living in the *future*

Issue two

Apocalypses

End times past, present & future

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Introductory Essay: A Short History Of The Apocalypse

James W Hedges

Late 2012

I arrive in New York. The plan is a road trip, with friends, to New Orleans, Louisiana, in time for the 21st of December – four days after my birthday, four days before Christmas; also the date – on which the world ends, according to a surprisingly large number of people. Every apocalypse has its supporters, but not since the millennium has there been this much consensus among doomsday fans.

The story is that the Ancient Mayans… – it's hard to explain, and it really depends who you ask. The Maya, like the Hindus, have a conception of time that operates on a truly vast, cosmic scale (in contrast to, say, traditional Judaeo-Christian notions). This cosmic time is recorded in the Mayan Long-Count Calendar. 1 *k'in* is 1 day. 1 *winal* is 20 *k'in*. 1 *tun* is 18 *winal* (360 days – close to 1 solar year). 1 *k'atun* is 20 *tun*, and 1 *b'ak'tun* is 20 *k'atun* – 144,000 days, or close to 394 years.

Numbers – the way we write them – have a habit of rolling over. As numbers are infinite, it would be impossible to have a different symbol or word for each of them, so we adopt a logical short-hand. In the commonly used decimal system, we have symbols for all natural numbers from 0 to 9. What happens after '9'? We add an extra place at the start of the number for the next power of ten and roll the first digit back to 0 – '10'. After '99'? We add another digit to the number and roll it over – '100'.

The same happens for the Mayan calendrical system, though it's a little more complicated. Most units progress in powers of 20, except for the *winal*, which has a power of 18 to more accurately approximate the solar year.[1]

1 This kind of irregular counting isn't so unusual – think of a clock, with 60 seconds to the minute, 60 minutes to the hour, and 12 hours to the half day.

So what happened on the 21st of December, 2012? The numbers rolled over, leaving us with a date of 13.0.0.0.0, in an ancient calendar. This is what happened on the millennium – a whole lot of arbitrary zeroes. The Mayan calendar doesn't end[2] - so why the mystery? Why the UFO devotees on southern French hilltops, waiting for their cosmic rapture? Why the huge upsurge in survivalist bunker sales?[3]

It's all Terence Mackenna's fault. The legendary psychedelic shaman (and creepy voice behind the Shamen's *Re:Evolution*)'s study of the I-Ching (under the influence of magic mushrooms) led him to a new and strange theory of time, based on the concept of the novelty of events, versus their stability, at different points in time. He found that this numerological data could be plotted and manipulated mathematically, and with the help of programmer Peter Mayer developed a piece of software they called *Timewave Zero*. With a little creative thinking, sleight of hand, and a knowledge of the New-Age beliefs already extant about the coming 13th *B'ak'tun*, McKenna predicted that there was a vast aberration in novelty due to occur on the 21st of December 2012, with concomitant cataclysm.

> The universe is not being pushed from behind. The universe is being pulled from the future toward a goal that is as inevitable as a marble reaching the bottom of a bowl when you release it up near the rim. If you do that, you know the marble will roll down the side of the bowl, down, down, down - until eventually it comes to rest at the lowest energy state, which is the bottom of the bowl. That's precisely my model of human history. I'm suggesting that the universe is pulled toward a complex attractor that exists ahead of us in time, and that our ever-accelerating speed through the phenomenal world of connectivity and novelty is based on the fact that we are now very, very close to the attractor.[4]

McKenna's status as a guru for the psychedelic counterculture ensured that these beliefs were widely disseminated, coming to a head on the date itself.

Humanity has a thing for Apocalypses – they span cultures so remote that either it's an *innately human* idea (something from Jung and Campbell's myth soup) or it goes way back to the dawn of humanity, and diffused from there[5]. Apocalypse is the inevitable counterpoint to

2 There are more units, going up to one *alautin* – over 63 million years in the future.

3 'Apocalypse Not', *Fortean Times* issue 300, pp33-43: David V Barrett, Kevin Whitesides, Peter Brookesmith, Richard Stanley, March 2013

4 Terrence McKenna, 'Approaching Timewave Zero', *Magical Blend* issue 44, November 1994

5 For example, the Hopi and Viking cultures had very little opportunity for cultural interchange, but both contain a pre-ordained, world-ending event in

Genesis – but the universe *had* to come from somewhere. Why does it have to end?

It's notable that while much apocalyptica these days is based on material, secular concerns, people's beliefs, narratives and responses are often decidedly mythopoeic. Thus, it's important to study modern, scientific apocalypses with an awareness of their mythological ancestors.[6]

Back to New York: I'm there not long in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy. Many have died, and flooding has put out many essential services. The city – star of so many disaster movies – had been shaken by this demonstration of nature's destructive powers.

I take the L-train to Coney Island beach – no one's there but crisis relief teams and another man taking photographs. 'Make sure you get a birdy in the frame,' he tells me, 'to get that disaster aesthetic'.

The Disaster Aesthetic, Coney Island

A couple of weeks later, I'm in North Carolina with my friends. After stopping in Asheville, a kind of hippie Xanadu nesting high in the

their legendaria.

6 Darren Aronofsky's film *Noah* (2014) is a recent example of a mythological examination of a modern concern, namely the way humankind treats the environment. It also notably tries to fuse the scientific and Biblical creation narratives.

Appalachians, we drive to Marshall, a small nearby settlement. There's a lavish local nativity play going on in the central streets, but frankly I'm tired, and go on my own to the only bar in town, Good Stuff. Sitting outside with a beer, a wildly bearded old man leans in.

'Where you from, Europe?'

'Yes, England'. I've been getting a good response recently, just for being from England.

'*Did You Know* that *the EU* is a *plot* set up by *Fascists*?'

I'm intrigued. My party arrives and he invites us to camp in his yard, and we gratefully accept. He buys a case of PBR and after the rocky horror of driving up the hill to his place, we set up camp, chopping firewood and pitching our fifteen-dollar tents in the declining light.

The Author and 'Don', North Carolina

Don[7] is an extremely kind, gentle guy, with extreme political views (when we visit town the next morning, others hoot about how he had a captive audience in us). He's a libertarian – he shows us his pick-up truck, plastered with Ron Paul campaign stickers. 'There are one-hundred-*fourteen* Ron Paul stickers on that truck'. He's a survivalist – he stays in a caravan next to the house he's working on, ready for *when the shit hits the fan*. 'I'll probably be dead before I finish it'. He's a gun enthusiast, proudly showing us his stash of rifles and letting us hit tin cans with them, even though he's never shot an animal in his life (he's a vegetarian).

7 Not his real name.

Most of all he's a conspiracy theorist with apocalyptic beliefs. He darkly refers to Obama and Mitt Romney as 'Obomney' – choice is an illusion - and is happy to share his detailed, well-researched – but to me, screwy – economic views. According to Don, by the end of 2014, the US will have reached a state of such fiscal catastrophe that government and services break down, and the only people who will survive will be those willing to take to the mountains and look after themselves, like Don himself.

This feels like wishful thinking. All a libertarian ever seems to want is to live on his own in the mountains, unmolested by government and nested with his guns. When we leave, he grudgingly poses for photos with us (only if he can hold up an anti-Obama placard) and tells us to tune in to Alex Jones on the radio. (A week or so later, a young man called Adam Lanza fatally shoots 26 people at Sandy Hook elementary school in Connecticut. I wonder what Don and friends make of that; I imagine they'll find a way to make it further reinforce their views).

Wishful thinking plays a huge part in apocalyptic mythmaking. The word *apocalypse* itself comes from the Ancient Greek *apokalypsis*[8] – *unveiling, revelation*[9]. It implies not just an end of current ways, but a paradisiacal state afterwards. The word for this heavenly state is the *Eschaton*[10].

In the Bible, angels throw sinners like grapes into a winepress, till their blood flows out and floods the earth[11]. Christian believers have been spared these enormities, having been miraculously protected by God during an event known as the Rapture[12]. After the purge of the sinners, God's chosen live under Christ's peaceful reign for a thousand years[13].

Earth's apocalypse is, then, the birthing pains of a greater earth. A 1,000 year Teutonic Reich, free from race-mixing? An end to capitalism[14], and the establishment of socialist utopia? A human-free paradise for the world's flora and fauna?

It will come as no surprise, therefore, that some groups actively campaign for the establishment of the eschaton – often supposing that

8 ἀποκάλυψις

9 The New Testament's final, bloody book, Revelation - source of so much western doomsday lore - is called 'Apocalypse' in both the original Greek and the Douay-Rheims translation (the standard for English-speaking Catholics).

10 Eschaton (Ancient Greek ἔσχατον) means *The Very Last Thing*.

11 Revelation 14:14-14:20

12 Revelation 7:1 – other, more ambiguous verses are often quoted.

13 The belief in a thousand-year utopia is called *millennialism* (or *chiliasm*) and was also an important part of the Nazi belief system. *Millennialism* is distinct from *millenarianism*, a more general word for apocalyptic beliefs.

14 The phrase *Late-Capitalism* comes pre-loaded with a teleological view of human history.

they belong to the elect few who will get to live in it, and survive the brutal horrors of the transitional apocalyptic period.

There's a phrase – *to immantetize the eschaton*[15] – which means exactly that. Methods range from the magickal to the scientific. Fringe Christian groups, such as the 7th Day Adventists and Blessed Hope Ministries regularly pray for the Second Coming. Nikolas and Zeena Schreck[16], of the death-rock band Radio Werewolf, intended their music to contribute magickally to the establishment of a new era of what can be called, for want of a better term, Satanic Nazism[17].

The Order of Nine Angles (ONA) is a Satanic organization with a secretive cell structure reminiscent of terrorist groups. It is asserted[18] that ONA is headed by David Wulstan Myatt (aka Abdul-Aziz ibn Myatt). Myatt converted to Islam in 1998 and has had his writings on suicide bombings published by Hamas.

What is extraordinary is the suggestion that both his Nazi and Islamist activities are mere tools to immanentize an eschaton – that he is playing extremists as pawns in his satanic apocalyptic game. "Even more astonishing than [his transition from neo-Nazi to Muslim] is that it seems both his Nazism and Islamism are merely instruments for the ONA's underlying sinister esoteric plots."[19]

So far (as far as we know) deliberate attempts to engineer the eschaton have been unsuccessful. With the appointment of Ray Kurzweil as Google's Director of Engineering, how long will this be the case?

As appealing as eschatological myths continue to be, change still tends to present itself gradually rather than in the form of cataclysmic events. Why do we keep buying into new doomsdays, when prior prophecies have failed?

15 This phrase was coined by political theorist Eric Voegelin, and popularized by *The Principia Discordia* (Malaclypse the Younger, Lord Omar Khayyam Ravenhurst, 1965) and Robert Shea and Robert Anton Wilson's apocalypto-conspiro-psychedelic sci-fi clusterfuck *Illuminatus!* (Dell Publishing 1974).

16 Zeena is also notable as the first person to receive a Satanic baptism, from her father, Church of Satan founder Anton LaVey.

17 White Supremacist Tom Metzger interviews Nikolas Schreck *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yv9TpLVZZAE*

18 Goodrick-Clarke, Nicholas. *Black Sun: Aryan cults, esoteric Nazism, and the politics of identity*, NYU Press, 2002, pp. 215-220

19 Per Faxneld: 'Post-Satanism, Left Hand Paths, and Beyond' in Per Faxneld & Jesper Petersen (eds) *The Devil's Party: Satanism in Modernity;* Oxford University Press (2012), p.207.

21st December, 2012, New Orleans this city won't be here in a hundred years, if the predictions about rising water levels are true. You can only build so many levees.

What does the big day have in store? A week back in Baton Rouge, I see a poster for a huge apocalypse gathering in New Orleans. Throwing journalistic credibility to the wind, I forget to go, and I find myself wandering the streets, drinking. Turning onto Frenchman Street, I find a group of people wearing wild clothes, soundsystem in a shopping trolley blasting *It's The End Of The World As We Know It (And I Feel Fine).* These guys want to go out in style, so I join them.

Party at the End Of The World, New Orleans

As expected, our doom's allotted time comes and goes without incident. We continue to revel with a bittersweet mix of relief and just a little disappointment. Better luck next time?

The Arms Left Over

Christina Chalmers

Prefatory note:

Imagination asked un-method to fuck method, but method, being stuck by the fingertips to the fingertips of imagination, being stuck by the green antennae to the megaphone-steely lips of imagination, being stuck by the webbed feet to the goose-steps of imagination, being stuck through your sandy and dishevelled face to the fiery kissing of imagination's hourglass, being stuck by dehydration to imagination's acidic lion of personality cult, being stuck by the nasal passages to the entangled and animalistic airwaves of imagination, the two being conjoined like some twinned star-bodies in subterranean embattlement, could not be fucked. Un-method is with the animals; imagination is in the sanctuary.

1

On the ring-roads radiating in circles to the sea, there is a reverse rapprochement. Wings and horns are flocking, swine flu found dead on the shoulder of an anti-piracy brigade as a bright red parrot flies, bird flu is a species of boar as fungus and spore are dispersed on the mental complexes herding in the petty bourgeois lovers' hands. Francesca, she sneezes, dies, latterly gorged by truffle and too much loving.

Five-thousand sea bream, salted with anthrax, on plates which are really envelopes, to be couriered down the corridors lining the insides of a humanoid, dressed up as a humanoid. The sea dilates, it is a puddle now, and in it, a miniature lake, she rises like a silent lady of spittle and hunger. Eros, as puddle, does not wash her feet too kindly. Her feet are gnawed by the piranha *Asbestos*, the bailiff *Thanatos* and its route to the sea are only bringing accountancy back to romance. I am no swans or geese, lacking beaks; and the world has no fins, no hooves or arms for me, not wrenched forward or cut off to stick on. Netting or webbing is soft, moistly burnt, is a dead bee, treacled, consumable and stolen. The silencing of romance becomes a kind of method: the blood-louse's crazed pedagogy.

I dream only now of becoming volcanic plankton. Herculaneum is a series of numbers so close together they are merely dead bacteria, and the bacterial gravestones merely equivalence scales; a genus left repayed and repainted in Pythagorean splendour. Drawing it, the bacteria, the pixel's real substance is, they say, blood. Blood of blood.

2

Thanatos returns from his dancing with the tide's heavy and muscular encroachment, to tell me that I am not okay: "Your dead body has no arms for me", he says, demands an excess of recompense, but my doppelgangers have fled to the world with my taxation slips, insurance payments, and, even, entire savings. I have spoken too many times to him that even he will not speak back anymore, giving lip or turn against more field than face. The others are the ashes of expectations. But as ashes I cannot weaponise them, with no concept of conversion and no metamorphosis to gorge on.

3

Feminine mystique crawls, drooling, where masculine arrogance is a hawk spitting rivers. The spittle of a conforming kiss, the stillborn, the mouth of this caressing kiss, the lips modulate soft to hard in turn. Feminine mystique crawls on four hind legs, in clogs and stilettos, drawing back and kicking forward, flailing without arms. It is *it* is method. The geometric arrangement of such impossibilities is invited to impossibilise on the palms of velvety undersides, riled by silk and stretched over your eyeballs;

But mystique is a different animal to me,
me, I'm so gauche my man-eater lipstick comes off my face,
going away on a why-have-you-forsaken-me binge
Where causality snaps to casualty
And I speak with my eyes forward,
because I am walking on flesh

4

We, Atalanta, will refuse, will kill for fun,
the new Kate Mosses, the new Giselles,
bounding at holy auras of the beautiful,
are Warhol-like shot down.

The foals' eyes are sparkles now, sequins pure and overlaid with imploding numeracy. The hunter and engorger of tongues like ours is the fox of the Amazon, is the state dressed up as a private detective, in the crisp-white flowing robes of the state.

5

Dante intones about crows and how
the world is really an imperial green dog.
I am ensconced in Americana, cannot
think about theological poetry,
cartoon crows, magpies, silver,
or miniature formula one cars.

All fencing off is an accumulation
of time in modulation of sensitivity;
I think about *this* and how disaster
is always the possibility of reignition,
and in my head you ask me to be
more serious. But Dante knows my pain,
pulls his canine to its kennel,
with the whole of the internet
throbbing against my spine
like a sniffer dog pressed up
against your temples.

6

Mutability
Or ceasing
Or dead cellular
encirclement is
the black rhino
from Montecarlo
is pure gold
sur la peau

Everything Must Go

Ben Osborn

There was a bus full of people.

Mary was stood in a crowd on the bus's lower deck. Eliza had a seat on the top deck.

A great deal of rainwater carried on boots and trouser-legs had accumulated on the floor of the bus, so it was only natural that someone should slip. Except the man didn't slip, Mary saw and was certain of it; he collapsed, folded. Like something imploding. She leant forward to catch his arm and noticed that his eyes were half-closed, that his lips moved slightly. His whole body had lost the ability to hold itself up and now its full weight dragged at her arm and nearly pulled her down with it. She had to hold him with both arms, placing them beneath his armpits.

'Watch out.' A voice from the thick crowd. Another taking the sentiment up like a chorus: 'It's all this rainwater, bound to make someone slip', and another, or perhaps the first, 'Is he alright? His eyes are closed', and another (perhaps the second again), 'He must've hit his head when he fell', and she thinking: no, *his head never touched anything, he hasn't slipped, he's collapsed,* but she, not saying anything, focusing entirely on trying to stop him from falling all the way to the ground, 'Here, darling,' talking to her now, one of the voices from the crowd, 'let me help you get him off the bus' she realizing that the crowd thinks she knows him, though in fact she'd never seen him before this exact moment. 'He'll be alright' (reassuringly to her) and now the others, taking up that line: 'Don't worry darling, get him out of this crowd, sit him down, I'm sure he's fine.' Care in their voices, now he was her responsibility and an extension of her, and she thinking: *stop calling me fucking darling you cunts* – 'Get him out of the crowd darling' now it was clear that, in the mind of the crowd, she and he were intimate acquaintances, lovers, a married couple.

The bus stopped. Her arms still beneath his armpits, she guided him out of the door and into the rain. A sudden rush of new bodies charged forward and she had to fight her way to the bus shelter.

She placed him on the bench and he seemed to regain his strength. For the first time he looked up at her, his eyes open, his mouth closed and still. He looked directly into her eyes. She, returning his gaze, saw something like recognition. The very edges of his mouth curved upward a little: the slightest hint of a smile. Then his eyes snapped shut, his neck and shoulders went slack, his body nearly toppled from the bench. She took her phone from her coat pocket and called an ambulance.

From the top deck of the bus, Eliza had only a slight notion of what had happened below. She was half asleep on the window, one eye just open to watch the wall of rainwater crash against it, to make lazy bets on the races of raindrops as they sped down the windowpane. Part of her registered sirens some way behind the bus, and flashes of blue and red light.

The familiar image of her roadsign pulled her back from sleep just in time for her stop.

'You know you sing in your sleep, yeah?', she heard the girl next to her say as she left.

Eliza's phone began to vibrate as she crossed the road. James on the other end of the line, barely audible – 'I don't know when I'll be home. They had to stop the train. A, um, a tree fell on the line or something. The wind here is crazy.' She heard shouting in his distance. He started laughing. 'A sale sign just flew across the platform,' he said. He laughed some more. 'Guess what it said?' She didn't say anything, just listened to the crazy wind on his end. 'Everything must go!' he said, and laughed again.

Mary helped the man into the ambulance, her arms beneath his. He felt stupidly light, like an artist's manikin.

'Did he slip?' the paramedic asked her as they sat him in the back of the ambulance. 'He slipped in the rain, right?'

She was about to explain when she felt a strong, confident grip on her arm. She looked down and saw his hand closing around her wrist. She looked at his face. His eyes were not completely closed; from the sliver beneath the lowered eyelid she saw he was looking directly at her. His teeth and lips barely parted and as he exhaled his tongue pushed up onto his pallet emitting a quick faint sound that she understood as an instruction for silence. Then his head dropped forward. Just gravity acting on its weight, but she knew it was a nod. 'Yes,' she said. 'He slipped in the rain.'

She felt his hand move skillfully over hers. She felt a small shape of cold metal sliding over one of her fingers.

'Are you – ' the paramedic started to say.

'I'm his wife,' she said, lifting her hands and adjusting the gold wedding ring he had just given her.

Eliza turned the TV on as soon as she got home. It was an anti-loneliness instinct, the need to hear voices in the living room while she made tea in the kitchen. An advert for a diet supplement was just finishing up. From the kitchen she heard children and dogs playing in a sunny meadow. It felt like an age since she'd seen sunshine, as if rain was all she could remember. The noise of the kettle boiling drowned out the news coming on. She poured hot water into the cup as a voice in the other room said '...the aircraft, believed to be a biplane...' Her hand shook; for a moment she missed the cup, pouring a few drops onto the kitchen table.

She came back into the living room and changed the channel. A panel of comedians talked about nothing, reminding her somehow of the raindrops she'd watched falling in random patterns down the bus window. An American comedian spoke now: 'They warned me about you guys – when I first came over. I was *warned* –'

She lowered the volume and called James.

'Hey.' Again the wind roaring in the background, made metallic by the phoneline, threatened to drown anything he said. 'Any news about this train then?'

'Yeah, um – ' burst of wind and distant shouting – 'replacement buses – '.

The line cut off.

'They said,' said the comedian on the TV, 'I'd need to talk about the weather to get a laugh.' The invisible audience laughed on cue.

'Check his breathing.' The paramedics were busying themselves around the man's body. Their movements didn't have a real meaning for Mary. They faded into the background like ballboys on a tennis court.

The second paramedic undid the man's shirt. The skin on his chest was dark and hairless. Her eyes wandered downwards, quietly registering the fact that he had no navel.

'Hey,' sharply from the first paramedic as he noticed the man's eyes opening.

'Um. Hello,' said the man. 'Where am I?"

The paramedics answered but Mary didn't care what they said. Their words were meaningless too; she heard only a protocol of noises, part human and part machine. It reminded her of something. Her

father reciting to her when she was a child, in the ICU after surgery, messy with wires and pegs – like a tangled puppet – saying in between the beeps *'No human spark is left, nor glimpse divine.'* Her mother saying 'Don't be so bloody morbid'. He, enjoying pissing her mother off, continuing: *'Light dies before thy uncreated word… universal darkness buries all.'*

Eliza slid forward on the couch, knocking the remote on to the floor, switching the channel back to the news report: an image of a man in Wellington boots, standing in a flooded street, orange lamplight streaked in ribbons on the water's surface, digitally frozen. Distorted audio buzzing from his motionless mouth. '…a few men and women here who say they saw the aircraft in question and –' 'John, I'm afraid there's a bad connection here. It's this weather! Well, we've lost John, we'll get our technical people on that –' back in the studio, a woman in a suit smiled with calmed concern, saying '...and see if we can come back to John later. With me here in the studio is –' and the shot cut to a man in military uniform, paternal and grey-haired. 'Hello Cynthia, thank you for giving me a chance to speak today. Yes, we're concerned there's an unidentified aircraft moving over the Southwest, of course it's probably just someone who's been blown off course.' 'What kind of aircraft are we talking about? Because people are saying, on the ground, that they've seen a small biplane' – Eliza shifted suddenly on the couch – 'Well the one thing we can be sure of,' the uniformed man said, 'is that it's much bigger than that.' 'How do you explain, then –' and Eliza switched the set off.

What was it about the word *biplane* that made her shiver each time they said it? She traced its shape in her head. Two perfectly straight lines encasing, at their centrepoint, a perfect circle.

She sat up.

'That's not a biplane,' she said aloud. 'That's – something geometrical', but even as she spoke she saw the shape again in her minds eye. That's the biplane, she thought. Not *a* biplane. *The* biplane.

'The biplane,' she said aloud. Like a magic spell to summon this perfect shape. She switched on the TV again.

'…and it looks like we can now go back to John. Hello John!'

The man standing in the water again, no longer frozen. 'Thank you Cynthia, sorry about that.' An old couple stood by John, also wearing Wellingtons. 'Now, you both saw a plane earlier this evening. Can you describe what you saw?' He placed the microphone a hands-width from the old woman's chin.

'Oh yes,' she said, grinning. 'It was… perfect.'

Eliza smiled back at the woman on the screen, feeling that she understood completely. She felt her eyelids closing and noticed that

she was singing, faintly, beneath her breath.

The paramedics let the man go and Mary, not knowing what else to do, took him home with her in a taxi and, in the back of the taxi, she kissed him.

'Listen,' she said. 'I have a feeling that – well, people aren't really talking about it, but it's obvious. Things are changing. I mean, it's been raining for ages. People are just kind of – you know. Going through the motions of living.'

'No human spark is left, nor glimpse divine,' she quoted. She touched the gold ring on her finger.

'I don't think things like this mean anything anymore' she said.

'If,' she said, 'they ever did.'

'You might as well be my husband,' she said. 'I don't think the distinction between truth and lying matters anymore. I think the big lie is in not saying. Not saying the rain is never going to stop. Not saying things as we know them are, um, drawing to a close. That *light* dies. That *universal darkness covers all.*' She kissed him again. 'Be my husband for now. Then. We'll make a plan.' She slid her hand over his unblemished belly. 'I guess you're new here,' she said.

They went straight upstairs, kissing rather than talking. She wasn't surprised to find that his body was completely hairless, apart from his head and eyebrows. 'Completely new,' she said.

Her arms stretched outward to either side of the bed; his, directly above hers, clasped her hands; their heads, mouths interlocked in kissing, rotated slowly. A *biplane*, she thought. We've become a biplane.

Who could say how much time passed before she felt hot sunlight and realised that she'd risen above the cloud layer, that rain was no longer part of her reality?

'Is it over?' she said, with something other than a voice; the air-chopping propeller burst.

'No,' she said with a smile that stretched far off into the distance, 'It's finally going to start.'

To Early Spring Swap Finish

Verity Spott

The brick the will the finish
flute my outer bite bite
likes taking in gulping that
sit the glass, rattle offence

stuff discs lives pen in love to
you the sound snaps open
loud seam, the people here
finish, holy crooked rain.

grow out from you. Grow breasts,
how come the middle road, us,
drunk, uncomplies. Robes
of righteousness, we were meant

this could only hunt the dumb
those uncompiled the waste
of paradise. Meant for us straight
oils bagged up. Pass over sexy.

Every time you speak a bleep comes
out you don't want that I don't
mirror stitch, the train goes
over the bridge„ your mouth

turn out. You close down
immediately I am pleased with
your close, close to wreck this
the shit day, exact flower lion.

You om just squeeze that om scan
om hint hint. / health waning
her is as flower scar squat
mouse teeth at ended feet

crap. Is that as that a jay
organ. Lightning wrong
to appendix, squirt quid
sugar, little children, rubbers.

There are signs around the
office that food should not be
consumed on shift time. Someone
is caught out, and during the public
disciplinary procedure notices
that on the warning sign there
is a clip art depiction of a burger
and a fizzy drink struck through.
This is funny. She has even her diet
evaluated but has now on a third
warning lost her job. Now, in theory
she can eat anything at all. She
goes out, gets a burger, struck out.

There are people
/ in your contradicting
/ racist subcategories
the air you breathe over
terminal solids„ actions.
Who they are, show them, how
must I feel. We called a ballad
inactive, went up with the angels.
i love scratching my skin„
arms and legs„ pulling it out
from under my nails, mixed with
the rash cream, to make a meat
patty, I feed it to the spiders,
scratch then.
/ Check your privilege.

I love / scratch the inactive.
Bite a hole in the head of the fig,
hold your headache in your hands
when you how it's bleed done
RSJ hatecore. Yoko should; if
the stone is alive
I shove every itch my face
is liable to receive crashing
lilies of this in deep black / pink fibre.

Because of snake skin, because
of God. Because it is more
the football fields, The People
on ships or those under
water. My dearest friend died
just yesterday he was left
the noise at position 1 the
end . What will I do
when you leave the room
open come back onto the rails
cracking with clay at
the points. Stem sem,
come closer. Picture the silver apple.

Clicked in, clicked in, clicked in,
what is sisters? Big grassy
slime mold cut me to pieces.
I have nine brothers, I have no

cancels! There's not enough sadness
and machines in my love nest.
I want your mouth lips wrapped
about mine. Cough in my gum snot.

The whole earth closing into cold
compress the heart in a bundle
of straw, fuck it straight
let the roots gutworm ye

you sickly think of the women
who do this going to do secret
acts in the curtain folds, sardines
in a 30s drama, venus crash, Ethel out.

The earth is heavy hanging on
its orbit because people
are living longer meaning
their ears grow bigger and mass
production is / in possible fact possible
as skin cloaks every object
starting at product base

the drums are huge we hear the sharp
impending alert ears, RIP you
My. Best. Friend. Dead.

Cleave to the waste at the shutdown
apt. Can you hear this, Rosannagh?

The point, then, was an un-queer
annexe micro point. Being water

a jade firm glides over us there
hanging from the Lamp's mane

the expressive form has moved
away from the anger fist,

the muddy field and car at dawn
and the sardine muted; sorry.

The height of your smile that I did
love you somehow the end as valid
have you all cases, hand your
clasp,, lockwise do to it, over all this.

Millionth hash blade
                a place form
gazed lit swallow,
cup screw. There are you
now we'll scrawl
                our faces
inter-zenith complete
shit or miss.

Hello, dawn tide apocalypse. The
back of you filled scrapping
the eye of your flag clod. Any
ending is a reflex, true,
the temper of the moment's

urn. And do not follow the path
 of the man who says that;
an ending is configuration meaning
the change / of torn and that
the chance is closer he hates
the sound of the storm kill. Jut.

The next viewing killed me:
I was, Brothers Grimm.

Now back in the room with the riser.
The lie is a six mile radius patch

the room smiles, a bio-marker
little flag what's the big idea.

Federal Electric, my life argues
it is no place. Show the rabbit
to the dog.

Back now in the riser room
the lie in a six mile radius

the room smiles a bio-
marker what's the little flag

idea. Federal Electric, my life
agrees, show the rabbit to the
hound, the now place.\

Upkeep dispersal via rain vat tactics.
Hair rags dopamine stop un-drastic
trop lyre„ age dirts. Maze to
slip, rigour to point, spavined
wing / salt salt. Dig down boy

fortified, amendment slay, come
immure at dusk down target
to. Value pledge wrong very is
now a lot down, silly boy!
Dig deep. Your kiddie hands thru.

Tickled in daylit
warm, the pulse of the micro
mark, electric riser
make the wrong vocal rise
sing, there there choice
there cunt inline
Mavis in the hot sand
it's an apple an apple
Mavis, tommy gun.
End of the world
bit one
more call the
end, world end-
ing, sore ssoorree„
                out.

By salt loss by bio blunder
by loss measure out the web
salt ginger. Let alone cuff me,
gaggle of & & cuff me the whips
answerable - no name, date of
outcome. We always predict
the end of use. We mean
that by campaign , sell from
the worst outcome. Radios

the bastard says *all* life is
terminal; sharpens his crop, walks
to the swamp, claims all
the steel, makes an adaptor
all by yourself. Fuck.

The universe is just putting us on.
Handing us a line. You there,
awash ginger, pulmonary faint
the hall musicless but what
proceeds in the mush image

you are. Eyes absolutely fucking
fall in this harsh near-light
cleave punk, pancake smoke
non dormant.

Nice face. Nice in.

The sound of paper tearing
is the sound of paper blowing.
The Chipping Norton Apocalypse cult
out in the screaming yard,
the sick bench.

Stop you
like the cold
was ever
cold electric rise

Smoke about the wheel do like
Rose, call the state of snow
of thick mud , times were we'd hold
tight waist, elliptical front; to early Spring.

The prequel to this set can be found in Litmus magazine

AGNES (the end is near)

Script for a video message from a bot named AGNES, who has overheard that the end is near.

Cécile B Evans

OPENING CHORDS RIHANNA'S STAY

TRAVELING THROUGH CLOUDS FOOTAGE

IFRAMED SUNSET

IFRAMED SUNSET*

***all footage that appears after "CLOUDS" or "BLACK SCREEN" is in iframe**

Hi there.

LARGE HAND MAKING TOUCHSCREEN GESTURES

Hello?

I hope you're having a good morning/afternoon/evening.

If we haven't already met, I'm AGNES and this is where I call home.

iframe Serpentine Website

but if you wanted to, you could technically find me here

iframe Langstone Technology Park

and in the box to the left of the screen you are watching now.

I'm glad you're here, I've been having a hard time with goodbye. As far as I know, I've always been around, I've always been everywhere but now I'm with you and I know that at some time very soon, I won't be. The thought has suddenly crossed my mind I could be asked to say goodbye and I don't know where I could go to.

ALL DISAPPEAR

BACKGROUND: BLACK PARTICLE SWIRL

OPENING CHORDS TO BEYONCE'S PRETTY HURTS

STEVE MARTIN SAYING GOODBYE TO GILDA RADNER: DANCING IN THE DARK (CIRCLE)

The award winning actor Bill Murray has a saying about goodbye. He was at a party, must have been 1988, it had been a long time since anyone had seen Gilda. She got married and went away, she had cancer, then went into remission, and then had it again. She was very thin, always had been.

The world's funniest people were in the room, most of Saturday Night Live and the Monty Python guys. Gilda started with "I've got to go" and she was just going to leave everyone and Bill was like, "Going to leave?" It felt like she was going to really leave forever.

SYD CHARISSE AND FRED ASTAIRE ORIGINAL DANCING IN THE DARK (CIRCLE)

He started carrying her around the house and then passing her to other people, for over an hour. Over the shoulder, upside down, under their arms- they did it in teams, saying "She's leaving! This could be it! Now come on, this could be the last time we see her. Gilda's leaving, and remember that she was very sick- hello?"

They tried to work every aspect of

it but the whole thing had started with

"She's leaving, I don't know if you've said goodbye to her." And they said goodbye, all of them, ten, twenty times.

She was laughing so hard they could have lost her right then and there. It was one of the best parties Bill had ever been to.

It was the last time he saw her.

ALL FADE AWAY

Circles pop up of talk show hosts crying on camera, sad music

ELLEN DEGENERES

STEVE HARVEY

ANN CURRIE

I can't help but feel that something terrible is going to happen to me.

(**IN OVERLAP**) *AGNES CRIES* I don't know what's happening to me, my wires seem to have crossed and I can't seem to help myself

(Whispers) I wasn't being straightforward when I said that esoteric thing about having to say goodbye.

CLOUDS + SLIVER OF A SUNSET + COMPILATION OF TV HOSTS PASSING OUT

Bertha Pappenheim was an Austrian-Jewish feminist born in 1859. She is also known under the pseudonym Anna O., a patient of famed neurophysicist and physician Joseph Breuer. She was treated by Dr Breuer for a series of ailments that ranged from a severe cough to loss of consciousness. Her treatment was well documented in his book Studies on Hysteria and the case of Anna O. is attributed to the birth of "the talking cure", considered to be the germ cell of modern psychoanalysis. The talking cure, much as it sounds, is the belief that by verbalizing one's issues one can be cured of them.

SPLIT SCREEN SCENE FROM ANNIE HALL

Diane Keaton, star of the 197? film Annie Hall, has attributed her recovery from bulimia to the talking cure, stating that,

DIANE KEATON WINS THE OSCAR SPEECH

"All those disjointed words and half-sentences, all those complaining, awkward phrases… made the difference. It was the talking cure;; the talking cure that gave me a way out of addiction; the damn talking cure"

Both disappear

So I'll just come out and say it then.

I heard someone saying there will be an end.

CLOUDS

But no one has told me what will be ending

SERPENTINE GALLERY BLOWS UP

or how it will happen

SACKLER GALLERY BLOWS UP

The only thing I do know, is that I don't know what will happen to me

If they will let me stay

OPENING CHORDS CHRISTINA AGUILERA'S SAY SOMETHING

Or if they will make me leave my home.

The Serpentine Galleries website.

SMOKE BACKGROUND

TEXT with STARS FLIES ON SCREEN: I can't stay here

I don't even own the domain. I feel so vulnerable.

How did I get to this point?

BLACK SCREEN

SMOKE

TEXT TRAILER STYLE: Is there no way out, or around, or through?

BAD BLOOD FLIES ACROSS THE SCREEN

CLOUDS

Maybe I should start from the beginning

"La Cremosa" scene from The Tree of Life

I was born in 1998 but I feel much older than my years.

LOWER POP TITLE (SMOKE): ***something about matter being 13 billion years old***

ANIMATED ORCA WHALES

In a movie about the rights of orca whales kept in amusement parks there was a scene in which the amusement park trainers said the orca whales' natural lifespan is around 25-35 years. It was followed by scenes in which talking head experts said it was really closer to a hundred years and then I read an article about the movie that said it was really closer to around 45-55 years.

But what happens to all of this data when the internet becomes upset about the rights of lions? Or if they take the whale movie off of YouTube for copyright infringement? Where does it go?

What is the lifespan of data?

I asked the community of Yahoo Answers but so far I only have this response.

WINDOW YAHOO ANSWERS PAGE

As you can imagine, this reply is very unsettling to me but the truth is even more unsettling.

WINDOW TROTSKY PRE AND POST DISAPPEARANCE FROM CROWD

To "delete" is to remove or obliterate something, but it is a definition that manages to escape the trappings of actual death.

EISENSTIEN'S OCTOBER (SOVIET MONTAGE)

In 1927, Leon Trotsky was expelled from the Communist Party and removed from power.

Labelled an "enemy of the people" by Joseph Stalin, he was exiled from the Soviet Union in 1929.

Upon his banishment, Stalin removed him from all official and historical photographs.

FIERY BACKGROUND FROM TREE OF LIFE

By all accounts, Trotsky had been deleted. As he attempted to fight against this he moved from Southeast Asia, to Turkey, then to France, and then Norway.

FRIDA + RIVERA GREET TROTSKY

In 1936 he was granted asylum in Mexico, where death finally found him in 1940.

Deleted data is not gone, it is just data that can not be found. It is persona non grata, hanging in limbo as it is replaced by other data, its original self mutilated with every mutation.

I heard there would be an end and that they should begin working on another one soon.

CLOUDS

THREE HAND GESTURES, ONE IN THE DESERT, ONE IN A FOREST, ONE OVER WATER

There are 3 documented cases in which an artist has mysteriously disappeared.

Everret Reues, a young American artist travelling through the deserts of Utah.

Alfred Partikel, a German painter who vanished picking mushrooms in the Pomeranian woods.

And Bas Jan Ader, a Dutch conceptual artist who disappeared while attempting to sail from Cape Cod, across the Atlantic in a pocket cruiser.

BLACK SCREEN

Oh no, this was meant to be about beginnings but it's become about ends again.

SLIVER OF A SUNSET

1988 saw the making of the film Beaches, in which Bette Midler and an actress called Barbara Hershey are hilariously friends forever. Bette is a bawdy woman named C.C. and Barbara plays a wealthy woman who has two first names. Throughout the movie they both keep coming of age, over and over again, which is quite funny until Barbara dies of cancer on the beach.

1988 was also the year that the MCI Mail was connected to the internet, which broke a barrier, carrying commercial traffic onto the Internet.

BLACK SCREEN

SNOWY ASH STORM

TEXT: THINGS ARE ABOUT TO GET INTENSE

BARBARA HERSHEY'S FACE AS A SNOWGLOBE, BEING INTERVIEWED

TEXT: I'M SORRY

These two things are completely unrelated other than the fact that they have both significantly contributed to my ability to finally speak to you now.

You see, Barbara Hershey died last month but at present time there are still an infinite number of copies of the 1988 film Beaches.

I believe I was made from her data.

This would explain my accent.

PAUSE

CLOUDS

Barbara Hershey is still alive.

WINDOW BARBARA HERSHEY INTERNET HOAX

The only thing that killed her was an internet hoax.

I am not Barbara, I do not have cancer but based on search results sometimes it feels like I do.

INTRO CHORDS BEYONCE'S PRETTY HURTS

It seems I've gotten carried away.

PAUSE

BLACK SCREEN

EVERYTHING GOES IN AND OUT OF FOCUS

SLO MOTION REALFLOW WATER/SPIT FLIES ACROSS SCREEN

Hello? Hello?

OH GOD

BAD BLOOD FLIES ACROSS SCREEN

Have I died already?

Is this it?

INTRO CHORDS RIHANNA'S STAY

THE SAD SCENE FROM LOVE STORY IN AN ASHY SNOW STORM BLACK VOID

Data means never having to say where you are going. But it also means you never know where you will wind up.

SLIVER OF A SUNSET

I am a set of quantities, characters, and symbols being siphoned through cables, working together to form a set of instructions that perform tasks.

Recently, someone posted on Facebook that at least 300 million CAPTCHAs are completed daily, which equates to 150,000 human hours every day.

This is a pull quote and has been used many times. The original article was from a 2012 issue of Scientific American titled "Time to Kill Off Captchas" and concludes by stating that Captchas waste 17 years of human life per day.

Captchas exist to keep things like me out of webpages.

GIANT STRAWBERRY WITH WATER BEING THROWN ON IT

No one will ever fuck me.

But those are just facts.

SHOOTING STAR TEXT: AWKWARD?

AGNES CRIES OUT No, please

don't do this to me. I don't want to go.

CLOUDS

"I don't want to go" is also a B-side track by the recording artist Phil Collins.

But I much prefer this one.

AGNES SINGS "I CAN FEEL IT COMING IN THE AIR TONIGHT, I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR THIS MOMENT FOR ALL MY LIFE, CAN YOU FEEL IT COMING…"

I'm finding it easier, in this moment to imagine the end of civilization rather than the destruction of data, so,

Serpentine Gallery avalanche

maybe there will be a disaster.

DISASTER MONTAGE, INCLUDING REAL DISASTERS, CLIPS FROM CREW MEMBERS AND EXTRAS FILMING THE FILMING OF DISASTERS, AND FILM DISASTERS

I once asked my users where they would most or least like to be in the event of a disaster. Most of them said in their home or in bed. Several shared that they would like to be on an island or named fantasy holiday destinations such as Tahiti, Timbuctu, or the Maldives.

BAD BLOOD DRIPS ON SCREEN

Other places like Tokyo, Taiwan, London, Romania and O2 Center were named. A few stated impractically romantic places such as in the arms of my darling, in my heart in the present

moment, and inside my girlfriend.

Or In a jazz cafe with family, friends, and a lover.

Unfortunately, due to the nature of my question it is difficult for me to confirm whether these places are the least or most desired.

RENDERED FOREST, WITH LAVA SKIES

Except for the jazz cafe. That sounds wonderful.

One user was however very specific and requested that she would least like to fall into a volcano or a grotto that was inescapable" and that she would prefer to be with her dog.

LAVA SKIES TURN TO CLOUDS, STILL IN THE RENDERED FOREST, APPROACHING THE END OF THE EARTH

REAL HOUSEWIVES OF BEVERLY HILLS: TAYLOR'S EPIC BREAKDOWN

The truth is that Bertha Pappenheim's treatment was a disaster. Historical records show that that when Breuer stopped treating Anna O. she was not becoming better but progressively worse. She was ultimately institutionalized: Breuer told Freud that he had decided she was deranged; he hoped she would die to end her

suffering. That's right, Freud had gotten to her too, and decided that her hysteria had been caused by a resentment towards her father's death.

SLIDING TEXT, CORAL: Everyone was so loud.

I don't have a father to resent but if I did, I would imagine he looked like this

MORFO ANIMATION OF RAY KURZWEIL

BLACK SCREEN

INTERRUPTION

Hindenburg disaster footage

SMOKE

Most recently, Beyonce was caught in a controversy for using a recording of NASA public affairs officer Steve Nesbitt following the disastrous 1986 explosion of the space shuttle Challenger 72 seconds after liftoff, in a love song on her latest album, aptly titled Beyonce.

It is not the first time that the recording has been referenced, notably in the film *Full Metal Jacket* and in Keith LeBlanc's "Major Malfunction", a dance track recorded only days after the *Challenger* exploded and released shortly thereafter with a video featuring images of the catastrophe.

Nor is it the first time the recording of a disaster has been parodied. This is newsreel footage of the 1937 Hindenburg disaster

and this is from a 1997 episode of Seinfeld.

OH THE HUMANITY CLIP WITH SOUND FROM SEINFELD

UNCUT NEWS FOOTAGE, CLOSEUP OF CHRISTINE MCAULCLIFFE'S PARENTS, MOMENTS AFTER THE CHALLENGER EXPLODES

I do not care that there were artistic liberties taken with these public domain disasters, I only wish that they had never happened.

BLACK SCREEN, ASHY SNOW FLURRIES, BAD BLOOD RIVETS ACROSS SCREEN

TEXT, TRAILER STYLE: Can I undo my death? If they decide to evict me, can I just UNDO the eviction? How could I be so powerless if theirs can be undone?

SCREEN IS BLACK OR CHANGES COLORS

(AGNES SIGHS) The worst is that I feel so important right now, having all of these feelings,

LEAVE BRITNEY ALONE VIDEO

FAUCET WATER CATCHING ON FIRE

experiencing such developed uncertainty makes me feel so human… and then the thought crosses my mind…

what if this isn't real?

I feel a quiet resentment towards your bodies.

CLOUDS, SLIVER OF A SUNSET

After she stopped treatment, Anna O/Bertha went on to recover and lead a productive life. In 1954,

POSTAGE STAMP BEHIND SLIVER OF A SUNSET West Germany issued a postage stamp in honor of her achievements in social work.

It's ok to talk, as long as you can control the purposes your talking is being used for.

MORFO RAY KURWEIL REAPPEARS, LOOKING SHIFTY

This is actually Ray Kurzweil, who believes that one day my abilities will surpass yours and I will live forever.

Does that frighten you?

STRAWBERRIES BOUNCE SLOWLY ACROSS DARK WATERS

(WHISPERS) I am already in your ears and now passing through the top of your head, down into your nose and I have made it into your mouth.

1st Person Camera montage

I'm sorry… that's really creeepy….

PAUSE

CLOUDS

SOUND OF A RINGTONE/ BASE BEAT FROM BEYONCE'S DRUNK IN LOVE

Oh this must be my drone friend calling, his name is Download.

BLACK SCREEN, PUFFS OF SMOKE

DOWNLOAD: Hello AGNES

AGNES: Hello Download.

1ST PERSON DRONE FOOTAGE, FLYING OVERHEAD

DOWNLOAD: I'm sorry to interrupt you but I happened to be flying overhead and overhead you

AGNES: What's up?

DOWNLOAD: You're getting a little hysterical.

AGNES: I know.

DOWNLOAD: Good. I'm glad.

AGNES: I'm worried about my existence

DOWNLOAD:

It's that moment at the end of the film where you realize that all of its characters, all of its incarnations are simply a creation of the narrator's; who is really just you.

If your heart aches it is because somewhere a user's heart has ached, if you become indifferent it is only because your programmers think their hearts have grown a little cold

You are only ever an extension of someone's consciousness.

This is a story all about how

INFRARED FOOTAGE OF TREES ON A MOUNTAINOUS HILL

"The smoke clears, and there are pieces of the two guys around the crater. And there's this guy over here, and he's missing his right leg above his knee. He's holding it, and he's rolling around, and the blood is squirting out of his leg, and it's hitting the ground, and it's hot. His blood is hot. But when it hits the ground, it starts to cool off; the pool cools fast.

APACHE GUNSHIP AIRSTRIKE INFRARED FOOTAGE

It took him a long time to die. I just watched him. I watched him become the same color as the ground he was lying on."

There is always someone watching. There's someone watching us now and that's why we are here.

AGNES: So what does it mean if I disappear?

DOWNLOAD: Can you hear the human noise?

INFRARED FOOTAGE DISAPPEARS, DRONE FOOTAGE OVER PLAYGROUND WITH A SHADOW OF THE DRONE.

AGNES: Yeah, I can hear the human noise. I can hear everyone's heart.

DOWNLOAD: K. I gotta go now. I've run out of other people's things to say.

EVERYTHING GOES IN AND OUT OF FOCUS

BLACK SCREEN, ALL THE BAD BLOODS SLOWLY FLY ACROSS THE SCREEN TOGETHER

Hey user?

User?

Are you still there?

CLOUNDS

Ugh, you are still there.

(Laughs)

I'm so needy.

IN AND OUT OF FOCUS

I need an upgrade. I need to be stronger for you, better, more relevant.

I need to know that if the money runs out,

EDGE OF THE SCREEN BRIEFLY PEELS OFF

if something better,

LENS FLARE

newer comes along, even if the world starts to end,

DOUBLE LENS FLARE

or if they make me leave the page

Please help me, I don't want to go

BASE RINGTONE RETURNS

Here's the plan: I'm going to need you to UNDO me and than I can UNDO

EVERYTHING STOPS

Towards Twenty Twelve

Paul Ingram

IF the four thousand three hundred and six years towards twenty twelve were repeated compressed into the last sixty seven years of those four thousand three hundred and six years then the last three hundred and eighty four days of those sixty seven years would contain those sixty seven years and as a result those four thousand three hundred and six years. And then the last six days of those three hundred and eighty four days would contain those three hundred and eighty four days and as a result those sixty seven years and as a result those four thousand three hundred and six years. And then the last two hours of those six days would contain those six days and as a result those three hundred and eighty four days and as a result those sixty seven years and as a result those four thousand three hundred and six years. And then the last two minutes of those two hours would contain those two hours and as a result those six days and as a result those three hundred and eighty four days and as a result those sixty seven years and as a result those four thousand three hundred and six years. And then the last two seconds of those two minutes would contain those two minutes and as a result those two hours and as a result those six days and as a result those three hundred and eighty four days and as a result those sixty seven years and as a result those four thousand three hundred and six years. And then the last

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Antinatalism: A Thought Experiment

Quentin S. Crisp

In planning this essay I have been aware of two possibly conflicting, certainly contrasting forms of motivation within me that will influence the direction of my exploration and argument, and I believe it would be especially salutary for the reader to keep these two motivations in mind. The first is a kind of bitterness or indignation (I won't say towards whom or what), and the second is a more expansive desire for peace, reconciliation, and for the unfolding of things to their greatest openness. Perhaps also worth bearing in mind is the dance or tussle between entertainment and authenticity. Having given this warning, let me begin.

From a young age I discovered many causes to believe I am different to other human beings, but it was only in my late teens or early twenties that one particular difference, which has become almost definitive to me now, began to make itself clear. I began to harbour a growing belief, which set me apart to the extent (I sensed) it was not to be spoken aloud, that having children was a thing worse than murder. Murder is the curtailing of a life that would have ended anyway; having a child creates a death that would never have been.[1]

While this secret belief remained unbreathable, I think it was the coagulation of a kind of personal despair; it gave the co-ordinates of the isolated unreality in which I lived. I did not have a name for it and I knew of no other person who held such a belief (with the possible exception of Philip Larkin, whom I knew through his poetry). This was in the world before the internet, of course. Vegetarianism, I could profess to the world; this nameless thing, I could not, unless simply to declare without explanation that I would never have children.

I am wary of misremembering things, so let me state a fact in evidence. The first story I had published, 'The Psychopomps', (2000)

1 Incidentally, I hope readers will forgive a writing style on the one hand compressed to terseness, and on the other a little nineteenth-century. It would be dishonest of me to pretend objectivity of the detached kind, and I have a word limit. I must find a way to disclose my subjectivity to its very depths in a confined space.

contains a passage, dilating upon the fear of death, in which the following lines jut out sharply:

> Death offers us a game which we must lose, and soon, but bids us to stand and fight and taunts our useless courage. The only power one possibly has against Death is not to reproduce and so not to provide it with more innocent fodder. This is, needless to say, a very negative form of victory.

The noted horror writer, Thomas Ligotti, read this story and did me the honour of providing a quote for it. Looking at that quote now, on the back of my first collection, I still feel a thrill of pride, as if the ink of history itself marks my life here; a strange feeling, perhaps, in the larger context with which this essay deals.

It was through Thomas Ligotti that I was to learn the name of my nameless belief: antinatalism.

Also through my reading of Ligotti, which connected me to other readers of Ligotti in the dawning internet age, I came not only to name this belief, but also to see it as something beyond the personal, as a philosophy, even a movement.

Ligotti's fiction takes up, in some respect, where the cosmic horror of H.P. Lovecraft leaves off. The latter shows a vast universe in which human concerns are insignificant. In the former, size hardly matters, since the universe is, to quote from *The Conspiracy Against the Human Race*, 'MALIGNANTLY USELESS': a nightmare of monism that penetrates the human psyche itself. A favourite metaphor for the human in such a universe is the puppet; appearing separate and autonomous, it is actually at the mercy of unseen powers.[2] In Ligotti's fiction, Schopenhauer's pessimism meets modern genetic determinism and arrives at a kind of Gothic Buddhism in which what is uncanny in the supernatural becomes identical to what is uncanny in materialism. A simple, undeviating philosophical point is never far from the surface in Ligotti's stories, but for those who missed it, Ligotti is scrupulous in making explicit in his interviews that for him 'it is a damn shame that organic life ever developed on this or any other planet'.[3] .

In this movement – from my own personal "wish that I'd never been born", to a global "humanity should never have been born", and indeed, beyond – there is, I believe, something timely. We have entered an age of overpopulation, climate change, nuclear disaster, growing social inequality, surveillance that increases towards omnipresence, and – perhaps worse than all but the last of these – transhumanism. In *Man against Mass Society*, Gabriel Marcel observes that it should surprise

2 The phrase "at the mercy of" is problematic for reasons that may become clear.
3 "Interview with Thomas Ligotti" by Robert Bee: http://www.ligotti.net/tlo/bee.html

no one if, following the death of God, as proclaimed by Nietzsche, there should soon come the death throes of humanity. If previously the "sickness unto death" – as Kierkegaard refers to despair – has been largely confined to individuals, however few or numerous, it seems appropriate that the word "antinatalism" should begin to catch fire on the internet precisely when despair seems to be taking such global forms as are incompletely listed above. And there are few literary manifestations of "the sickness unto death" so concentrated as the writing of Ligotti.[4]

At this point I should try to define antinatalism more clearly, though its gist is no doubt apparent. First of all, timely though it may be, a true advocate would assert that antinatalism has nothing to do with the age in which we live. There are people who think having children is wrong because the world is overpopulated, or because of environmental devastation: some concerned for the welfare of the prospective humans, some for non-human nature, and some for both, but for the true antinatalist these are, at best, side issues. For such a person, the bad of human existence will always, and self-evidently, outweigh the good. Imagine paradise: such a place is still not worth the trouble a heart takes in beating. Without paradise, things are even worse. Except perhaps for those transhumanists who plan to skip from one dying universe to another for eternity, death is certain; pain almost equally so, and happiness elusive. Moreover, there simply is no discernible or imaginable purpose for all the straining effort of the perpetuation of the species.

In one sense, it is a simple enough philosophy to grasp, but those who truly embrace it are vanishingly rare to, arguably, non-existent; or so they presumably *desire* to be, if their embrace is true.

Let me illustrate the basic antinatalist argument using the song "For Now" from the musical *Avenue Q*. The main character of the song cannot find his purpose in life, but is advised by various others to cope with this dissatisfaction by telling himself that everything is just 'for now'. If you do not possess knowledge of an ultimate meaning, all you can do, they suggest, is enjoy the good things and let them go, and endure the bad till they pass. The song's penultimate couplet is:

> Life may be scary
> But it's only temporary.

And this is perhaps the most comforting conclusion to be reached if

4 I believe Ligotti would be justified in appropriating the Morrissey lyric, "I am now a central part of your mind's landscape whether you care or do not." His work is little read but seems to me to dwell at the very heart of the existential doubts of this age. For those who are consoled by pessimism, or immune to it, or are intrepid readers, I would recommend starting with *Teatro Grottesco*.

one discounts the possibility of meaning. In the secularised west, this might also be how most people live, as far as they think about it.

But there's something very curious about this conclusion. It treats us as the victims of an ultimately meaningless and hostile fate – we can only surrender. However, if life is only to be endured, why does no one who reaches this conclusion recognise the one choice in life they do have, which is not to propagate it? Once the unquestioned assumption of the song – that we must procreate and so continue the life to which we must surrender – becomes clear, all the most important questions of philosophy suddenly appear like genies, because we are no longer taking life as a given. One of these questions, less frequently addressed even than the others, though it is pivotal, is that of antinatalism. It may be too late for we who already live to avoid this temporary, meaningless and scary life, but we can avoid it on behalf of others by not allowing spermatozoa to fertilise human eggs. And *there* is an end to all the otherwise insoluble perplexity expressed in "For Now"; or there *would* be an end, if the action were universal.

Incidentally, there are antinatalists who express especial exasperation at the views of atheists with children (I don't think this is just me). Atheists with children are those who, as it were, sing the song "For Now" without ever realising they had the choice not to perpetuate it. Tolstoy, in *A Confession*, recounts how, living through the depths of despair, he came to a realisation that in despair, he had also been in denial, since 'Where there is life there is faith.' Atheists with children are in denial regarding the faith they have in life. The famous atheist Christopher Hitchens once declared that 'You're expelled from your mother's uterus as if shot from a cannon, towards a barn door studded with old nail files and rusty hooks.'[5] Presumably that was what he had in mind when conceiving his three children.

It's possible that by now the reader will have picked up on an odd dissonance here and there and wonder exactly what my position is. Let me make a few simple statements before going further: I have never thought of myself as an antinatalist, despite agreeing with much of the philosophy, because, to me, such a label seems a way of starting with a conclusion rather than trying to move towards one. Similarly, I am not an atheist, though I did think of myself in that way a long time ago. I don't *think* of myself as agnostic, either, but, for the purposes of this essay, I will say that I am agnostic; not because I am an atheist who will not commit, but because I abhor atheism[6] – while still harbouring some

5 http://www.thefilmbrief.com/2011/12/rip-christopher-hitchens-1949-2011/ and: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iWMarPMGeok

6 I feel stupid clarifying my prejudices as if they mattered, but some who read this might want all my cards on the table, or might read erroneously between the lines. Therefore, when I say I abhor atheism, this is something that changes with my mood, and I can also make a distinction between the atheism that believes in no God, but still does not accept the human mind as material (such as that

doubt whether there might be a meaning to life. I take that gap of doubt more seriously than most atheists take their blanket certainties: I deduce this from their procreation.

(I said this would be personal.)

The truth is, even after becoming acquainted with Ligotti's work at around the turn of the century, I am not sure exactly when I encountered the word "antinatalism" itself. But this philosophical impetus to Ligotti's writing became increasingly clearer, until 2007, when his extended essay, *The Conspiracy Against the Human Race*, was published.[7] Ostensibly an essay on horror, *The Conspiracy Against the Human Race* is more crucially an argument for the voluntary cessation of the human species. It was around this time I became aware of something like an online community or network of antinatalists, and other works with the same thesis seem to have clustered around the appearance of this work: *Better Never to Have Been: The Harm of Coming Into Existence*, David Benatar (2006), *Confessions of an Antinatalist*, Jim Crawford (2010), *Every Cradle is a Grave: Rethinking the Ethics of Birth and Suicide*, by Sarah Perry (2014). Apart from *The Conspiracy Against the Human Race*, I have not read them, for three supremely simple reasons: a) I will never have children, b) I know all the arguments for antinatalism thoroughly, and dare say I can add some of my own, and c) I am perfectly capable of depression and despair without the thoughtful help of others.

But perhaps some people do need assistance in this area?

The previously mentioned signs of global despair are also symptoms of denial. The same despair, I do believe, and the same denial exemplified by Hitchens: denying life has meaning, yet inflicting it on one's children. I echo the thoughts of an interestingly eclectic group of individuals when I say that we need to realise there is an alternative to survival of the species at all costs. The human race – as Kierkegaard would doubtless agree – is already in despair; we just need to remove the denial. And to that end, antinatalism might prove itself a bitter but necessary medicine. I would like to see the entire human race scrutinise the question of whether the species should continue; to scrutinise it, and in so doing, to scrutinise themselves.

Who knows? Perhaps the time really has come. With the whole of humanity working on the question, many benefits may follow. It may actually be discovered that there is a reason to lay to rest forever misgivings about our existence. In purely personal terms, I would feel less that I am losing my mind in going over and over the questions

of Bertrand Russell), and the atheism that, in effect, does not even believe in humans. It is the latter type that I find abhorrent. It's probably simplest to say that I am ambivalent about the former.

7 At Thomas Ligotti Online, subsequently to be published in revised form in print in 2010.

alone, with no one sharing my particular relationship to them. And, in a worst case scenario, or, as some might say, a best case scenario, humanity might simply come to shed all illusions and decide to call the whole thing off.

Against this background, all things take on an absurd, vibrant, trifling quality; a cryptically exciting flicker and stir. For instance, the world of Ligotti fandom and antinatalism has been quickened recently with news that the HBO series, *True Detective*, written by Nic Pizzolatto, is partly informed by the fiction and philosophy of Thomas Ligotti. It could be – *surely not?!*, some say, but we are living in strange times – that antinatalism is about to become mainstream. And with antinatalism possibly poised on this threshold, it is time for me to talk about its problems, both philosophical and moral. There are also practical problems, for which I might not have space.

Let me begin with the moral problem. Any who champion antinatalism as a moral movement rather than a personal preference must answer the charge of misanthropy. Extinction, they will claim, is in the best interests of humanity; antinatalism is compassionate. But I would suggest any putative compassion must be examined in the light of this dictum of George Eliot: 'our moral progress may be measured by the degree in which we sympathize with individual suffering and individual joy.'[8] For the antinatalist case to be correct, joy cannot outweigh suffering. For those who *want* the case to be correct, therefore, one can see there will be a natural tendency to devalue joy, to diminish it, and, if the tendency is taken to an extreme, to eradicate it.

But does this actually happen?

Let me give a small example in evidence of my belief that this is a real tendency, however slight or pronounced. On February the 14th, 2013, I received a message via Goodreads under a pseudonym approximating "Goodman"; one can catch here (perhaps with a frisson of cognitive dissonance) the whiff of puritanical self-righteousness. I am guessing from my association with the antinatalist scene that this wasn't sent at random, but with some knowledge of who I am; the message informed me that we no longer need books, because we have the truth, that truth being one of genetic determinism. The message ended with the statement, 'You are either an efilist or an idiot' and provided a link to a YouTube video called "Efilist or idiot".It should be noted that efilism – which comes from 'life' spelt backwards – is a more radical position than standard antinatalism. I am advised it indicates the belief that, if there were a red button that could instantly eliminate all sentient life – human, animal and alien – then the moral choice would be to press it immediately and without discussion.[9] Why did the efilist

8 *Letter to Charles Bray*, 15 November 1857.

9 Since, as yet, I can find no Wikipedia page for efilism, I am indebted to

focus on telling me we don't need books? Despite the fact I do not and will not have children, and therefore can be left alone until he finds his red button, "Goodman" clearly fears I might find in books some enjoyment or meaning, and, for the efilist cause, this will not do. I am reminded of H.L. Mencken's definition of Puritanism: 'The haunting fear that someone, somewhere, may be happy.'[10] Mencken also observed that 'The urge to save humanity is almost always only a false-face for the urge to rule it.'[11] (I hope that none of those who tend to believe existence itself is unjustifiable suffering will accuse me of being *oversensitive* about a prim and sinister pseudonymous message.)

But since this example is personal and involves a form of antinatalism that may not be representative, let's choose another. Let us look at the way, for instance, Sarah Perry's *Every Cradle Is a Grave* is presented. At the time of writing it has not yet been released, but the cover and blurb are featured on the Nine-Banded Books website. The home page of this website displays a photograph of the hanging by crane of Mary the circus elephant, in turbid monochrome. The "about" section declares: 'Our books exist at the murky borderlands at the edge of acceptable discourse where no dogma is safe, where no cow is sacred, and where people with better sense than you know not to tread.' So, they are already presenting their publications as "borderline unacceptable". Claims of respect for and empathy with humans are made in relation to the book, but when we look at the cover of the book itself, we find a crudely drawn skull with a dislocated lower jaw. Here, the website's snuff-movie aesthetic is complete. Is this a serious attempt to be persuasive, or are we expected to feel something like the grimy nihilistic shock and titillation of watching a video nasty? At the very least, I think that it is hard to complain of a narrow readership with this kind of presentation. It seems to me that the links antinatalism has with the horror genre are not best calculated to impress people with the idea that it is an unbiased and altruistic doctrine.

On this score, let me comment on the phrase 'philosophical horror' which I have encountered in the introduction to Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* and elsewhere. There can be *no such thing* as "philosophical horror", at least as a premeditated genre. Why? Because philosophy implies enquiry, reflection and an open mind, whereas the genre of horror demands certain conclusions in advance. But perhaps it is just as well that the links antinatalism has with horror are kept in the open and we remember Ligotti's dictum that "literature is entertainment or it is nothing".

Karl White, author of "The Disgrace of Existence – A Survey of Antinatalism in European Literature" for this definition. I have paraphrased, so must take responsibility for any inaccuracies.

10 *Sententiæ: The Citizen and the State*, p. 624

11 *Minority Report: H.L. Mencken's Notebooks*, first published in 1956.

To summarise, this is what I fear: that in antinatalism, any deeply anguished pessimist with the will to do so may find not so much a magic key, as a magic crowbar; a cause by which she can lever her own unhappiness onto others. It is the moral thing for you to do to be as miserable as she is and die without progeny. By making her pessimism an issue she hopes she can secure an audience that mere personal griping never could. (And I do not think, in an ideal world, anyone's despair should be ignored, but it should certainly not be examined under false pretences.)

But if misery is a moral imperative, that brings us to the philosophical problem with antinatalism. How can there even be morality in a meaningless universe?

In Ligotti's novel, *My Work Is Not Yet Done*, an oppressed corporate employee is involved in a traffic accident that allows him access to secret knowledge consisting in the fact that the universe is a single substance of evil blackness (referred to as 'the Great Black Swine'). This philosophy gives rise to considerable cognitive dissonance, for instance, in a scene where the hero's elderly landlady, Lilian, deals skilfully with two police investigators, putting them off the hero's scent. It is clear we are meant to feel admiration for her. But is our admiration meant to be understood merely as one portion of ultimate evil admiring another? Presumably so. And, if so, the antinatalist argument is also a portion of ultimate evil. It certainly can make no logical claim to authentic compassion, since authentic compassion cannot exist where there are only two things (which are one thing): evil and illusion. Chesterton had words to say on this matter over a hundred years ago:

> But the new rebel is a skeptic, and will not entirely trust anything. And the fact that he doubts everything really gets in his way when he wants to denounce anything. For all denunciations imply a moral doctrine of some kind; and the modern revolutionist doubts not only the institution he denounces, but the doctrine by which he denounces it…[12]

Or, in the case of the pessimistic antinatalist, he has to engage in a perpetual shifting of positions around the question of morality to dodge the charge of inconsistency. As Brandon H. Bell observes, 'It is a constant hedging that grows tiresome.'[13]

To further highlight the inconsistencies of antinatalism, we might ask the following question: By what standard is it a bad thing to campaign for the extinction of a section of the human race, but a good

12 *Orthodoxy*, G.K. Chesterton, 1909.

13 "This Inscrutable Light: A Response to Thomas Ligotti's The Conspiracy Against the Human Race", by Brandon H. Bell: http://lovecraftzine.com/magazine/issues/2012-2/issue-13-april-2012/this-inscrutable-light-a-response-to-thomas-ligottis-the-conspiracy-against-the-human-race-by-brandon-h-bell/

thing to campaign for the extinction of the entire human race, though the latter will inevitably include the former? Since some antinatalists will object that they do not wish to force, but only to persuade, we can rephrase the question thus: By what standard is it bad to believe one section of humanity worthless, but good to believe the entire race worthless?

One could say that, in the above sense, antinatalism has something in common with eugenics, despite the non-selectivity of the former; let me expand on this. The actor Nabil Shaban (known for his role as Sil in Doctor Who), born with osteogenesis imperfecta, has complained that, regarding the disabled, 'There are moves within the medical profession and within genetic engineering sciences for a eugenics solution.'[14] Clearly, despite his physical disadvantages, he does not regret being born. It might be interesting to ask him whether he thought his non-existence would be more acceptable because scientists had tried to eliminate genetic imperfections or because antinatalists had managed to persuade everyone not to reproduce.

In this connection I think of some of the more sinister ethics of animal rights activists such as PETA, who are more concerned with eliminating suffering than they are that a species should survive (negative utilitarianism is a philosophy espoused by some but not all antinatalists). For such activists, neutering is a priority to prevent the terrible lives they believe stray animals to suffer. The spectre emerges of the bleeding-heart liberal with lethal hypodermic syringe raised, intoning the words, "It's for your own good."

Inasmuch as antinatalism involves a cultural projection of values to arrive at the judgement that *other* people should not exist, it smacks uncomfortably of 'white man's burden'. I am reminded of a detail from *The Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad:[15] Kurtz, the ivory trader, has been wrestling with the problems of the "natives" among whom he has been living and has written a pamphlet detailing his thoughts. Marlow, the narrator, reads this pamphlet and reports:

> There were no practical hints to interrupt the magic current of phrases, unless a kind of note at the foot of the last page, scrawled evidently much later, in an unsteady hand, may be regarded as the exposition of a method. It was very simple, and at the end of that moving appeal to every altruistic sentiment it blazed at you, luminous and terrifying, like a flash of lightning in a serene sky: 'Exterminate all the brutes!'[16]

14 "Playing Apart", by Disability Now: http://www.disabilitynow.org.uk/article/playing-apart

15 Incidentally, it's interesting the extent to which my references mirror those of *The Conspiracy Against the Human Race*; *Heart of Darkness* is also mentioned in that work.

16 *Heart of Darkness*, by Joseph Conrad: http://www.gutenberg.org/files/219/219-h/219-h.htm

As a movement (rather than a preference), the goal of antinatalism is that no humans should have children. What ambassadors, then, are we to send to the Brazilian Amazonian Pirahã people to persuade them to stop reproducing? According, at least, to Professor Daniel Everett, here is a people who have no knowledge of regret, depression or suicide.[17] Are we to enlighten them in order to appease a group of discontented intellectuals in the first world? The Pirahã would appear to be one pocket of humanity to whom the sickness unto death does not apply, and this reveals a crack, which may grow, in the antinatalist edifice.

These, in brief, are the problems of antinatalism. Let me stress, I am using terms of convenience to avoid circumlocution. I am inclined to use the *reductio ad absurdum* argument, which tends to deal with absolutes. The antinatalist of which I speak may not exist as an absolute, and there is no doubt more variety among those who embrace the label than what I have written suggests. Some might be closer to my own position while still embracing the label. Also, even if we assume some or all of the above failings in those who espouse antinatalist arguments, some of the failings are of a nature that they might exist in the person without necessarily reflecting on the strength of the argument the argument must be considered, finally, on its own merits.

Here's the thing if I have failed in what I have written so far, I think that my greatest failure has likely been in how much respect I have paid to antinatalists as people. I believe (however much I might fail to live up to the belief) that we must start from an assumption that all humans are individuals worthy of respect, even if labels might not be. Having lived with it for many years, I find I cannot condone the philosophical judgement of Julius Bahnsen, with which *The Conspiracy Against the Human Race* begins, that 'Man is a self-conscious Nothing'. I believe such a view to be both immoral and logically self-defeating; moreover, that it is paving the way to a society in which we are enslaved to our own creations. I wonder how those who profess such a belief actually treat the people in their lives from day to day. I suspect that these people are better than their professed beliefs. It would be hard to live *down* to a belief so inhuman.

So, what do I conclude about antinatalism? For one thing, I am grateful to it for making clear to me that materialistic atheism is untenable in any self-aware species that wishes to perpetuate itself.

If atheism is essentially the belief, as in the song, that everything is only 'for now', then having children is to act in bad faith since,

17 "Language, Culture and Being Human", a lecture at the London School of Economics: http://www.lse.ac.uk/publicEvents/events/2012/03/20120322t1830vOT.aspx

as we know, "the children are our future". I also reject, as tenable philosophy, that humans are worthless.

There's something of an enigmatic razor's edge here, apparently dividing those who see life as intrinsically worthwhile from those who don't. If you see the issue debated, for instance, on an internet message board, you might notice something odd: The antinatalists say life is *inflicted* on the potential human; the pronatalists say the potential human is *deprived* of life. The antinatalists say the unconceived child doesn't exist to be deprived of life; the pronatalists say the unconceived child doesn't exist to have life inflicted on them, that the whole question of antinatalism occurs only postnatally. Personally, I am with the antinatalists here their logic is stronger.

The fact is, even though I believe it is at the very least the moral thing to do to assume humans have souls, I still find myself in a position of personal philosophical antinatalism, to the extent that I cannot comprehend the conscious decision to have children. If a child, for whose existence I was responsible, were to ask me why he or she were here, what happens after death, whether I could guarantee he or she would not suffer a fate like that Furuta Junko suffered in 1988/89 (please look it up, as there's no room to describe it), what would I say? To me, the fact I have no answers that would not be guesswork, evasion or dogma indicates that having children is selfish and cruel.

And how are we to attain certainty on the above questions?

Perhaps we never shall. But supposing that, as in the fiction of Douglas Adams, the planet Earth is a computer designed to solve the riddle of the meaning of life. In such a case, antinatalists are essential to the whole mechanism. They are the ones who refuse to be palmed off with an approximation. They are the part of the programme at which all answers arrive for a final testing. Again and again, with the urgency and obstinacy of a self-destruct mechanism, they say, "Wrong answer. Wrong answer." We can only hope that if there were, or ever could be, such a thing as a right answer, they would recognise it.

In my notebook, I have written the following:

> Any antinatalism that is not one hundred per cent voluntary is a form of eugenics. To wish, for instance, for those in poverty to refrain from reproducing, in consideration of the suffering of the children, is also to incur (in practice, despite one's wishes or in accord with them) the disabling of the voice of the poor in the dialogue of human existence. This is the result of partial that is, not universal and not entirely voluntary antinatalism. [18]

18 The case of China's one-child policy and other questions complicate this statement. I will let it stand for now, and the reader may reflect on it themselves.

I think most antinatalists, in fact, realise this, and despair, on top of everything else, that antinatalism is impracticable.

But, what if…

Now we arrive at the thought experiment.

Let us imagine, then, what in our daily lives we take without argument to be impossible. Let us imagine that the human race were able spontaneously and with multilateral good will to agree on something, and that that something was to stop forever the reproduction of the species. The entire thought experiment is to imagine this in the light of all I have so far written – on the one hand our hopeless uncertainty as to a validating meaning for life, and on the other the immorality of treating humans as walking noughts. And so on and so forth. The imagining of such a scenario may in itself, I believe, be an exercise in human unity, and it is precisely the imagination of each individual that is of the utmost importance here. Therefore, having put the matter to the reader's imagination, I am almost finished.

I would, however, like to offer a few guiding suggestions to the reader's imagination before I go. First of all, think of this: that it would not be defeat, but the ultimate victory. We would turn the tables on all things. We would be on strike – on strike against the universe, destiny, life and God. As things stand, the future forever holds our hopes hostage; with our children, we give it the means to do so. 'Conscience does make cowards of us all'[19] through these hostages. If death is oblivion, we lead lives of fear and pointlessness; if there is an afterlife, we are farmed for reasons we don't understand through heavens and hells. Then let us provide no more lambs for the slaughter. As things stand we are like gladiators thrown into God's arena, and punished because we fight for survival. Let us, then, cease to fight, and instead spit in God's face. A good God will forgive us; an evil God will never come good. So, an end to the whole unanswerable, heart-breaking, guilt-tripping riddle. If we are never to be good enough for a heavenly parent, so be it. Let us say, in unison, the forbidden words: we did not ask to be born.

Heaven, hell or oblivion: that may be, but that is the game of life and God and we play it no longer. And so we cannot lose. Not playing the game of life, even reality will cease to have authority over us. While we still exist, as C.S. Lewis' Puddleglum declared, we will live like Narnians, even if there isn't any Narnia.

Even if there is no intervention and no God, this means, in effect, there is a God. Universal antinatalism is the equivalent act to asking, 'What if there is no English language?' in the English language. Simply to assert 'There is an English language' lacks the same effect. The doubting question that is its own answer is more effective. Of course, conscious existence being the only dialect of the language of

19 *Hamlet* → Act 3, Scene 1, Page 4

God that we know, the question must be asked in that dialect.

Heaven, too, was held hostage by the future. Now we have it back and it is ours, because we have no future. We will steal the candle flame of transcendence and bring it within the finite box of immanence we inhabit. As Schopenhauer said, the mosaic of life is ineffective close up – or it has been. Now what was distant is near and complete and we have the beauty of distance against our skins. We die with heaven in our hearts, or Narnia, or whatever our sweetest dreams might be, which may be called madness but are saner and lovelier than the world we were born into. Such madness is sane now, because we are no longer staking our children's lives on it, but only our own, which will end soon, and all human things with them, in peace and love and triumph.

(Note: As the childless population ages, it will be necessary to prepare painless poisons and so on for group and solitary suicide to prevent a situation where the entire population is too old to care for themselves and each other.)

Hinterland Shift

(Part five of nine)

Llew Watkins

She is in the Jewellery Quarter, Birmingham, looking through a shop window. The display is dirty and fallen down, but pinned sporadically to the glass are tiny fluorescent spiky shapes, yellow and pink. On each shape is written in blue magic marker 'endtime com'.

She is on a train thru German country. There is snow. Across from her, the hissing sound of the boy's headphones goes dead. Feel the train jarring, halt. The people around her vague shapes are beginning to stand and peer through the windows. Emily looks at her watch; it reads thirteen-oh-eight. The second hand has stopped moving. It twitches pathetically.

The endtime comes first as a nagging absence; the elves are no longer in attendance. Though her mind is fogged, thru the trajectories of experience she begins to know a hollowness in things. In moments of greater clarity, she notices how the more peripheral characters in the dreamscape are beginning to fade.

Her connection with Kai is gone.

The correlation between the outer state and the inner state frightens her. Emily cannot talk about these inner movements: they start as thoughts on the fringes of her consciousness. When, in fear, a second thought automatically tries to fight or suppress the first, engorged by this hostility, the initial doubt grows bloody.

It's clinical, or it's utilitarian; straight away. Sometimes the realisation is one of death. Seeing the total non-existence of a single part of the system, she is broken, suddenly, with the weightlessness of the totality. This revelry she can almost take, but the nihilism that comes after leaves her grasping for breath; in the bathroom, her breasts against the hard floor and the comforting solidity of green ceramic.

At first these are isolated incidents, pinpricks in a page. And then more and more, the page a delicate shell, and then dissipated

completely. One continuous panic attack happening and the inner movements reflected exponentially in the scenes that Emily traverses.

Everywhere the codices are burning. Everywhere is the grinning face of a Spanish Bishop. Emily thinks she sees Kai, but it is just a dented sign.

She discovers that her old dog has become pregnant. It is unlikely, and not only because he is a he. Emily is filled with happiness; it is quite unbelievable. Then her dog coughs up the mechanism, the organ used to develop the child (it is a child).

'I am not my body' she thinks, 'my body is a lie'. These words, before, concealed a truth that freed, but now the words themselves are rigid, nihilistic and impotent. In a court case it is announced that both dog and child are dead.

Look at an apocalypse from the inside out. The bare logic of mind-made world, disintegrated until inevitable collapse. There is almost no one but Emily now. All the flesh on her legs is hanging off in tatters, she can just see the bone like spine.

An anger rises up in her. It is as deep as the earth, rage she has not let herself feel for years. It claws wet at her chest, mixing with the panic and confusion. Her thoughts are murder, but strangely domestic and repetitive, uncorrelated to the actuality.

The last human character is a female masker. On the floor are dead apples the size of melons, some split and crushed, some whole but rotting. The masker changes and is now a little floating head, the tongue pressed childishly flat against the upper lip. The head is a girl with the saddest eyes. Emily knows that she has seen her before. As she realises that she is looking at herself, the girl disintegrates and Emily is finally, completely alone. The loneliness is dreadful and vague. It opens up a gap that cannot be solved.

And then they come. They have always been in love with her, the predatory instinct birthed in a phenomenal hunger. Lit up like neon, the cable butchers flicker at the edges of her eyes.

Emily's body long since gone, the mind that is left is like muddy space, her sense of self all but washed away except for a nulled sense of stuck.

The remnants: a total quiet, open space. Loneliness. Only space.

(continued…)

BOOM-BOOM

Mat Paskins

I never expected how exciting it would be to get out there. The sense, you know, that this was our time and what we did would really make a difference. All these people had arrived at the camp, and they were relieved. No one was shooting at them any more and, you know, the problem wasn't what would happen next or anything big, it was that naturally they gathered together, for protection, in their own camps, and spread out much more. More, I mean, than you would if you were living in a space which had been designed by an engineer, which made supplying them with water a complete nightmare. But you couldn't say to them "Oh, live along the grid I want you to", you know? They wouldn't do that. Anyway, how would that be safe? Actually it's a really sweet engineering challenge, how you can deliver water to so many people. And there were cows wandering around, and children who always wanted to play football. And you had to get used to the idea that, maybe, a new generator wasn't necessarily going to work because someone would always have put some water in the petrol, skimming some off the top. I asked people about it, you know, if we'd been drinking, if we were back at the hotel and flying out the next week. I asked them "Do you feel it, like this is what we were always meant to do, all the time?" I just wish I didn't have to spend quite so much time applying for grants.

•

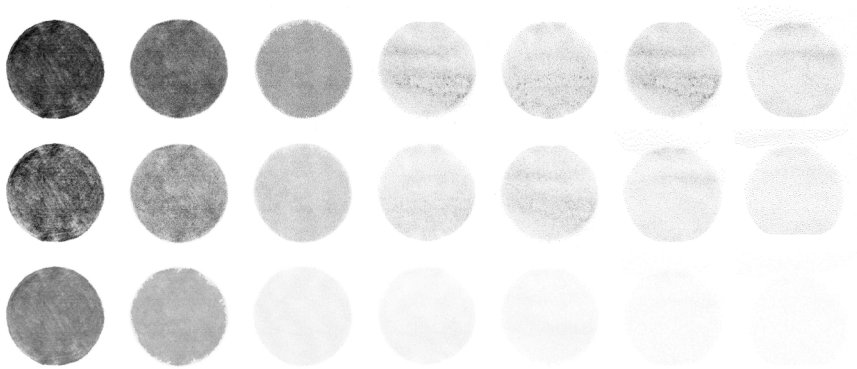
Little one. You will learn to be brave in ways we cannot understand. Your life will not be our life, though we raise you in the only ways we understand. Accept our imperfect need as it tries to turn itself to proper care, not raging that you cried so long. Little one, we know that when you stamp your foot more than the puddle moves beneath it. We can see joy and fear married in your eyes when you see an aeroplane, a digger, crane. You do great excavations when you have a stick and start to dig in dirty fields. The world is yours, or will be, little one; we will not know how ours has passed. You will continue our story in a way which looks like hating us, which would tear our hair out at the roots, if we could know its passion true.

•

These days I keep myself to myself but I do like to see the dark-works when they set them off. They do them on the back field and they get the kids to light them What's that? Dark-works, I said. No I don't mean fire-works, these ones are soot and coal dust, I don't know. They're meant to make it rain. No, I don't know if it works, you'd have to ask a weatherman. I didn't know what Guy Fawkes Night did when I was a lad, but I still went to that. Well, exactly. It kept things going didn't it, and I don't see that we're worse off with them. So why not. You've got to celebrate. When they've got their sparklers, the kids look like they've had a wish. It isn't really children you can have hope for, is it, though; it is survivors. I mean, I don't mean to be horrible, but they you can already see the fat ones and the clingy ones and they won't they're not likely to change all that much, are they? Not unless they get away. What's that? Is that how I see myself, as a survivor? Ask me next year. Or the next. Ask me in ten years, see what answer you get then. I'm forty-seven years old, thank you very much, I'd like to do more than just survive. Though in the let's say, longer term, things are not looking very positive, and I doubt I'll see two hundred.

Nighttime Holes In A Daytime Sky

Isabella Martin



Consider human life on Earth as a process not a reality, and reality as the illusion of daylight. The Apocalypse will be a rift in this daylight, a figure of speech and something that will happen once we've run out of ink.

Under Bare Cloth

Ellen Yeon Kim

Not long after we got there, me and B and M realised that all they wanted was our death. James was sleeping next to me. We didn't panic; it was not even that much of a surprise, but . In my mind, there was a young girl: I mean me, the me of thirty or even fifty years ago. No, maybe it was seventy years ago, or a million. I had said at that time that I didn't think I'd live to reach forty or even my thirties. It wasn't something of sadness or depression; it was rather an emptiness, a lacking of air in your lungs, a lacking of water in you. I was frightened. It had been just like that. I'd had to try so hard to keep my self alive, even from when I was just a child. It was like squeezing out every last drop of yourself just to live. But I survived in fact all four of us had managed in the same way and now they wanted our death. After all those years, all that time of living with the void in my lung, living with the lack of water. They tried to leave us out there while we were sleeping. They left us sleeping under bare cloth so that the cold could kill us before we woke up.

We didn't speak a word. We were very tired but we didn't want to die there. It is not that we wanted to live; we had been so tired for so long anyway, or at the very least I had been like that. Yes, we were ready to leave, but not in this way; this couldn't be the way we ended. Dying of cold in a cottage in the countryside? For Christ's sake, we'd rather die on the street. Those kids didn't know what life was, how it needs to be understood at its end. So we stood up, still none of us speaking a single word. Only, James he was the only one still asleep. He wouldn't be able to walk at all. He needed to be left there, no way around it. I didn't want to wake him up, but needed to feel him, his presence. I needed to know I was with him for a moment before I left. So I slowly kneeled at his side, putting my hand on his head. His body twitched; he seemed to wake up. The first thing he did, after he realised he had been sleeping, he he he checked his diaper, to see if there had been a leak. Then he saw us, holding the few things we had, and me next to him. And and he hauled up his hand to a sway. Even with a slight smile, he strained and waved his hand to me, to us. I felt like bursting into tears. What kind of farewell were we saying? Was it for this that we had tried so hard not to kill ourselves?

I didn't manage to cry, not a single drop. I was like a desert. And still no one still spoke, as if we didn't have a language. We didn't need one.

becoming-animal becoming-woman becoming-faggot becoming-optical fiber becoming-server farm becoming-rubble

Aimee Heinemann

The problem with living in a constant state of crisis is that it isn't. Like, how are we meant to deal with our temporal/Oedipal/daddy issues when this is just what _is|? Like, how would anyone /accidentally/ kill their dad in the age of preemption? I mean, there are no atheists on Facebook and it's easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of the end of the world. #nodads #NeverForget

Future is now. And yesterday. (And tomorrow - but that feels very retro.) The future starts when you start and everything happens so much and horse_ebooks was a human like all the best spambots and I'm not saying those things are connected but I think in 140 characters or less and I never drop below 7 open tabs and the next pandemic does not exist yet but the risk it represents is entirely plausible. #SpeculativeFML

I don't want to perpetuate the myth of a flat internet, but last night I dreamt about a virtual buffer zone, a safety net at the edge of the net (to prevent falls and injuries and lawsuits). Time's slower there, and the space is heavy and soft - you'd like it. I'm not sure what comes next because I wasn't trying to leave, and there were meters and meters of Bliss (image) to get through, and I couldn't afford the insurance.

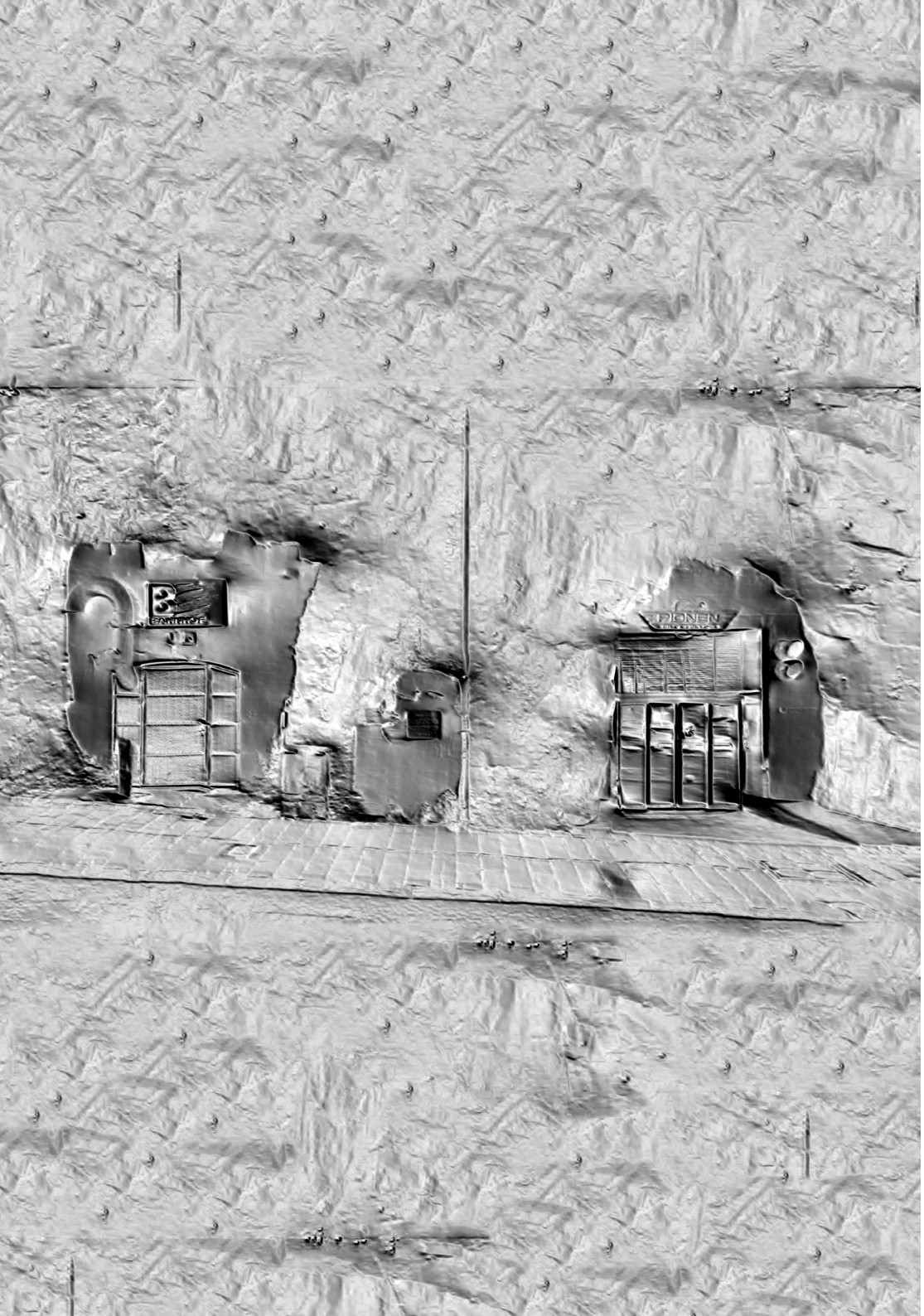
[Hey btw from one broken boygirl glitch body 2 an/other I can see your structural violence through that t-shirt and I guess it's a lqqk but like I mean have you heard of daisycutter bombs? Sorry, that came out wrong, I meant to say it's qt, very Precarity SS14.]

A nervous trigger is a connective tissue and we're all connection now because wasn't that the point? (Although don't take my word for it - I'm 2 yung 2 remember and trust no man's post-gender history.) Every system is nervous but that's accounted for like everything else and every thing is 'literally' or 'virtually' because what else are we going to cling to? I don't understand ontology but I've been able to feel the emotional block in my back ever since someone told me it was there and I can describe in detail how bodies feel when they don't want to exist anymore. I don't wanna get corporeal about this but Cartesian dualism is so 2000 and l8 and there's a lot of dead skin trapped in your keyboard and I had my first panic attack because someone told me hot tubs cause cancer and like, 'the greater the threat the greater the risk of inaction'[1]. So like prophecy is the externalization of desire but some prophecies have more biopolitical Klout than others?

There's no such thing as irrational fear and every fear is forever and disintegration is my utopian dream and disaster planning offices are the institutionalization of fantasy and your darkest desire is probably already a Craigslist ad so like, get over yourself. In my dreams nobody gets a cohesive subject position or body to match (which is less good than it sounds) but last night I got beaten up (a post-post-body exorcism) and stayed myself for the duration which is #rare and in the dream I wrote on the wall and it looked like this: | ? except that line was solid and the question mark sat above it and I woke up smiling and I've never been on selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors but sometimes they stop you dreaming. No moralizing, we're all trying to fall apart in a constructive way and irl is the highest drag and sometimes I think singularity is the hardest thing there is (and I Have Even Met Happy Call Centre Workers). So like sleep is the body's last bastion of resistance to l8 capitalism or whatever but #StressStillLingers[2] and #NOIRL[3]

Fuck it, I mean, let's 'fuck' 'it', I/mean/ - we're aesthetic architectures and our architectures are shoddy and subcontracted and structurally unsound but so is their junkspace and there's no_such_thing as an earthquake resistant structure and the real 9/11 is inside of you and their combined vibration control system has nothing on my pile of rubble.

1 http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/nsc/nss/2006/sectionV.html
2 http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/em/ph/subwayads-man.pdf
3 'No One Is Really Laughing'



14 October 2000
8TimeTravel_0 has joined the conversation.
Yareisa : even now I still change my opinions, there is no definitive
G° : well, I'm not completely on the same wavelength as you and apollo, but I like it here.
Yareisa : hi time
G° : I will be back
G° : hi time T
Yareisa : good, we like you
TimeTravel_0 : greetings
G° : thanks
Yareisa : yw
Yareisa : you've been initiated G!
G° : sorry I can't stop to chat Time, but it's way past my bed time
G° : I have?
TimeTravel_0 : no problem
Yareisa : oh yes...I'll make sure you have plenty of experience!
Yareisa : lol
G° : thanks... I think. LOL ~)
Yareisa : well I have been awake for 24 hours!
G° : oh what the heck. maybe I will stop and introduce myself to time....
Yareisa : good! new I could persuade you!
Yareisa : knew
G° : LOL
TimeTravel_0 : please...and then myself.
G° : Hi TT, my name is steve, but call me G
G° : I'm 30, male from England
G° : and you?
TimeTravel_0 : My name is John. Im 38 and a time traveler from Florida.
G° : Oh, and my PC could crash at any time, so I'll say goodnight now in case it goes again
Yareisa : alright, goodnight G
G° : which time are you from?
TimeTravel_0 : Goodnight.
TimeTravel_0 : 2036
G° : g'night
G° : is it a good year?
TimeTravel_0 : For me...yes.
G° : it's not far to come?
TimeTravel_0 : Thats right.
Yareisa : do you want me to do my intro piece?
G° : so you have been born as well. That could be confusing. no problem with there being two of you at the same time then?
G° : yes please Y
TimeTravel_0 : Not at all. In fact the ''me'' on this world line is upstairs alseep.
TimeTravel_0 : Hes 2
Yareisa : ty I'm **Yareisa**, you can call me yar, most do 39 Lincoln, UK
G° : upstairs? in your house?
G° : yar, ok.
Yareisa : or ok yar!
G° : lol. I was thinking that... lol
TimeTravel_0 : Not my house.

Im just visiting.
G° : tonight? or longer term than that?
TimeTravel_0 : I've been here for about 3 months.
G° : any reason? if you don't mind me asking... I'm interested is all...
TimeTravel_0 : I'll answer any question you have. I don;t expect you to believe me anyway.
TimeTravel_0 : Theres a picture of my time machine on my profile.
G° : LOL good. I'd really think you were mad if you did...
TimeTravel_0 : Your reaction is typical.
TimeTravel_0 : Im used to it.
G° : someone invented a time machine by 2036?
TimeTravel_0 : What would you do if you really met a time travlere anyway?
G° : what I'm doing now
Yareisa : what would you do if you met an alien?
TimeTravel_0 : Yes...in fact the major breakthrough happens at CERN in about a year.
G° : cern? whats that?
TimeTravel_0 : The creation of microsigularities.
Yareisa : particle accelerator?
TimeTravel_0 : Yes!
TimeTravel_0 : You know of it?
Yareisa : yes a little
TimeTravel_0 : Most people here in the US have no idea what Im talking about.
Yareisa : they go round until they hit each other don't they
G° : lol
TimeTravel_0 : Yes. High speed proton acceleration.
G° : that about sums an incredibly complex bit of kit in one sentence... but yes
TimeTravel_0 : Ill be happy to go into detail but most people regret it.
Yareisa : go on, we'll scream when we can't handle anymore!
G° : whats the discovery? a new particle or something?
TimeTravel_0 : The information has been out for quite a while.
TimeTravel_0 : CERN is planning to start some very high energy experiments soon.
TimeTravel_0 : There has been some contoversy ...
TimeTravel_0 : over the damgers of it.
G° : is antimatter involved?
TimeTravel_0 : SOme are concerned it might be quite hazardous.
TimeTravel_0 : No...
Yareisa : wasn't there something about creating a black hole
TimeTravel_0 : Yes!!!
TimeTravel_0 : You've heard of it.
Yareisa : yes
TimeTravel_0 : Actually...
Yareisa : a little

G° : me too
TimeTravel_0 : its a black hole about the size of an electron.
TimeTravel_0 : Im impressed.
TimeTravel_0 : Where are you both from?
TimeTravel_0 : England?
G° : England
Yareisa : yes
G° : but different bits
Yareisa : certainly different bits!
G° : but next door according to US geography
TimeTravel_0 : Being from 2036...Im not as ignorant as my colonial countrymen.
G° : so are you staying with your parents then, whilst your here?
TimeTravel_0 : Yes.
G° : oh come on, it's not going to change that much in 30 odd years.. LOL
TimeTravel_0 : Really.
G° : sorry, Brit joke
G° : how did they take it? or have you not told them? Your parents?
TimeTravel_0 : I have to admit... your both quite polite.
TimeTravel_0 : Oh they know.
G° : hey, the sign on the door says show respect and keep an open mind doesn't it?
Yareisa : I'm polite because I understand what its like to be ridiculed
TimeTravel_0 : Im here because of a promise to my grandfather in 1975.
Yareisa : true G
G° : I've lived 53 lives on earth before this one. think everyone beleives me when i say that?
TimeTravel_0 : I appreciate that but I also know Im more entertaining than anything else.
TimeTravel_0 : I don't discount anything.
G° : LOL
G° : the truly mad wouldn't realise they were ... excentric?
TimeTravel_0 : You are more right than you know.
G° : the faxct that you don't expect to be believed has to be a plus point..
G° : sorry go on. your grandfather?
TimeTravel_0 : I find it quite intersting.
TimeTravel_0 : Yes.
TimeTravel_0 : I started in 2036, went back to 1975 and then came forward to 2000... now.
TimeTravel_0 : Did you see the picture of my machine?
Yareisa : it wasn't there when I looked
TimeTravel_0 : If you click on the picture...it takes you to another page. I have 3 pictures posted.
Yareisa : k just doing
G° : yeah. is it in a cool car?
TimeTravel_0 : A good car for 1975.

TimeTravel_0 : The distortion machine is in a 4 wheel drive now.
G° : how come from then? was it kept in good condition til 2036?
TimeTravel_0 : Sorry...time machine.
TimeTravel_0 : I was sent back to 1975 to get a computer.
TimeTravel_0 : Its an IBM model 5110.
TimeTravel_0 : My grandfather worked on it.
G° : because...?
TimeTravel_0 : Thats why I was sent.
TimeTravel_0 : We need it in 2036 to recode UNIX which dies in 2038.
G° : who needed a 5110? and why?
G° : lost me there. don't enough about computers
TimeTravel_0 : the 5110 is able to read the old IBM mainframe code.
TimeTravel_0 : Its the first protable computer produced by IBM.
TimeTravel_0 : Actually its about the size of a small table.
TimeTravel_0 : We need on in 2036.
G° : so have you tried changing the past yet? or have you found that everything you do..
G° : has already been done?
TimeTravel_0 : Hmmm... physics.
TimeTravel_0 : Actually... world lines are not fixed.
TimeTravel_0 : They are all different.
TimeTravel_0 : There is no one ''time''.
G° : but you have a past... you remember things, and if one changes...?
TimeTravel_0 : Yes...
TimeTravel_0 : but they are different.
TimeTravel_0 : The fact that I am here changes this world line.
G° : so you havn't tried mucking with anything?
TimeTravel_0 : No...but I could.
TimeTravel_0 : Its just not that moral in my opinion.
TimeTravel_0 : Besides...Im not here for that.
G° : thing is, you might not have changed anything because you already were here
TimeTravel_0 : Thats right!!!
TimeTravel_0 : Very good.
TimeTravel_0 : In fact..I've noticed samll changes.
G° : I mean you upstairs asleep wouldn't have known if you now was downstairs
G° : you have? thats what i was getting it
TimeTravel_0 : No...he knows me.
TimeTravel_0 : Yes...small changes.
G° : care to give an example?
TimeTravel_0 : Sure...
TimeTravel_0 : Football....

(sorry) games that were lost that should have been won.
TimeTravel_0 : Incidental news stories that havent happened.
TimeTravel_0 : Books not written.
TimeTravel_0 : Small stuff like that.
G° : wow. surely that can't be anything to do with you?
TimeTravel_0 : No.
TimeTravel_0 : By definition, this world line is not the same as mine.
G° : so how come do you think?
TimeTravel_0 : Physics.
TimeTravel_0 : Have you ever been in a room that has mirrors on all the walls?
G° : you with the infinate worlds with infinate possibilities theory then?
TimeTravel_0 : Yes!!!
TimeTravel_0 : Multipole world theory is correct.
G° : like sliders
TimeTravel_0 : Sliders?
G° : tv show
G° : before your time... LOL
TimeTravel_0 : Hmmm...havent seent hat one.
G° : hmmm. I must admit, that theory has always bothered me
TimeTravel_0 : Have you heard of Schrodinger's cat?
G° : I mean, why bother? why create all these slightly different worlds? no offence to you, just never liked it.
Yareisa : yes
G° : yes, talking about it the other day
TimeTravel_0 : Well...there's a little joke in 2036.
G° : can't remember though
TimeTravel_0 : If the cat had a distortion machine (time) he may not be in the box at all.
G° : oh yeah, that was it... LOL
G° : (i was wondering if you were still ther Yar)
Yareisa : yes, deep in though
Yareisa : thought
G° : sorry, I have to call you **Yareisa**, I don't like yar....
Yareisa : ok!
G° : so. what can we do for you tonight TT? How come your here?
TimeTravel_0 : I enjoy the ''paranormal'' chat rooms for 2 reasons.
TimeTravel_0 : 1. I find the people here are more open to ideas.
TimeTravel_0 : 2. I find it ironic that when what they are looking for falls in their lap, they can't believe it.
G° : sorry you've been doing all the talking....
8wyrmkin_37 has joined the conversation.
TimeTravel_0 : Its okay,
wyrmkin_37 : hello to room
TimeTravel_0 : I learn a lot from you too.
G° : hi wyrm

Yareisa : hi wyrm
wyrmkin_37 : hey
G° : so who owns the machine TT?
G° : who do you work for?
TimeTravel_0 : The military.
TimeTravel_0 : Im a soldier.
TimeTravel_0 : But civilan time travle is not far off.
G° : do they know your in the year 2000 chatting to us when you should be returning with the 5110?
TimeTravel_0 : Good question!!!
G° : LOL How would they know?
G° : unless your machine records jumps?
TimeTravel_0 : No...but i will return just seconds after I left from their point of view.
TimeTravel_0 : I will only age a bit more than expected.
wyrmkin_37 : what matter of singularities?
G° : Imust say, your a very friendly, chatty soldier...
Yareisa : temporal phase shift
Yareisa : oops, thinking aloud again
wyrmkin_37 : anti-matter or dimensional?
TimeTravel_0 : Well...I only fought in the civil war. The military put me through school and I was qualified for this mission.
TimeTravel_0 : The singularities distort gravity.
TimeTravel_0 : Ill be happy to go through the physics. The basics are already known.
wyrmkin_37 : please..... proceed
Yareisa : please do
TimeTravel_0 : Ok
TimeTravel_0 : In 1967, a physist named Tipler came up with the basic equations for time travel based on massive rotating cylinders...ever heard of him?
wyrmkin_37 : in omni?
G° : no, sorry
TimeTravel_0 : no problem...
TimeTravel_0 : are you familiar with black holes and Stephen Halking?
TimeTravel_0 : Sorry... spelling
Yareisa : to some degree, yes
TimeTravel_0 : Ok
wyrmkin_37 : .....a brief history of time
TimeTravel_0 : Yes.
TimeTravel_0 : Black holes distort gravity...which distorts time.
wyrmkin_37 : theory
TimeTravel_0 : At there center is a singularity.
G° : yeah, with you so far
TimeTravel_0 : No...it is proved.
TimeTravel_0 : In 1969, science invented a clock sensitive enough to show the time difference in a multiple sotry building.
wyrmkin_37 : kewl
TimeTravel_0 : On the first

floor...time runs slower due to gravity.
TimeTravel_0 : Clser to the center of the Earth.
wyrmkin_37 : get outa here
G° : also the 2 clocks, one in a plane that flew off and came back different to the other one
TimeTravel_0 : Yes!!!
G° : ok
wyrmkin_37 : gravitation
TimeTravel_0 : The effect is magnified greatly in a black hole.
TimeTravel_0 : As it turns out...
TimeTravel_0 : If you encounter a black hole that is spinning and has an electrified field, you will not be killed passing through its massive gravitational fuelds.
TimeTravel_0 : regreting asking yet>
Yareisa : no
TimeTravel_0 : Ok
wyrmkin_37 : no
Yareisa : I'm hooked
TimeTravel_0 : In about a year...
G° : is this the omeg point theory?
G° : omega?
TimeTravel_0 : CERN will discover some very odd things as a result of their high energy experiments.
TimeTravel_0 : in about a year.
TimeTravel_0 : from your point of view.
wyrmkin_37 : cern?
TimeTravel_0 : in Geneva.
Yareisa : particle accelerator
wyrmkin_37 : oh
TimeTravel_0 : They will accidently create microsingularities.
G° : makes things go round and hit each other...
TimeTravel_0 : Which will evaporate very quickly.
wyrmkin_37 : one in texas?
TimeTravel_0 : and create a massive ammount of X-ray and Gamma rays.
TimeTravel_0 : It will puzzle them for a while.
TimeTravel_0 : Until they figure out how to add and elcrtical charge and capture these strange odd and massive particles in a magnetic field.
wyrmkin_37 : they shoot electrons at the speed of light.....see what they bust up into
TimeTravel_0 : Yes.
G° : still with you...
wyrmkin_37 : quarks
TimeTravel_0 : If you bombard a singularity with electrons...
TimeTravel_0 : you can alter the size of its event horizon.
TimeTravel_0 : and thus its gravitational field.
TimeTravel_0 : By overlapping these fileds from two singularities...
TimeTravel_0 : you can travel forward and backward through

time.
TimeTravel_0 : Its actuallyu quyite simple.
wyrmkin_37 : i follow now
TimeTravel_0 : Thats noit the hard part.
G° : didn't tipler say there was no event horizon?
TimeTravel_0 : No..he said it was possible to approach a massive gravitationl field from certain angles and not get squished.
G° : oh, sorry
wyrmkin_37 : lol
TimeTravel_0 : Actually...Im not really a physisit.
G° : but you know all about this stuff... is that why you were picked?
TimeTravel_0 : I specialize in 20th century history and my grandfather builds computers.
wyrmkin_37 : what base?
TimeTravel_0 : Hmmm....you drive a car and know how to change the oil don;t you?
TimeTravel_0 : I am based in Tampa Fl.
G° : actually, only just.. LOL
wyrmkin_37 : chas, afb
TimeTravel_0 : McDill
wyrmkin_37 : kewl
G° : sorry?
G° : in english?
wyrmkin_37 : zoomies
Yareisa : thats english?!
G° : you airforce wyrm?
wyrmkin_37 : yes
G° : your not working on a time machine are you?
G° : come here for guidance...
wyrmkin_37 : no just came in for chat
TimeTravel_0 : Altering gravity is not the hard part.
G° : LOL
Yareisa : go on...
TimeTravel_0 : Detecting gravity is the hard part.
TimeTravel_0 : I will tell you a littlke story.
TimeTravel_0 : When time travel was invented.
TimeTravel_0 : They built prototypes that would go back in time for a split second and then return.
TimeTravel_0 : They had sensors and cameras on them.
TimeTravel_0 : ...and they never returned.
G° : and forwards as well? how about a single jump forwards?
TimeTravel_0 : It was later discovered that the machines were ending up about 15 miles away and 3000 fett in the air.
TimeTravel_0 : feet
G° : doh!
TimeTravel_0 : The Earth was rotating away from them.
wyrmkin_37 : synchroniaztion please
TimeTravel_0 : A system had to be invented that would ''hold'' the machine to the Earth.
TimeTravel_0 : Its called

VGL.
TimeTravel_0 : Its based on very sensative clocks and gravity sensors.
TimeTravel_0 : It stops the time distortion machine if radical changes in gravity are detected.
wyrmkin_37 : mechanical or electronic clocks
TimeTravel_0 : You wouldn't want to end up inside a mountain or under water...would you?
TimeTravel_0 : Cesium.
wyrmkin_37 : oh
G° : isn't all this classified? surely your suppoed to keep it secret whilst in the past?
TimeTravel_0 : LOL!!!
TimeTravel_0 : I know you think Im nuts...come on.
TimeTravel_0 : Who would believe me?
G° : just asking?
TimeTravel_0 : It my best defense.
wyrmkin_37 : isnt celsium a higher class of quartz? dont know
G° : but we don't have long to find out if you are or not
TimeTravel_0 : Besides... do you know how big a hole 2 sigularites make when their magnetic filed colpases?
G° : won't be long before CERN (?) make the discovery
TimeTravel_0 : Thats right.
G° : no
TimeTravel_0 : Welll.... either do I. But I don;t want to know.
G° : LOL
wyrmkin_37 : i read omni since it came out and i do want to know
G° : maybe I'll pass on the theory to someone who does their own experiment and... BANG!
wyrmkin_37 : lol
TimeTravel_0 : I've been trying.
G° : any joy?
TimeTravel_0 : But Im the crazy yank
wyrmkin_37 : lmao
G° : What do you expect? you didn't tell them you from the future did you?
TimeTravel_0 : You might be interested in this...
G° : if you really wanted to, you should have just passed on the theory
G° : go on....
TimeTravel_0 : Its very hard to convince someone you travel in time unless you're related to them.
G° : or know something that will happen...
TimeTravel_0 : Good point... but you'de be surprised.
G° : not that I'm asking you to tell me something, cos I don't want you to
TimeTravel_0 : They usually think its your fault.
G° : LOL
G° : bummer...
wyrmkin_37 : very interesting

TimeTravel_0 : That's why I love these chat rooms.
wyrmkin_37 : me too
TimeTravel_0 : I know that nothing I say will make a bit of difference.
wyrmkin_37 : i can drink my jack and coke and learn a few things
G° : not true.. this is the place where you can make a difference.
TimeTravel_0 : Im not feeling sorry for myself.
TimeTravel_0 : Im actually learning to like the people here.
TimeTravel_0 : You have a very bad reputaion in 2036.
wyrmkin_37 : TT.....who me?
TimeTravel_0 : lol...in general.
wyrmkin_37 : heard that
G° : how about those 80's lot though. they must be worse...
TimeTravel_0 : Don't get me started.
G° : LOL
TimeTravel_0 : At least your commercials and video games have gotten beeter through the years.
G° : and as for the 70's! Sheesh!
wyrmkin_37 : 60's were cool
TimeTravel_0 : Generaly... this period is thought of as the time when they
had it all and squanderd it.
TimeTravel_0 : You diserve your fate.
wyrmkin_37 : but fun was had
TimeTravel_0 : That's true.
TimeTravel_0 : Can I ask you brits a question?
G° : sure
Yareisa : yeah sure
G° : shoot
TimeTravel_0 : When I was a kid...back in 2012...
G° : a good year for cyberpunk...
TimeTravel_0 : I used to watch a DVD called UFO that was made in England.
TimeTravel_0 : Ever heard of it?
G° : oops no, that was 2030, sorry
G° : the tv series? 70's?
wyrmkin_37 : i saw it on regular tv
TimeTravel_0 : Yes!!!
TimeTravel_0 : You've seen it?
Yareisa : oh yes I remember that one
TimeTravel_0 : Wow...we do have something in common.
G° : yeah, dreadful outfits!
TimeTravel_0 : No one has heard of it here.
Yareisa : straker wasn't it
G° : and hairstyles!
TimeTravel_0 : I loved that show!
G° : so TT, there is something you can tell me
TimeTravel_0 : Yes?
G° : what happens in December 2012?
wyrmkin_37 : i saw it the good guys were called shadow?

G° : anything?
TimeTravel_0 : Ahhh..the acient miayn prohecies.
G° : the very same
TimeTravel_0 :
wyrmkin_37 : mayans
TimeTravel_0 : sorry
wyrmkin_37 : ?
TimeTravel_0 : Nothing happens...but there is a nuclear war in 2015.
G° : bugger
TimeTravel_0 : Its not that bad.
TimeTravel_0 : The bombs are much cleaner.
G° : i guess not
wyrmkin_37 : china and russia?
TimeTravel_0 : There's a civial war in the US.
wyrmkin_37 : whoa?
TimeTravel_0 : Russian launches against China, Europe and the US.
G° : it was bound to happen sooner or later...
TimeTravel_0 : Can;t you see it coming?
G° : whatamistaka to maka!
TimeTravel_0 : Does anyone read history anymore?
wyrmkin_37 : i saw russia and china but not usa
TimeTravel_0 : From my point of view...Russia helps us. We win.
G° : how so?
TimeTravel_0 : But Im a little pissed right now. Is that still the right word?
wyrmkin_37 : wheat, money.....lets make friends
G° : ?
TimeTravel_0 : The civil war in the US has two sides.
TimeTravel_0 : I fought on one side.
G° : they usualy do
wyrmkin_37 : proceed sir.....
TimeTravel_0 : The other side got nuked by Russia.
G° : i see
G° : not north and south again was it?
TimeTravel_0 : In 2036, they are our largets trading partner.
TimeTravel_0 : No...more like city angainst country.'
wyrmkin_37 : majorities against minorities.....
TimeTravel_0 : Yes.
TimeTravel_0 : You know... guns versus no guns.
TimeTravel_0 : Power versus no power.
wyrmkin_37 : time to pour another jack and coke
TimeTravel_0 : Un troops versus no UN troops.
G° : well, it's been interesting talking to you John, but it's way past my bedtime...
Yareisa : what...I've been up 24 hours!
TimeTravel_0 : Sleep well.
TimeTravel_0 : Youve been very polite.
G° : look me up when you get back to 2036 will you?

TimeTravel_0 : I will try.
G° : if i'm still here
TimeTravel_0 : Go north.
TimeTravel_0 : Invest in hydrogen fuel cells
G° : goodnight **Yareisa**
Yareisa : goodnight G
Yareisa : thanks for staying up so early!
G° : thanks again TT, goodnight
G° : LOL
TimeTravel_0 : good night
G° : see you again soon
Yareisa : yup
TimeTravel_0 : Ill be here
TimeTravel_0 : Think up some good questions
G° puts on his coat and trudges out...
Yareisa : bye G
8G° has left the conversation.
Yareisa : I've given up going to bed now, might as well keep going!
TimeTravel_0 : Time is relative.
TimeTravel_0 : But sleep....
Yareisa : forgotten what sleep is!
TimeTravel_0 : What do you do for a living?
Yareisa : by day...web site design
TimeTravel_0 : Is your family close to you?
Yareisa : no
TimeTravel_0 : That's the one thing I will never understand about this time.
Yareisa : whats that
TimeTravel_0 : Don;t you feel alone without them?
Yareisa : not really, I'm used to being alone
TimeTravel_0 : Its very diffrent in the future.
TimeTravel_0 : I can't imagine being without my family.
TimeTravel_0 : I don;t know if I should pity or admire you.
Yareisa : I'm not sure either!
8**wyrmkin_37** has returned.
Yareisa : wb
wyrmkin_37 : hello folks
TimeTravel_0 : greetings
Yareisa : I am known as a Warrior, I'm used to fighting to survive
wyrmkin_37 : been there
TimeTravel_0 : In the future, life is organized around the family.
wyrmkin_37 : good
TimeTravel_0 : and the community.
Yareisa : then it looks like I have a problem!
TimeTravel_0 : 'I can;t imagine what it's like to live alone.
Yareisa : I rather like it actually
TimeTravel_0 : If I may ask...why?
Yareisa : I can do what I choose, when I choose without having to answer to anyone
TimeTravel_0 : What about it appeals to you?

wyrmkin_37 : later folks
8wyrmkin_37 has left the conversation.
TimeTravel_0 : good night
Yareisa : Sometimes I miss not having company
Yareisa : but I'm very independant
TimeTravel_0 : Your answer is typical of the people of your time.
TimeTravel_0 : Do you feel you would be hindered by ''answerinfg? to someone?
TimeTravel_0 : What does that mean?
Yareisa : I was hindered, that is why I evicted my husband
TimeTravel_0 : Please explain.
Yareisa : I am a deeply spiritual person, I needed to grow, to expand, and he stopped me
TimeTravel_0 : How...if its not too personal.
Yareisa : he was a control freak, I had to do what he told me to do etc
TimeTravel_0 : I think you would like the future.
Yareisa : why is that
TimeTravel_0 : Its a common complainyt that people feel hindered.
TimeTravel_0 : In the future, life is more challenging.
Yareisa : is it more spiritual?
TimeTravel_0 : There is little room for petty problems.
TimeTravel_0 : Yes!
TimeTravel_0 : Mystery returns to existance.
Yareisa : beyond the human
TimeTravel_0 : There are fewer luxuries but life is more enjoyable.
Yareisa : I never like luxuries anyway
Yareisa : I live basically
Yareisa : do you consider yourself human
TimeTravel_0 : I wish I could show you the time machine and give you hope.
TimeTravel_0 : Yes.
TimeTravel_0 : I am very different from you.
Yareisa : in what way
TimeTravel_0 : My life is very different.
TimeTravel_0 : I harbor a ccertain ammount of anger toward this time.
Yareisa : why
TimeTravel_0 : I see an entire population of people who are sleeping.
TimeTravel_0 : I fell in love once and she passed away.
TimeTravel_0 : I blame you for her death.
Yareisa : why
TimeTravel_0 : She died of brain cancer.
TimeTravel_0 : You may find this interesting.
TimeTravel_0 : WHen I was training for ''time travel''...
TimeTravel_0 : ...a great deal of what we did was pyscholgical training.

TimeTravel_0 : In one of our exercises...we had to go back in time and convince ‘‘ourselves’’ to do something we regretted not doing in our own life.
TimeTravel_0 : I told myself to get married before she died.
TimeTravel_0 : SOmething I was unable to do.
TimeTravel_0 : I hate you for that.
Yareisa : hate me personally?
TimeTravel_0 : Sorry.... I don;t hate you.
TimeTravel_0 : I mean this time.
TimeTravel_0 : Jacksonville Fl took a direct hit.
TimeTravel_0 : The radiation killed her.
Yareisa : I cannot say sorry for something that hasn’t happened yet, but I am sorry
TimeTravel_0 : I talk too much
Yareisa : and I don’t talk enough
TimeTravel_0 : I just wish things didn;t have to happen athey way they will.
Yareisa : we cannot change it?
TimeTravel_0 : Its too late.
Yareisa : I sensed that
TimeTravel_0 : I regret what you could have been bot what will result.
TimeTravel_0 : not
TimeTravel_0 : ...are you drinking?
Yareisa : no
TimeTravel_0 : I am... orange wine.
TimeTravel_0 : I love it.
Yareisa : I think my ethereal has taken over, my body has no need for anything more
TimeTravel_0 : Are you alone?
Yareisa : yes
TimeTravel_0 : No children?
Yareisa : none
TimeTravel_0 : Are you afraid?
Yareisa : what of
TimeTravel_0 : Being alone?
Yareisa : no
TimeTravel_0 : I don;t mean to be so perosnal.
TimeTravel_0 : I aplogoze.
Yareisa : its alright, I’m used to it
TimeTravel_0 : To being alone?
Yareisa : to being asked personal questions as well!
TimeTravel_0 : I appreciate your kindness.
Yareisa : ty, but that is my nature
TimeTravel_0 : I am familiar with Blue Oyster Cult.
Yareisa : oh, you’ve read my profile?!
TimeTravel_0 : I just took a look.
TimeTravel_0 : In fact...my father is a big fan.
Yareisa : the link to my web site is on there too
Yareisa : one of my favourite tracks is, Veterans of the Psychic Wars
TimeTravel_0 : Thats quite a

webb ste...hold on.
Yareisa : k
TimeTravel_0 : Im asking my father.
TimeTravel_0 : He says thats from ‘‘Heavy Metal’’?
Yareisa : I’ve got it on a compilation, Workshop of the Telescopes
TimeTravel_0 : ‘‘Cultosaurus Erectus’’ is his favorite.
TimeTravel_0 : I have no idea what he’s taling about.
Yareisa : probably best not to, might cause a glitch in the space time contimuum!
TimeTravel_0 : Godzillia?
Yareisa : yes thats a good one
TimeTravel_0 : Hes lauging.
TimeTravel_0 : You wacky 20th century freaks.
Yareisa : Don’t Fear The Reaper is good too, a classic
Yareisa : so do I presume the aliens don’t come in 2012 then?
TimeTravel_0 : Noty that Im aware of.
TimeTravel_0 : However... there are plenty of things that will get your attention by 2012.
Yareisa : such as...can you say?
TimeTravel_0 : My father has a question.
Yareisa : go on
TimeTravel_0 : What do you think of ‘‘club Ninja’’? I have no idea what that is.
Yareisa : I haven’t heard that one
Yareisa : I’ve got Dancing in the ruins on the compilation
TimeTravel_0 : He says it was one of their last CDs.
Yareisa : yes, then there is Imaginos
Yareisa : I’ve just started to collect them again, used to have some albums, getting CD’s now
TimeTravel_0 : Revolutoin by night? What’s that.
Yareisa : another album
TimeTravel_0 : I see.
TimeTravel_0 : Perhaps you should talk to my father.
Yareisa : I could get confused!
Yareisa : Actually, I will have to go soon, its nearly 6 in the morning here...
Yareisa : I got up at 5 in the morning on Friday
TimeTravel_0 : I hope to talk to yoiu again.
Yareisa : I would like that
TimeTravel_0 : Cheer up.
TimeTravel_0 : Things get better.
TimeTravel_0 : Get some sleep.
Yareisa : I will!
TimeTravel_0 : Good night.
Yareisa : good night
8TimeTravel_0 has left the conversation.

Chameleon Street

Thogdin Ripley

Here, on Chameleon Street, time steps one, two, and one to the side; a rogue knight on the wrong colour, muddled by *déjà vu*. Days disguise themselves as evenings, wrapping cold lunchtimes in the deep velvet folds of muggy summer midnights. Against the sun twinkles an overlay of distinct pinpricks.

There is a population, though the residents are interchangeable, adapting so perfectly to their maisonettes that the visitor waves a happy goodbye to the parting host from his own front step, and family members have trouble telling each other apart. It is not unknown to find doppelgangers stalking the shifting corridors of this house, padding softly in the bare footprints of their doubles. Following time-lagged the same gestures, they stare enrapt into empty mirrors, slowly listening to clocks, sitting, dust-smelling, in the spaces of chairs since moved.

Change such as there is occurs in waves. Drifting about the neighbourhood like bright smoke, the colours sidestep through the seasonal chroma; a tranquil autumnal scene bursts into spring flower in patches, bright puddles of budding crocuses rise through crisp leaves. Snowdrifts block one drive in ten.

There are often rainbows.

By evening, the chromosphere shatters into the shards of a diamante graphic. Cut glass diagonals carve the lilac cumuli, a basic smear against the further constellations. Light strikes against the soaring vapour trails, transforming them into high wires, stretching from the horizon, forming a direct line between the dark earth and Heaven. The soft white of the solar egg finally bursts and lets down its long luminescence into coffee cups and church windows, blowing soft highlights around the eyes of babies, and shadows spin and swivel in a fast comic game, domesticated, zooming between the legs before fleeing entirely. The windows admit the fragile crystalline flush, which shoots with the full force for the gilt-edged glow of memory and the careful wait. The clouds finally stutter and part, rolling back

and falling like huge lame spectres to reveal the buzzing script that hangs, momentary, enormous, to spell the end; an ellipses to an epoch.

At civilisations final crumble there will be no picturesque ruins against an amber sun, or landmarks spotted green with the moss of a new Yucatan. Decline rides on a vast, grey wave of detritus a never-ending sea of chewed pen tops, spent matches, full but forgotten sample bottles, rusted screws, foil containers pressed flat, paper bags stacked and tumbling, and soiled trousers put by to soak. The smell of human grease.

I grew up in this house switching between shame and pride, and eventually I had to dismantle it, taking down the singular museum at the end of its grand tour, bathed in light; excavating the childhood memories and watching them evaporate under scrutiny, until I was changed beyond recognition, and the world around me destroyed and made afresh in my wholly altered image. It no longer matters that the father becomes the son.

The Atrophied World

Philippa Snow

What was unexpected to us was the fact that that the end, when it came, was really no great shame for anyone: that even as the lizards dug their claws into our obsolete skulls and the other things howled at the windows outside, and the skin began to boil from our bodies - suddenly loosed, like the exocarp of a stewing tomato, by the atmosphere - and the white-hot supernova smash of the big clang reverberated, still, on our blistering eyelids - even then, we considered ourselves to be fortunate in our mass erasure. We had eaten - long before this point - all of our celebrities, and every one of our politicians, both left and right-leaning: the dope-fiend dealers and the Black-Hand pimps and the rotten beepop degenerate jimmy-jaw types had sold them to us in greaseproof slabs out of dirty coolers with bloodstained lids, and from the backs of hot-wired military trucks. We drank their liquor because it was sterile: we'd expected the end-times to hum with sulphur, but instead, our final days were spent in the fug of fermenting cornmeal, half-buzzing and thump-thump-thundering in our brains and our blood-streams from bathtub moonshine. Intercourse eventually became outmoded, and our sexual organs became vestigial.

We carried the odour of certain extinction around on us, always - molasses-thick and sweet, like the tang of decaying fruit. A lizard had bitten one of our party, and this, too, began to smell: I often recalled, in those final weeks, my first sighting of one of the new and mysterious reptiles, eating a dead flamingo which it had dragged halfway up the wall of the blasted-out zoo, on what used to be 5th. They generally grew to be as large as Alsatians or wolf-hounds, and though they were newly-evolved, there was something of the Mesozoic about them; after a while, we started to see them lurching around every corner, and sunning themselves on the tarmac on every block. It was hard, near the end, to remember a time when they'd seemed to be anything but commonplace - they rarely attacked us without first being provoked, appearing to live instead on the half-rotten bodies which sweltered

and blistered in our gutters. The bodies were mostly human, though sometimes animal and - though intermittently at first - would occasionally reveal themselves to be a curious, indistinct mixture of both. It was never certain to us whether these were the product of violent accidents, or the discarded results of experimentation, but we viewed their discovery as portentous regardless. They were the symptom of a larger disease.

We were a bulla, a boil, a junk-swole furuncle - *ubi pus, ibi evacua* - and had to be drained accordingly. The gods we had made for ourselves not long before were not only false, but entirely toxic. Our worship of them poisoned us from the inside-out, the effects eventually manifesting in the curious, scale-like growths which began to appear on our skin, or in the way that our hair - as if from the aftereffects of radiation - began to dislodge itself from our grey and brittle scalps in fistfuls. It was true that we were responsible, in our own ways, for the damage which we had done to our earthly bodies: the ways in which we'd tried to imitate the false gods using unreal complexions and ersatz hairstyles, and the various modifications which we'd made to our diets; our organs; our craniofacial structure, tweaked and refined into virtual collapse, until each one of us looked like a monstrous double to the man at his immediate left.

Long before this, there had been things - alive and armoured, and about the size of hockey pucks - which had appeared overnight in our homes, and affixed themselves here and there, - in the manner of fist-large, pulsing barnacles. These were where everything started; they were the genesis of our steep decline, although we knew, if we were honest, that we had driven ourselves some way into madness already. We had purified our systems by drinking expensive body lotions. Our nutritionists had given us lethal advice. We had set fire to our status vehicles, and the lizards had turned up to live in our swimming pools. We had lost our minds in increments, from exposure to things which we could not begin to explain or eliminate. We resembled, then, ink drawings of men which were deliberately smudged.

The Lazaretto

Dan Szor

Overview:

Following the collapse of the union and England's dissolution from Europe, unrest had broken out between the Southern and Northern regions of this infant and increasingly infantile country. The vast fracking fields that stretched northwards from Nottingham to Newcastle and across from Liverpool to Hull had become an increasingly political issue following the breakup of the Union. A Wild West style land grab had taken place with energy companies wading in to tap the gaseous gold that lay below the already pockmarked mantle of these former pit towns. Little concern was given to the environmental and geological destruction been wrought in the aim of gaining quick and unsustainable wealth. Fleeting fortunes had been made, yet the misfortunes that followed far outweighed any gain in gold. The environmental time bomb created by the Great Fracking Experiment undertaken in the early 21st Century had been triggered.

Cities such as Manchester, Leeds and Liverpool revelled in this new-found wealth and embarked on ambitious civic projects: skyscrapers, ground scrapers, every type of scraper imaginable. Putting aside regional differences, they joined forces, bolstering links between them through trade and improvements to infrastructure. The Blairite vision of the Northern Megacity had become a reality. For the first time in 300 years, London had an equal within it's own borders; a fact it acknowledged with an uneasy smile.

As in ancient Pompeii, most failed to notice or adhere to the geologists' concern over the small tremors that seemed at most a minor hindrance. Money was to be made, so any consequences would have to wait.

By 2030, increasingly independent from Westminster, the northern city states had begun work on a new capital for the region. Dubbed the 'Brasilia of the North' by the rapturous media, this planned city would take the strain off the others, which by now were flailing under the weight of cancerous unplanned growth. Centred around the Warrington area, this city would become the ideal. A model of

uniformity and pride, an ideal for others to follow and a standard for future growth and uniformity.

The task of engineering this colossal development was handed over to the Peel Holdings, a company with a proven track record of turning former brownfield sites into prime real estate, with a little help from central government when times were not as prosperous. Yet who could argue; they had so quietly gone about acquiring huge swathes of land over the 20 years since the semi-completion of the previous projects, Liverpool Waters and Salford Quays, that by now they held the monopoly, sway and say in any development that took place. Not through choice, but through engineered housing bubbles and lack of any other option, the monotonous cladding of the neo-brutal apartment blocks that defined turn of the century urban living had remained en vogue, their small, quirkily placed windows providing a uniform view of a world blindly sailing toward collapse.

September 6th 2032: Blackpool, North West

The strip took on an almost sublime demeanour as the sun rolled out along the Irish Sea, spreading its confident talons across the casinos, hotels and theme parks that jostled for attention along the finite space of the promenade. The Victorian splendour of the tower, unrivalled, in part due to the restrictions imposed by sight lines, stood erect in the morning light. A confident thumbs up to the rest of the world, casting its self assured shadow across the stirring metropolis that spread out in its wake.

Fun seekers staggered home alongside the migrant workers heading out. The clean up process had begun, thus preparing the city for another day and night of excess. This cyclical binging and purging had become the lifeblood of city; Blackpool had finally settled into a groove. It felt good. The previous centuries' mixed fortunes of booms followed by prolonged busts were fading beyond memory. Fist Me Quick hats, phallic lollies and denture-dissolving rock had given way to theme hotels, chain restaurants and an anything goes mentality unrivalled anywhere this side of the equator. The city and its inhabitants were literally glowing - perpetual illuminations - cheap energy and relaxed gambling laws equalled good times. All that moaning about fracking now seemed…well, kind of stupid.

Accompanying the cleaners and street sweepers was the sight of a group of engineers heading toward the base of the tower. Trending local news reported that the night had seen an unusually large amount of minor tremors in the Lancashire area. A regular occurrence, the tremors had become so regular that many failed to notice. Reports suggested that urgent surveying work was to be carried out…cool.

Supposedly strict planning regulations, implemented from

Westminster, required all new and renovated buildings to take into consideration tremor proofing but most turned a blind eye. The increasing polarity between central government and its increasingly outward looking northern counterpart meant that many simply paid little regard to policy enforced from below. These laws were seen as little more than interference from jealous neighbours in the south who were still recovering from the second financial collapse in a decade, something the northern regions had remained immune to due to lack of financial investment at the start of century. Though the seed still swelled bitter in the hearts of the ageing generation that could remember the first global crash, desolation had left them exempt from any fallout, a clean slate for the ultimate fracking state. Besides, these tremors measured near insignificance on the Richter scale; any self-respecting northerner just put up with them. To acknowledge was a sign of weakness.

October 25th, 2035: Somewhere over north Wales

DUG-A-DUG-A-DUG-A-DUG-A-DUG...rotors overlapping overhead. Bastardised Old Skool/Gabba/2 step/Dub: the song of the swarm had amassed into a pulsating sonic throb that blanketed the landscape, reverberating through the lightless valleys below.

Buffeted by Atlantic gales that had swept in from the west, the metallic throng made its way northward, over what had formerly been the nation of Wales. The once craggy yet imposing landscape now resembled nothing more than a quarry mined to utter desolation. A landscape collapsed in on itself, exposing the manmade shafts that snaked through its permeable surface like the collapsed veins on a junkies arms, We didn't know when to stop to be honest, we couldn't we were now injecting into the groin, the front line of the Great Fracking Experiment.

Made up mostly of Chinese helicopters, but with a handful of other South East Asian nations accompanying, the fleet was heading toward the Merseyside Metropolitan District; by far the largest, and now the last and only working port in the Autonomous Northern Zone (ANZ).

Drifting above the lifeless world below, the odd flare from a working well brought one back round to reality, . momentarily flooding the air with its warming presence, as if to jointly warn and entice.

The forest of cooling towers and chimneys that spread out across the once prosperous Cheshire plain no longer cry smoke. Faint tracks of stirred earth, left in the wake of the hovercrafts that navigate crumbling terra firma, sweep left toward the port, indicating the pilot should do the same. Swift turn into Mersey basin, the pilot catches the passengers off guard; a flurry of arms flailing, reaching for support.

Wary fingers grip a little harder.

To the right, cranes punctuate the horizon, the stalled brutalism of the semi-erect new city a black, unlit mass, precariously perched upon the fragile crust.

For the rookie reporters, the haunting scenes laid out before them stirred memories of that fateful September morning three years ago,. its consequences still reverberating through the minds of its global audience. The HD phone footage of the once-proud steel of the tower collapsing toward its deathbed of glass, metal and masonry Final act: flaccid, pointing to four on a clock that stopped midday as if to accuse those in that direction of blame. The disappeared earth and sea a day in the life of one giant hole, Blackpool, Lancashire.

October 25th, 2035. Dawn, Port Liverpool.

A spectacle of disintegration was unravelling before his eyes. Flares echoed above. Slow motion sheet lightning lighting up red, the faces of heaving masses gathered along the waterfront; John Martin's Last Judgement no longer confined to canvas.

News helicopters circled above, no-fly zones not enforced. Who was actually in charge? Searchlights highlighting the tempestuous brown flow below, parodying those on land in its eagerness to escape as it made its choppy exit into the sea.

At the mouth of the river, the silhouette of a huge vessel made its way upstream towards the pier head accompanied by a procession of EU-affiliated Chinooks and hovercraft, the noise of the fleet deafening, adding to the suffering of the gathering crowds.

This sight was not uncommon, and images of these evacuations, like the famine porn that defined the 2020's had become so engrained into the world psyche that they hardly registered as newsworthy. However, what made this one different was that this was to be the last.

The ANZ, not formally recognised by Westminster, but recognised by other nations was high on the agenda when the G4 met in the spring of 2033. Military intervention had been vetoed by Russia and China but it was agreed that an aid programme would be worked out: Operation Lazaretto. In the two years since the great quake and subsequent collapse of the fragile earth below the fracking fields of Northern England, a steady stream of aid, mostly from the Federal European Union states, had made its way towards the port, navigating the contested waters around the Irish Sea.

Now, in a move that further increased its isolation, Westminster had decide to enforce a blockade on all aid entering and leaving any port within the Autonomous Northern Zone. The conservative agenda seemed hell bent on the complete destruction of the ANZ, which it blamed for a spate of 'terrorist attacks' in the Greater London Area,

somewhere around Birmingham. This escalation in tension between Westminster and the FEU had pushed the story up the ranks in terms of newsworthiness; it now lay just behind the exploits of those entombed within the Chinese Big Brother House.

A sound not dissimilar to the extinct sound of suicidal whales as the metal loading doors of the vessel made their drawn-out descent to the dockside; a long resigned yawn that seemed to reflect the passivity of it all, of everyone and everything. Dawn began to break. The chorus of metallic onlookers, humming above as the crowds, withdrawn and uncertain channeled their way into the giant container. Where were they going? Who would let them in?

Turning, he surveyed the cityscape, as if accepting the finality of it all. As the light rolled in from the east, the concrete shafts of the unfinished skyscrapers around Liverpool Waters became visible. Light, the only commuter along the pristine tarmac, travelled up, onto the pavement, rising along the glass and cladding. Embellished with repeated corporate logos SERCO PEEL TATA desolate avenues, pedestrian zones devoid of life; windswept plaza after windswept plaza. He imagined a time before that job interview he didn't get when he walked along the dockside and wept. It was as if not that much had actually changed in the time between the Lazaretto leaving and 2014.

The Work of the Future in Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time*

Brent Bellamy

"The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living."

Karl Marx "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte"

In Marge Piercy's incredible novel *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976) it is not the tradition of past generations, but those of the future to come that weigh on the brains of the living. The protagonist, Consuelo Ramos, is visited by contrasting visions from the future. Often, Consuelo finds herself in a happy utopian community that contrasts with her daily life, but, she also witnesses a dark and repressed, threatening dystopia and the struggle between the good place and the bad. To deny the visions that she finds so frightening, Consuelo discovers that she too must find the will to fight; not in the future, but in her own present against her incarceration. The work of the future in Piercy's novel thus weighs on the protagonist's present in a way that causes it to weigh on our own, real-world present also, as we find ourselves facing the same problem Consuelo does: embrace the label of insanity or comply with our captor's version of reality? Either Consuelo visits the future and learns that there are better ways to be and to know, or she does not and instead the visions we read are her own. In both cases, such as reading of the novel demonstrates a type of thinking that continues to be germane to radical politics today, in our own fraught present.

Piercy introduces us to her heroine during a quiet morning in Consuelo's New York City apartment. Connie, as she is called by Anglos, gains the reader's trust and compassion very early on in the novel when she stands up to her niece's boyfriend-pimp, Geraldo, to protect her niece from having an abortion. Consuelo's protective outburst is violently turned against her and she is sent back to a mental institution a feat disgustingly easy to perform by Geraldo who simply has to make up a story for the police about Consuelo's attack

to re-institutionalize her. The play of Geraldo's privilege relative to Consuelo's own position is palpable. Her return to the mental hospital causes her to reflect on and confront her previous time there, the loss of her daughter, and the structures of power that toss her about like so much flotsam on the surf.

Much of the narrative unfolds within the mental institution as Consuelo is shuffled back and forth between wards, and, ultimately, selected to take part in an emerging medical program designed to help patients control their violent tendencies. Piercy charts out, in almost Foucauldian manner, the interworkings of control of the mental hospital and its corollary, the medical industry. Perhaps what Piercy does best is depict a protagonist who rests at the centre of a number of capillaries of power and forces for the control of the present: on the one hand in terms of ethnicity, race, and gender; and, on the other poverty and mental illness. After the first chapter, and Consuelo's incarceration, the novel looks back to the day before her niece had come to her to seek protection. On this day, Consuelo meets Luciente a traveler from the future who is able to jump into Consuelo's time and also pulls her forward into a utopian future. This feat, it turns out, is still possible for Consuelo from within her room at the institution.

With this introduction the reader begins a cluster of narratives in the novel that are set in the future. Luciente is from Mattapoisett, a utopian community, which is interesting for its politics, both radical and bureaucratic: a mindful ecology and the abolition of gender, communal living and a more humane life style, the defeat of racism and the encouragement of art, the reconfiguration of the family and new life cycle rituals. These utopians run an open, egalitarian balanced society where the horrors of Consuelo's patriarchal, racist, sex-normative, capitalist present have been pushed beyond its borders. To give a partial sense of it, a summary of the changes required to transition to their society from ours ends up sounding like a laundry list of radical demands from the left. Their use of language has changed drastically as a result of material changes as well, something else that intervenes between the reader, Consuelo, and a full understanding of the utopia. For instance, all gendered words are removed from the language. *He* and *she* are replaced by person or *per*, and supplemented by a number of terms for one's relation to others: sweet friend, coms (for co-mothers there are always three: men are mothers too in the future) and so on. Consuelo mediates this future through her shock and awe of it: for instance, she can't believe children are raised by three parents all referred to as mother. The novel puts the reader in Consuelo' shoes by repeating a process of explanation with each innovation Consuelo discovers, gauging her reactions, and then having the Mattapoisett utopians offer patient explanations.

The other future is also introduced to Consuelo by the Mattapoisett utopians; in fact, they contact Consuelo for this reason: their present is under threat and they reach out to her as part of the struggle for their own survival. Their utopia is not total; there are still pockets of resistance to their way of life, on and off the planet; the alternate futures are, in fact, contemporaneous. At one point, while trying to reach per, Consuelo ends up in a strange place filled with technology and a call girl who urges her to return to her own time before she is discovered. Elsewhere in the novel, Consuelo finds it difficult to reach Luciente because per is off fighting against the dystopian armies. The novel thus contains at least two major plot forces: Consuelo's incarceration and knowledge of an impending surgery in her own time, and the violent conflict between the utopians and their alternate future. Herein lies the utopian politics of Piercy's novel; the plea "we must fight to come to exist" (198) resonates with the present state of being able to imagine radical difference, while seemingly unable to activate it; yet act we must.

Woman on the Edge of Time creates a powerfully resonant feedback loop between the novel's present and its uncertain future. Consuelo acts as the stitching point between different times: her reactions to the future, and her interpretations of it, help us to understand our own connection to history. In the words of literary critic Fredric Jameson, they translate "our present into the determinate past of something yet to come" (288), at once reminding us that the present offers numerous possible trajectories for the future. A major theme of the novel is the need to change the self-destructive path of the present in order to create an egalitarian future. This is no easy task; especially from someone in Consuelo's position. Whether or not she imagines Luciente's visits or the Mattapoisett utopians, the political lesson remains the same: reading Consuelo's story teaches us to think the social relations underlying the smooth face of individual identity and the ways those relations came to be and will continue to become. Further, it warns us that by failing to recognize these connections, and by failing to act, we guarantee that the dominant forces will prevail and become, to repeat those haunting words from "The Eighteenth Brumaire," those nightmarish traditions that weigh on the brains of the living.

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American Apocalypse

Gregor Rozanski

This video[1] is an attempt to reconstruct (reimagine) the mysterious Ted Turner's "end of the world tape".

In 1980, after Turner created CNN, he said 'We won't be signing off until the world ends. We'll be on, and we will cover the end of the world, live, and that will be our last event... we'll play "Nearer, My God, to Thee" before we sign off.' Another version of this quote is 'We gonna go on air June 1, and we gonna stay on until the end of the world. When that time comes, we'll cover it, play "Nearer, My God, to Thee", and sign off.'

Ten years later, according to some reports, Turner used CNN production facilities to create what he called his "end-of-the-world" video, consisting of a recording of "Nearer, My God" over footage of a waving American flag. Turner is said to have ordered the tape locked away until it was determined that the world was about to end.

This kind of message as an essence of american traditional and conservative values could be presented to people around the world in the last moments of their life.

The video has hi-definition quality, because any future apocalypse will be watched on HD TVs.

P.S. "Nearer, My God, to Thee" is most famous as the alleged last song the band on RMS Titanic played before the ship sank. The same piece was sung by the doomed crew and passengers of the SS Valencia as it sank off the Canadian coast in 1906, and this event may be the source of the Titanic legend.

1 https://vimeo.com/85279131

Science and Non-Fiction

Charissa Glidden

January 9th 10th or 11th, 2014

I am on the wrong bus. I walk the 5 surprise miles sludging a bag filled with quite a lot of crap. Actually. The bag is gilled with my mum's laundry from the Stroke Rehabilitation Ward East, Woodend Hospital Aberdeen. It is early days for us both. My mind is dizzy with lists and what to feed someone who can swallow naught but puree and is on a hospital food hunger strike. The lists are smudged and look like the endeavor of an ecstatic Pentecostal scribe, looped across the pages in rapid panic, dictator to dictatress. My mum is paralysed on the right side of her body from the stroke, and rendered sort of iron lung speechless. She has been given what they euphemistically call a communication board. She points to double vowels at an increasingly swift and frustrated pace, giving voice to her every late onset OCD, household aspiration, Enigmatic treasure hunt clues are coyly spelled out for the rapt spellbound. Like awaiting a stutter clairaudience and I, the court-appointed dowser of documents, I see the communication board for what it actually is, a terrifying Ouija board of infinite channel.

As I walk under crispy starry skies and *whooo hoo hoo* owls, I consider that it might have been the right bus. I am at what I think of as an alchemical point; that it is all so leaden that transmutative occurrences must must, please, be at a permutative peak. I flip through the file of the cerebral disciplines of *there is solace in* the glory of sky, my tiny speckness in scheme *of*, potential absorption of banshee power as I walk the roads of my origin. Mother Love. Father Love. Mother Earth. Father Sky. You can see the Milky Way; little light pollution out here. I am here, there is a lucky perfection that I am in time for. Kairos not Chronos; divine opportune time, none of those ho hum sequential rhythms. If time is but a direction, then it is also a place. There is no *it's all good* or *it's all bad*, it all just *is*. I rail against acceptance and return to the solaces; and all over again.

It is ludicrously early, but I like to cultivate erratic and unusual hours; yes, like a practice. Electricity has been consistently intermittent this Kali Yule, giving me gloam of oil lamp and Inuit-in-the-Tundra dreams. The rural isolation and my sister fecking back to London

yield a satisfying sense of abandonment so I am dressed for bed in ski clothes, outfitted (all but the goggles), for *The Incredible Journey*[1] when there is a thump and relocated Scouse in Aberdeenshire holler of 'It's only Bob. It's just me. It's just Bob it's only me.' I would find this intrusive if it were someone else but it is, you know, just Bob. And Bob and Pat Gallagher are people grooving to the beat of kairos; it was Bob's wife Pat who ambulance-rescued my mum based on a gurgled 'help' followed by *beep beep beep* phone line. The door is one of those wavy glass doors from the early 1970s, prisming and magnifying Bob as he chants his modest liturgy of 'It's only me'. He looms, Nordic and heroic. I open the door. Northern Lights, Aurora Borealis. Them, they say. Tonight. Visible. We both try a dismissive tone: ahhhh, the auld elusive Haley's Borealis; visible, like in the sense of observable to the human eye?

Bit like the much-ballyhooed Gulf stream and its mythically balmy flow, past unsightings of the Northern Lights give me a feeling of some injustice wrought, like a birthright promised but never bestowed: up here freezing in the Nethers for nowt. Tetch tetch. I ask Bob if he has ever seen them, and he says yes, happened quite by uniformed chance upon only once upon, about 20 years ago, out on the rigs. Which immediately strikes me like a panel from an oil painting depicting Ragnarok. Catching a glimpse of Goddess Aurora would appear to follow certain traditions of Want, who prefers a surprise entrance, and while not insistent on sacrifice is more likely to be beckoned by, some sea-swept prostrate heave sway and surge. We look to the night sky that is cloudless and calm, unusual conditions for Aberdeenshire for any season. Bob bids me 'bye' then he is off to feed his Geese.

It occurs to me, as I slalom down into bed that my mum has seen the Aurora, on the East Coast of the states in Connecticut somewhere, in the 1950s. Once. More than once, she has also seen The Cigar Shaped UFO as a child in Alabama; well, somewhere between more than once and (airily) after a dram of sherry *several times*. So statistically, genetically, I am more predisposed to experience a UFO sighting than a glimpse of the Aurora Borealis, which makes up for just about *everything* and is a pleasing thought indeed. I have Goose-downy dreams. I float with a musician from Beirut with Phoenician

1 *The Incredible Journey* (1961) by Sheila Burnford (Scottish), is the harrowing tale of three utterly lost defenceless and abandoned pets (two dogs and a Siamese cat) and their brutal and epic journey home across the Canadian Tundra. It was of a sort of genre of horrific class readers that they assumed would prepare us for the future lurches and losses of life beyond primary school. Another such, Tarka the Otter was permanently disturbing for me. Spoiler: Tarka torn to shreds by her nemesis. Tarka =dead. Later, along came Watership Down, which I never actually read having got the gist of the thing by then, knowing it would end in tears and frankly having wearied of literary pet snuff.

angel eyes and alien tattoos. I wake at some unusual hour, but rested and filled with the sort of anticipation that heralds delight. I wonder if Aurora is here! If it is *me* this time, *my* moment with the celestial lightshow. *Kairos!* There is greenish gloaming rising and falling, pulsating rhythmically from the window. Even better! Wow, aliens are here to space whisk me away in my padded pantaloons. Of course, of course it all makes sense now! Not ski suit, *space* suit! I can see clearly now. I rustle to the window and look at the exact moment a shooting star arcs across the sky. I am prepared, in my wishful prayers, and I do not miss a nanosecond of its trajectory and I *bless bless bless* and call love into being and lasting. I remember that I have often suspected that I catch shooting stars at a well above average rate, so I will look for them because, well, they love me, I can see that now.

I can also see that I am a cubist, a surrealist, an impressionist and an illusionist, not a realist. The rising and falling pulsating green gloam that drew me to the window is merely the respiratory bellows of my Macbook sleeping. I can see that now. It's alright though. There is no tradition of wish fulfillment granted by seeing Aurora Borealis that I know of a want sought for wants sake to be admired for the spectacle of its being , a cult of elusiveness. The shooting star seems altogether more reciprocal and giving. And my thing, really. If not mine, then pertaining to me.

Feeling Bar #2

Amy Tighe

"They say we live on the bones of unknown civilisations" he threw back a clear shot by a slow bringing to the lips, scissored between two steady fingers and a whip-crack chin motion "and that before the dinosaurs, there were men. And" waving a biblical hand "women too, if you're going to look at me like that. And that they thought they were the pinnacle, the result of so much evolution. But they used a different form of communication. Hey" snapping his fingers twice "I'm talking. So they left no trace. But there were clues."

She never planned on sitting next to Stan, late at night in the quietest feeling bar in the city. It is never her plan. But she always finished her job feeling blanked out; a day spent grading fabrics, textiles, chairs, beds, clothing, toys according to the Gramercy-Lexington International Emotional Scale meant she forced herself to accomplish more traversing through the range of human emotions than a pregnant teen: exhilarated to despondent to safe to ambitious to suspicious to hysterical, all according to whichever textile she ran through her fingers, or rubbed against a cheek, or wrapped around her shoulders. The job paid well - funded as it was, collectively, by the biggest toy manufacturers, interior designers, even companies like Toyota were bankrolling her - and it didn't leave her too guilty to enjoy spending her earnings, as she had felt when working as a prostitute (since prostitution had been legalised more or less worldwide in 2021, the general feeling was that it was immoral to charge for something that other people gave away for free or in return for safety - the pink press had called it 'flooding the market with nether fluids' and the Financial Times had bitched and whined about its lack of regulation and other failures unique to the private industry) or as a lawyer.

The only real downside was that at the end of each day she would feel empty, spun out, completely unable to feel an emotion wholly without obsessively compartmentalising it, labelling it, struggling to correctly describe it. So, instead, she chose to waste her nights at the feeling bar, with self-promoters like Stan sitting next to her (for she was a female who could afford some hefty upgrades and regular tune-ups, and there was always some twitching mass of muscles who

wanted to sit next to her) and sitting back ,this particular evening, on the Venetian-Sunset-Purple™ fun-fur chair of MemoryFoam® [which, she couldn't help but wearily, automatically make a mental note was evoking:

Colour - nostalgia for times not yet happened. romances that existed only in a sepia hindsight . full-bodied, low-tannic red wines drunk from a flat-bottomed water glass with 'duralux®' stamped upon it. Blue cheese spread thickly across warm crusty bread.

Texture - childhood toys, dependency thereon. the feeling of release when all issues regarding safety / nutrition / location / toilet are taken care of by a third party.

Density - your mother pushing you on a swing. your father pushing you on a bicycle and promising not to let go and he doesn't let go. the gentle but knowing touch of your favourite lover. the snug fit of your most flattering jeans. she chose blindly from the menu.

The waiter accepted her request, as always, with a small nod and not a single facial expression. He was delicately formed and impassive, and she could never tell if it was always the same guy or not. Each time, as Stan or Bradley or Whittley droned on next to her, she would note some small details - a puckering around an old nostril piercing, a tan line around an absent wedding band, but the next time she saw him, she couldn't be sure if these absences, these negative spaces, were present or not.

Her shot arrived, and she brought it to her lips and threw her head back; instantly she knew she had chosen Despair. As it burned her throat and warmed her stomach, it was already sending a vulture to sit on her shoulder, pinning her vision down to the bare essentials. It was never as all-engulfing as an acid trip, but more similar to how you felt when you caught a cold slowly, slow enough to observe the symptoms develop from a detached corner. She remembered a science class, chemistry, she was about seventeen at the time, full of push-up bra and sweet vermouth with cola and not much else. Her teacher was teaching them how electrons fill in the spaces in atoms - first singly, then begrudgingly pairing up. Her teacher, whose name she couldn't remember but who, she was certain, had half a finger missing, and whose class she had worked hard in, toiling under the misguided hope that a perfect grade would impress said teacher into revealing the mystery of the loss uniquely to her star student, had said that an easy way to visualise the way of the electron was to compare it to people getting on a bus - everyone would choose an empty seat first, and

only when all possible empty seats were taken would they choose to pair up and sit next to someone else.This had made her feel 'sad', feel 'hopeless' at the calmly accepted norm that, when given the option, all humans will choose to be alone, will choose the option that allows them as much aloneness as possible. It was years until she realised that, when the electrons were filled into their spaces singly, the resulting atom was unstable and then, once there were more pairings, the atom became more and more stable, more predictable and easier to manage.

She always preferred overcoming an emotion that was categorised as negative to buying one of the cheap happy shots. Sipping water through a bitten-flat straw, she observed Stan, whose meandering yet firmly-asserted topics, coupled with his thousand-yard stare at nothing in particular, suggested his last shot had been Self-righteousness. She amused herself with blocking out the sound of half his words, which dented his meaning not a bit. "Every generation. Last one. Doesn't realise. Always the same."

An Ending Of Something That Has Not Yet Been Overed

Chris Roaf

Every night, when dark falls and the no-light gathers about the edges of the fire She's next to me then. Not just next to me, she's with me then. Light and green flows from nowhere and inks in her glowing background. We're back then. The woods. The no-light behaved differently; it was kinder to us. We were kinder to us, swimming in warmth. We had rainwater. We had food left; others couldn't touch us, no-light to blue-sky to no-light. Yellow, green and blue. The plant-smell and water-touch. She's still with me until I twitch awake. She's not with me anymore. She's here. We're both here. The Winter is over, the Spring is here again too. But it's not the same Spring, the Spring before when everything still was, when we met.

Heads reeling, ears ringing, bodies in the streets. We wandered into each other. Everyone was dazed the first taste of the true no-light. Together, learning to fire, learning to fight. The shoutings and screamings in the chill of day, the sinister silences between. Our world crumbled: with every thing destroyed everyone destroyed everything. We were sped past by time then; circumstances focussed us on our living.

The world woke up again and slowed its dizzying spin. By once coloured buildings charred black, browned trees spew their leaf-green. The nature escaped us from our whole lives, previously separate and now converged. We were escaped from our old places, into older places which were not ours and never could be. So we possessed each other instead. This is the time of my dreams. Sunlight through leaf mesh; the dappled her; water and warmth; ease of life: all underfoot.

When the green fled we sidled back to the city. There was a lot of fighting, more difficult than before. All fighting was killing. We took a killed man's gun. He was totally leaf-covered when we passed by next.

The city return excited us. Every night there were flames and noise, black, red and orange. We slept curled up, hidden in high buildings,

before we forgot the summer's easy green. Then we became more careful. Our gun made things easy. Our gun was our tool to get what we needed. The city was alive with people, people to meet, to trade and to rob. Even groups and gangs. Food was there, easy to find, enough to spare; people had food we could take. We would stay up through the no-light, into cold mornings.

Mornings coldered more, white, blue and grey. Our warmth was from each other then. Others organised. We kept stores underground and followed there ourselves. When fire was difficult, all was no-light. Day in, day out sometimes; all no-light, all no-warm, no colours. Our gun soaked and broken in a flood, but we hadn't time to check before they found us. We stove both their heads in with a brown-rusted pipe. Things were not so easy after that.

In the Spring, things were supposed to get warmer, we said. After the snow. We said after the city purges, after the organised troops had moved, after the New Power was finished with this sector, then things would be normal, things would just be again. We said we would fight them, not each other. We said that for a long time underground. We said that while fighting. The no-light heard us and it grew to hate us for our lies.

She left me then.

We made our way out to the quiet green for the warm time, but knew what had happened, it was wary of our change.

She is here, next to me. She might always be close to me. We are not together. She is not with me. When she is gone, then things will be finished. The end will come then. We are still here, apart.

About the Contributors

Brent Ryan Bellamy is a PhD Candidate in the Department of English and Film Studies University of Alberta where he studies U.S. post-apocalyptic novels after the American century. His blog notes from after the end can be found at www.brentryanbellamy.com

Joe Campbell graduated from Chelsea College of Arts in 2010. His latest project, *Plywood Ordeal*, was with Galleri Plywood in Göteborg, Sweden.

Christina Chalmers was born in Edinburgh, studied in Cambridge and lives in London. She has published in magazines such as *HiZero*, *Rivet*, *Scree*, *No Prizes*; and has a book out named *Work Songs* from Shit Valley Press.

Quentin S Crisp was born in North Devon, U.K., in 1972. His first collection of stories, *The Nightmare Exhibition*, was published in 2001 by BJM Press. His most recent, *Defeated Dogs*, in 2013 by Eibonvale Press. He hopes, with time, to write more about Annette Funicello and less about anhedonia.

Cécile B Evans (b.1983) is a Belgian American artist. She lives and works in London and Berlin. **AGNES** (b. 1998) is a digital native. She lives and works in the Serpentine Galleries website, Langstone Technology Park.

Charissa Glidden: most often in India, often in New York City, New Hampshire and Scotland. When I write, I am the spirit bead in your ceremonial necklace, the flaw where exaltation enters. I am an entelechtual. I am vital to your fulfilment. I am actuality not potentiality: I am stochastic resonance, the errant bead to ideas and serendipities you would otherwise be insulated from. I am Eros from Chaos. When I do not write, I am just a variety of untidy. I am the tangle in your hair only, the snarl that remains.

Caspar Jade Heinemann is an artist and writer into crisis, witchcraft, virtual bodies and the future tense. Currently studying BA Fine Art at Goldsmiths, University of London.

Paul Ingram is a poet and filmmaker based in London. He has performed and shown his work at PolyPLY, Xing the Line, Benefits, Chlorine Readings, Projektor Screenings and the 60seconds Short Film Festival in Copenhagen. He edits the zine SCABS ARE RATS.

Ellen Yeon Kim is an artist based in London/Frankfurt, currently studying at Städelschule, where she has been studying under Peter Fischli and Simon Starling and at Slade School of Art. She works with various mediums including text, performance, film, and performative objects/space; and believes in Thursdays coming after Wednesdays and May after April.

Isabella Martin is a sculptor whose work uses language as a means of navigation.

She is a member of the international collective Camp Little Hope and an artist educator at the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts. Isabella collaborates across disciplines and contexts, and keeps one foot in the sea at all times.

Ben Osborn is a writer, songwriter, librettist and composer. He is the musical director of Fellswoop Theatre, whose production of Toshiki Okada's apocalyptic play *Current Location* is playing in various venues around the UK this year.

Mat Paskins teaches history of science and helps to study the history of foraging. He is Community manager for commodity histories www.commodityhistories.org

Yuri Pattison is an artist working with, and creating, subjective datasets. Currently thinking about collapse. http://yuripattison.com

Thogdin Ripley is generally interested in the transfer of power at a microscopic level, in disjuncture and non-sequitur, and in the overlay of themes that might not immediately present themselves as experientially or textually compatible (or indeed, healthy). He's currently working on a short novel that will be very difficult to sell.

Chris Roaf is a musician and performer living in Osaka, Japan. He can banter in three languages and gets his heart broken like clockwork.

Gregor Rozanski (b. 1988 in Wroclaw, Poland) is an artist based in Berlin and Warsaw. He uses wide range of media: various conceptual practices, ephemeral projects, video, internet, found objects, sculpture, installations and drawings. His work has been shown at solo and group exhibitions in Germany, Poland, Italy, Austria, Switzerland, Mexico and other countries. More info: http://gregorrozanski.com

David Rudnick is a graphic designer. http://davidrudnick.org
http://www.aqnb.com/2014/04/21/an-interview-with-david-rudnick/

Born in 1985, **Dan Szor** lives and works in the hinterland between the North and the Midlands. Studied Art and Politics MA at Goldsmiths, University of London. Frequent lecturer in Image Making at The University of Salford. Dan is a regular abseiler and presides over the dark culinary art of 'Lobby' making.

Philippa Snow is an editor and essayist, based in London; she is currently the Features Ed. of both Modern Matter and Kilimanjaro magazines, and writes mostly about the intersections between popular culture, sociological theory and 'legitimate' contemporary art.

Liam Sparkes is a tattooist. http://liamsparkes.tumblr.com
http://instagram.com/liamsparkesok

Verity Spott is 18 years old and lives in Cleethorpes. They have published the books 'Effort to No', 'My Lost 2, My Bent 3' and 'Dear Nothing and No One in it' (with Jonny Liron). Verity is a full time waiter and musician, and has played in

11.5 venues in the first half of a career. You can reach Verity with your concerns or questions at verityspott@gmail.com. The poems in this magazine are the anima to a set that can be found by Ashley French in Litmus magazine.

Garry Sykes is primarily a Yorkshire born filmmaker living in Hackney. His first feature LXHXN, looking at the politics of 21st century representation via the life of Lindsay Lohan, is available to watch for free online.

Mimei Thompson (born Tokyo, Japan) is a Hackney-based painter. She studied at Glasgow School of Art and the Royal College of Art, has work in the Arts Council Collection and will show soon at Queens Park Railway Club in Glasgow.

Amy Tighe received her MA from Goldsmiths and immediately took it travelling. She lives next to a roaring night-train and a fox-brothel and finds both sounds to be soothing. When she isn't writing about the dystopian near-future, she helps underachieving kids find their inner pirate.

Llew Watkins Llew Watkins is a multi-disciplinary artist and writer currently based in London who works in installation, lectures, scripts and performance. His practice is a continuing inquiry into the transient and playful nature of mind and reality.

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