

The big city is modern

The big city is modern
with its buildings its avenues
its pleasant pedestrian areas
its lights its bright halls
and with the number of banks
of money machines
authorised credit cards
and the significant number
of cafés of cobblers of hotels
and the significant number of
of luxury shops
their products, useful products
alongside useless products
for decoration for entertainment
the significant number of customers
in the specialist boutiques
the bookshops
the cinemas the theatres
the city is significant
the men are in suits
the women are beautiful
their clothes are beautiful too
and a significant number
of restaurants of bars

of streets lined with taxis
of spaces hosting in significant number
modern sculptures and fountains
buskers mimes and musicians
beggars simply sitting
and a significant number
of bankers of loan sharks
of insurers of real estate agents
the city is a capital
a port a major hub
the city is significant
it draws in the poor
the very poor the abandoned
they sleep on the streets
eat when they can
what they find what they're given
the city is the capital
the poor are Maori young white
Pasifika rarely Asian

The city is significant
its development relies
on the low incomes
the few coins needed
to keep together body and soul
it's a significant city

a beautiful welcoming city we love
and a significant number
of bays of hills of trees
of walking tracks
of steps a cable car
it's a political city
the home of the minister
the house of parliament
it's home to the counter culture
the anarchists on Cuba street
hold their rally
and a significant number
of never ending protests
of independent publications of battles
national international
of embassies of consulates
including China's
near the cottage we're staying in
I think about Tibet magnificent symbol
of oppressed humanity.

The city this city
is a significant city
managing the country's affairs
playing its part in World affairs
in the Region's affairs

the large and small islands there have
their envoys their disputes
dealing with the lot of the poor
the reality of equality longed for
there more than anywhere else

Like all significant cities
it has a duty to listen
to those who do not rule
who are subject to the power
of business of leaders of movers and shakers
it should show as all capitals should
a caring and compassionate heart
to the humble the true citizens
invisible to passing tourists

And I think of them
while at my desk
I strive towards the heart of the significant City

translated by Sian Robyns and Jean Anderson