between my desire for freedom and belonging alike. It bridges a gap – both personally and culturally – between New Zealand and Germany, friends and family, past and present.

Referring back to Dan P. McAdams' life story model (see Introduction, *"V. Evolving narrative of the self"*) I have used this graphic novel in order to share a part of my narrative identity. It has given me the means to seek universal meaning in my individual experience of going abroad and to share it with my readers.

After all, what does belonging mean? Is it associated with names and objects, or rather with emotions and personal memories attributed to people and places? Shaun Tan believes that belonging is, after all,

"the attachment of sincere feeling and meaning to an essentially mysterious world" (Tan 48).

CONCLUSION

This research project investigates how illustrative conventions can convey the experience of journeying, displacement, and cultural shift. By using the form of a graphic novel I have converted my personal experience of moving from Germany to New Zealand into a visual narrative. Previous research has helped me identify the format of the graphic novel as a suitable medium for stories about travelling, as their sequenced nature mirrors the travel experience and their images can trigger a sense of immersion in an environment. It has also shown me that academic research in this context has not yet been done, thereby my research project can make a significant contribution to this field of creative inquiry.

A fragmentary heuristic method has led me to generate a body of work that spans a range of mini projects and a variety of visual conventions that convey notions of travelling, displacement and cultural shift. I have investigated maps; mental snapshots; aspect-to-aspect transitions; colour associations; framing and bleeds; image sequences, speech bubbles, architectural elevations; word-image constellations; visual diaries, onomatopoeic illustration. I have assessed and applied these conventions to my visual storytelling and have investigated their impact on reader perception. Additional knowledge was gained concerning the materialisation of memory through drawing, the manner in which photography can inform journeys into the past, how the concept of puppet theatre can be used as

a tool for indirect illustration, and how an epistolary approach can inform travel narrative. Additionally, visual experiments have led me to consider new graphic approaches, such as distortion, overlay and repetition.

During the phase of story development I have identified six overarching themes that have informed my journey, which are memory; discovery; transition; freedom; knowledge and the quest for belonging. On this basis I have created a graphic novel which not only encompasses my personal story of living in New Zealand, but which also reflects these universal themes of travelling and cultural displacement in its content, structure and design. However, as in any other art-related inquiry, this research outcome is subjective: it does not claim to be complete since there are infinite ways to convey a travel experience visually.

The process of my research project has caused me to think differently about my own sense of origin and belonging. It has made me reflect on past journeys and the people I have met on my trips. I no longer see myself as East German, I see myself as caught between worlds. Being German is only a fragment of who I am because each journeying takes me further away from the person I used to be. An ultimate sense of belonging is not so much embodied by a place in itself but by the meanings, emotions and personal memories I ascribe to it.

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LIST OF FIGURES

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

I am an illustrator from Berlin, Germany.
Born in 1985 I studied communication design
in Halle and Budapest before coming to New
Zealand for my Master project: a graphic novel
about my experience of living in Auckland for
18 months, the quirks of being a foreigner,
my trips around the country and observations
about the people I met. After my return from
New Zealand I am currently living and working
in Berlin.

This thesis demonstrates the development
of my graphic novel and investigates chapter
by chapter how my travel experience can be
turned into a visual narrative that is at once
gripping, funny and rich in detail.

154 TePuni, Vicky.
The grass is always greener on the other side.
Theresa on Unitec Campus.
2 November 2012. Photograph.
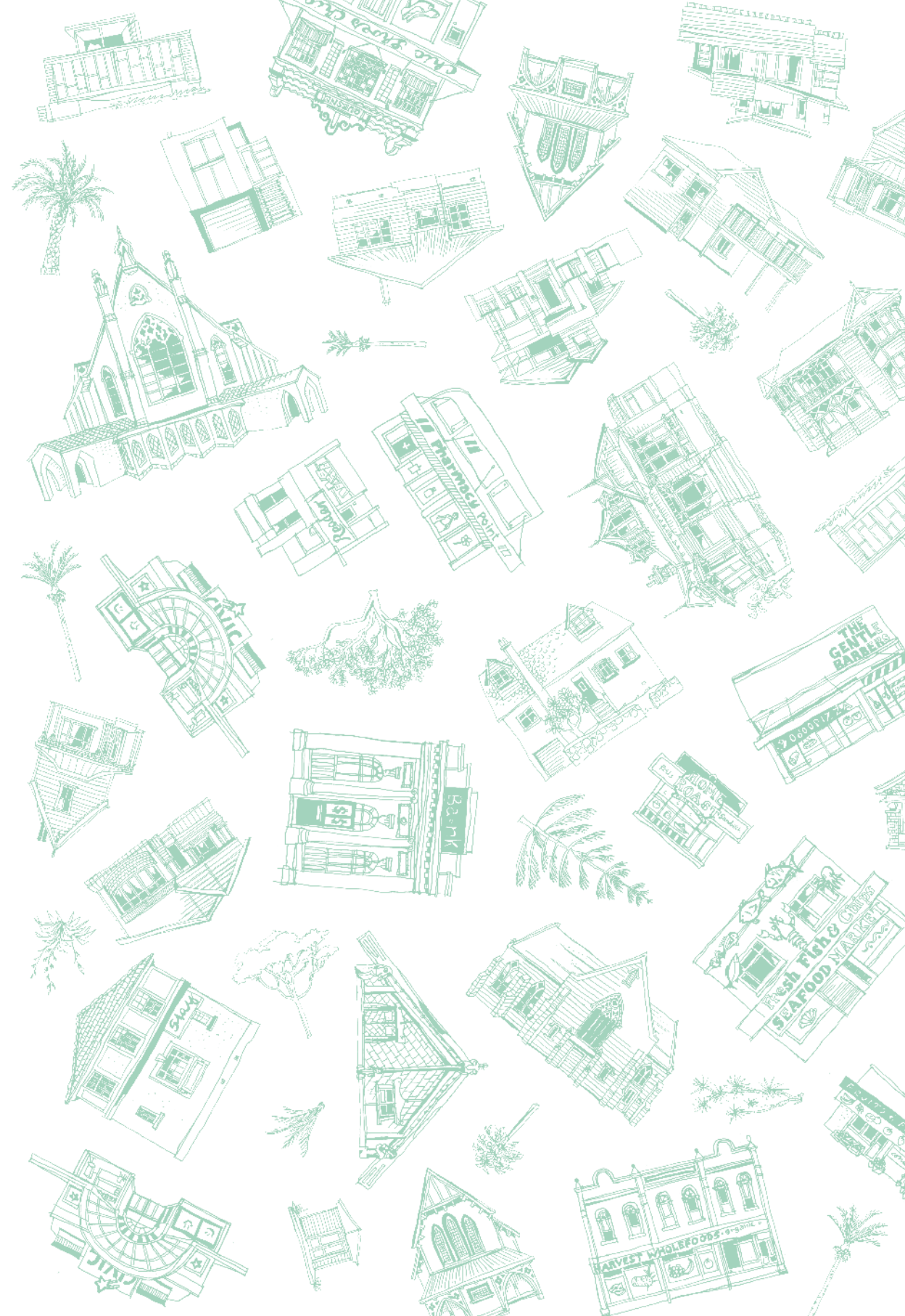
THIS THESIS EXPLORES HOW MY
EXPERIENCE OF MOVING FROM GERMANY
TO NEW ZEALAND CAN BE TURNED INTO
A GRAPHIC NOVEL. BY USING PANORAMIC
DRAWING, IMAGE SEQUENCE, SPEECH BUBBLES
AND MANY MORE I DEMONSTRATE HOW
NOTIONS OF TRAVELLING, DISPLACEMENT
AND CULTURAL SHIFT CAN BE
EFFECTIVELY CONVEYED WITHIN A VISUAL
NARRATIVE.