



TOWN

Madeleine Slavick

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RRP \$30 • 120 mm × 162 mm • full colour

132pp • softcover with flaps • memoir / photography

- first NZ book by Wairarapa writer / photographer, whose work has been published in Hong Kong and exhibited in NZ
- micro-stories / poems / photos about living in small towns and the country, especially the Wairarapa
- to accompany exhibitions of the photos
- author to appear at Featherston Booktown Karukatea Festival

In a valley along a highway, four consecutive towns, as if someone had once skipped a stone.

Each town takes its English name after a British man of the 1800s and offers free Wi-Fi.

Sunned dry mountains to the east, clouds clinging to damp ones in the west. Are we safe in the middle? Are we bored?

Welcome to *Town*, fifty stories and fifty images by writer and photographer Madeleine Slavick, who lived in Hong Kong for almost twenty-five years before moving to a Wairarapa country road that runs from state highway to bush.

'Slavick's images and text are mutually supportive and distinct at the same time. She reminds us of how much is to be discovered if only we would stop and ponder. The road I just walked, I must walk again, with new eyes.' — Robin White



PHOTO BY WONG YANKWAI 黃仁達

MADELEINE SLAVICK was born and educated in USA, lived in Hong Kong for almost twenty-five years and now lives in Wairarapa, Aotearoa. She is the author of *Something Beautiful Might Happen*, *Fifty Stories Fifty Images*, *delicate access 微妙之途* and *Round: Poems and Photographs of Asia*. *Town* is her first book published in New Zealand.

'*Town* is reminiscent of Robert Hass at his most beautifully imagistic, or Georgia O'Keeffe telling deep stories in flowers.' — Hinemoana Baker



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THE ROAD WHERE I LIVE

A straight line fifteen kilometres long. I walk in one direction one day, and in the other on the next. Seventeen cars pass. Almost every driver waves.

Blossoms of plum, almond, mimosa, kōwhai. Masses of bulrush, nettle, wattle. Glass from a windscreen, empty cigarette packets, walls of stone, a dead hare and fences.

A dog rounds up twenty-four sheep and moves them to another paddock. They click clack down the road I just walked. A man on a quad follows.

I arrive at a gate at the same time as a four-wheel drive, so I unlatch, let it pass, latch. Two smiles.

Every man wears shorts. I see different amounts of skin, shin, and it is the thigh I love to touch.

Five sheep stare at the movement of my body, five black cattle stand with enlarged udders, and five sparrows on a wire do not fly off when pigs squeal. I have always loved to count.

Magpie above a cricket field. Hawk on a rabbit on the road. Dogs in the bed of a moving truck. Sheep around the targets of the old gun club, puddles at the entrance, sky reflected.

In te reo Māori, there are more than one hundred words for the eel, blue-eyed. The fish live in the river parallel to our road, with gorse, thistle, watercress, flax. A man I love finds their bodies thrown to the banks, returns them to the waters, and to mate they swim back to the sea where they were born.

River after rain, deer roar, overnight sprinklers. Runs of the school bus and milk tanker. The north–south train that crosses the road.

A writer who once worked for the railways has lived near the tracks ever since, near the sound of the ground as the train comes, passes.

Our road a straight line from state highway to bush.



Text and images from *Town* by Madeleine Slavick.