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Time, After Time

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Time, After Time

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the melancholic vapours

*So, it's a veil of tears. And I don't know anything that's going to benefit me more than love. I just need an overwhelming amount of love. And a nap. Mostly a nap.*ⁱ Days turned to weeks and months. In November the days turned to darkness and rather than making them shorter, the lack of light seem to drag them out. Not quite night, but bleak grey darkness. The blues and greens of the fjord were replaced with a grey, damp malaise over the entire city. The malaise of my family half way across the world was palpable in everything I did. I spent so much time trying to be in the nine hours behind the present I was in.

Keeping reasonable hours, taking a husband, raising a child and growing plants, making dinner and the bed, chores, daily grinds. *The really important kind of freedom involves attention, and awareness, and discipline, and effort, and being able truly to care about other people and to sacrifice for them, over and over, in myriad of petty little unsexy ways, every day.*ⁱⁱ Married and divorced before celebrating a second decade. Ex boyfriends, ex lovers, ex pats. There were jobs that promised money, but just stole time, the business of getting left behind. Memories bled into the present, childhoods kept adults up at night. Internal emanations. I was a zombie in a mist of vapours. *I cannot lay my finger upon the moment it ended, can never cut through the ambiguities and second starts and broken resolves to the exact place on the page where the heroine is no longer as optimistic as she once was.*ⁱⁱⁱ But there was an alteration of self on a metabolic level. The limit of experience, that leads to a breakdown, a quarter-life crisis.

I come from a long line of melancholy. I lived in an all woman household in which I was the fourth generation, there was mom, maternal grandma, and maternal great grandma (mom's dad's mom). An inherited fuckedupness from the generation before- the debt of trauma from our family, like every family perhaps, was a source of joy and strength. The women were these great alchemists of pain turning misfortune into blessings and wisdom. Experiences and memories were fluid between them, with little attention paid to origin.

For my first year I lived on *fossveien*, waterfall way. I barely slept for three months.^{iv} I took up living during short sleep cycles. Living simultaneously and not. An abolition of distance creates an abolition of nearness. Everything is equally far, equally near; equally together and apart. *Everything gets lumped together into uniform distancelessness.*^v So, things can be close, and feel far, and vice versa. A body neither here nor there, bound by delusive logistics of schedules. A nomadic body gathering splinters to make a raft. The nomadic body *becomes* the gathering of an articulation of temporal and spatial collisions. Sunken memories float back to the surface, messages in a bottle, debris. Sometimes tangling up with the present. Whirl-pooling in and out of senses. The body without organs^{vi} traverses time and space in a myriad of constellations, floats in the grooves and folds of tenses. Vancouver-Calgary-Frankfurt-Oslo-Venice-Oslo-New York-Calgary-Vancouver-Seattle-New York-Oslo-New York-Calgary-Cancun-Calgary-New York-Oslo-San Francisco-Oslo-Berlin-Barcelona-Paris-Oslo-Stockholm-Oslo-San Francisco-Calgary-Vancouver-Calgary-San Francisco-Oslo-New York-Calgary-Seattle-Vancouver-Calgary-Oslo-Copenhagen-Oslo.^{vii}

*What if you slept, and what if in your sleep you dreamed, and what if in your dreams you went to heaven and there you plucked a strange and beautiful flower, and what if when you awoke you had the flower in your hand... Ah, what then?"*¹ In lucid dreaming I externalized, but tracing memories in the light of day, you can find yourself clawing at air, or clawing at flowers. During deep dreaming episodes, I feel my eyes going inwards, eyes looking backwards into themselves, a mirroring vision. Swaddled in the lethargic warmth of moments before regaining wakefulness, in the moments of struggle for recognition, of the passing of time in a fugal state consciousness exists in realms between the tangible and intangible. Sometimes, *for a second there, and always on the brink of dreaming and waking up*¹ there are brief moments of lucidity.

When I make myself, I imagine^{viii}

When I wake myself, I imagine

To imagine myself as *the repetitive motion of a line, to caress an object, the licking of wounds, the back and forth of a shuttle, the endless repetition of waves, rocking a person to sleep, cleansing someone you like, an endless gesture of love.*^{ix}

I imagine myself as
the motion and the line,
the caress and the object,
the licking and the wound,

the back and forth and the shuttle,
the endless repetition and the wave,
the rocking and the sleep,
the cleansing and the liked someone,
the endless gesture.

can I eat the love you give me^x

Strange, I had words for dinner
Stranger, I had words for dinner
Stranger, strange, do you believe me?

Honestly, I had your heart for supper
Honesty has had your heart for supper
Honesty honestly are your pain.

Jack Spicer, "Magic"

An empathetic relationship to the world allows the subject to enter the event of love. *You discover truth in your response to the event. Truth is a construction after the event. The example of love is the clearest. It starts with an encounter that's not calculable but afterwards you realize what it was.*^{xi} Alain Badiou argues that love opens both parties to a different experience of truth, it's difficult not to ask from the point of two? the point of who? ^{xii} Badiou argues that love opens *all* parties to a different experience of truth. Is the truth in all those days, all those years. The truth is when the memory remembers you. Truth, like love feels melancholic and wavering, a frustration of contemplating things and being with things at the same time, in the same breath. To love is to pursue what's vanished, in the hopes of reaching through time to bring it back, it also reaches forward into the future. This experience of truth offers multiplicity, if and/ or because moments are an accumulation and life is fleeting. The event of love also assumes *the distinction between past, present and future is only a stubbornly persistent illusion.* ^{xiii} It moves through our consciousness on a cellular, choreography of sensation. A dance of tenderness. I can't live without you, how did I live without you?

time, after time

Emotional malignity develop inside and take shape in the form of multiplying cells unable to escape organs in my body, these solidify and express themselves as sickness. I've never been able to separate any psychological or emotional distress from articulating within me. My grandma developed stomach cancer much too early. I happily became a nurse to her at three years old. I accompanied her to all her appointments with doctors, naturopaths, church. *The proof of the tender is in the tending.*^{xiv} I accompanied her to bi-weekly saunas, too young to enter; I sit outside holding the drinking water, dried eucalyptus branches, and a small wet face towel. I sit

in the shade of a palm tree by a wall blanketed by deep red hibiscus flowers, across from a row of trees full of pink mimosa pom-poms. Anise-honeyed scents sway in out with the breeze. Like the spliced earth and ocean of an old navigation map the cerulean tiles of the courtyard are a gridded underwater backdrop. I befriended the receptionist and she made sure I always had plenty of snacks. I would often return the favour with gifts of shiny rocks or interesting dried leaves, and once with a dead bee in a matchbox. During the intervals when grandma comes out of the steamy room, I wipe her round, red, sweaty face and check her temperature with the back of my hand and my cheek. She slicks back her dark shoulder-length hair; the humidity begins to spiral strands on the tips. She always looks so fresh and beautiful this way, her eyes shining and her freckles speckled across her nose, chest, and shoulders. I walk with her around the brick-walled and blue-tiled courtyard squeezing her hand and pushing myself on the side of her soft, fleshy leg and hip. Grandma smells like comfort: like a warm pillow after it's been slept on, sometimes she smells like fried oil or powdery perfume.

How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives. What we do with this hour, and that one, is what we are doing. A schedule defends from chaos and whim. It is a net for catching days. It is scaffolding on which a worker can stand and labor with both hands at sections of time. A schedule is a mock-up of reason and order—willed, faked, and so brought into being; it is a peace and a haven set into the wreck of time; it is a lifeboat on which you find yourself, decades later, still living. Each day is the same, so you remember the series afterward as a blurred and powerful pattern.^{xv}

One October morning when I was in Kindergarten I slept in, my mother already having gone to work, my grandma struggling with her sickness, and the current teenage maid too shy to motivate a precocious, sleepy child, meant I was late for school.^{xvi} Too embarrassed to show my face in my classroom, I skipped class and used my recess money to buy a single portion of chocolate milk, a fresh bun drizzled with powdered sugar and half a dozen sour Fizz candies; I spent a glorious morning in the park. Over the remainder of the month I would do this twice.

I loved school and was experiencing the powerful pangs of a first crush, so to me it doesn't make sense exactly why I did it. When my grandma found out about a month into my excursions, she was waiting me for me when I got home. She asked me to get the sauna face towel, instructed me to run it under the faucet, she then hit me with it. This was the only time this happened. It seems particularly perverse to use that cloth. When it was over, her amber eyes were

glistening with the beginning of tears. I imagine her crying viscous honey instead of salty tears. She looked so lost to me. It was the first time I doubted the certainty of adults. We never spoke about it. I was so humiliated and I couldn't think of anything better than to crawl into my bed and nap. As routinely scheduled she woke me up in time to watch The Flintstones and have early evening tea. Only this time she came and lay beside me in my tiny toddler bed and we fell asleep together. Perhaps, this frustration or helplessness or calm towards the understanding of our bond and the relentless elapse of time a *primordial phenomenon of gentleness*.^{xvii}

feeling some type of way

*since feeling is first
who pays any attention
to the syntax of things*

....

*my blood approves,
and kisses are a better fate
than wisdom*

ee cummings

time after time

For Jean-Luc Nancy: to touch is to touch the trace and to touch its effacement. To touch what moves and vibrates in *the open mouth, the hidden center elliptical return*.^{xviii} To touch the ellipse itself in as much as it touches, as an orbit of the edges of a system, whether cosmological or ocular. A strange orbital touch, touching the eye, the tongue, language, and the world: *every sensation first consents to the world*.^{xix} Eyes and ears touch. Colour, light, and movement touch vision. Sound vibrations move in waves inside the body, as we listen we are being touched, so that every conversation is an internal touch. At the center and in the belly: a *primordial phenomenon of gentleness*.^{xx} Smell can touch, all our organs contain olfactory receptors. Vapours dissipate, but we internalize them as they enter our bodies through skin, hair, lungs, blood.

From the ER you follow the feet on the floor, as if learning steps to a dance that leads to the mental health ward. Coupled words like safe accommodation, completion dates, intake room, waiver signature, visiting hours, are coming at us; hurdling, hovering, shooting to space and coming back down, ricocheting. An echo lost in it's own hollowness. *Love is most nearly itself, when the here and now cease to matter*.^{xxi} I'm taking a topographical survey of surfaces unknown. I think of the body on the other side of the world

being taken from room to room and supervised. Sometimes I feel like I reach through time and space, this is my body without organs. My networked body. Not a unified body, a body with endless possibilities of modification and mediation. Not bound by delineations, weighted in familial connection: it floats, collapses, implodes. I feel the beige walls of the rooms closing in on themselves, the sea-foam green scrubs that clothe the nurses move like amorphous scrapped pieces of ocean or sky, I can hear the echo of shuffling feet. I can smell the disinfectant bleach out the feeling and thoughts of the patients. No drawstrings, no zippers, no writing on clothing. Reflections are concave and un-shatterable, rather than breaking apart and multiplying, they distort in a vortex of silvery metal.

In an hour of insomnia late one night last winter, I read that a black hole in the Perseus cluster and a black hole in galaxy m87 have been reported to be producing rhythmic sounds, the frequency of these waves is equivalent to a B flat, 57 octaves below a middle C. Essentially a black hole has been singing for over two billion years.

To touch is to let oneself be touched. The thing touches back, an experience of time or a time experience. The sense gives back words, gestures, expressions and silence. It gives nearness, proximity: the presence of the present. We perceive the world through material, and forget about the negative spaces that lie in between. The empty space fills up with touch. There is no cutting to, no simple instant, it's between a before, an after, wherever. A past, from before still pending, a haunting of the tender. Reduced to touch: *all sense is touching. The transcendent of sense: obscure, impure, untouchable touch.*^{xxii} There is still this space in between; there are discreet borders, between the touched. To love from a distance we can feel space and borders collapse.

the rapture

In my junior year in high school a lot of time was spent in cars that year. My friend Ethan's mother committed suicide that fall. I don't remember much from the following semester, we tried to support him and this meant being there at lunch and after school, driving around, smoking terrible dry weed while listening to Pavement's "wowie zowie" on the newly installed sound system. It was his favourite album for four years running at that point. We often roll down our windows and allow the thick, hot air of the west Texas desert to slow everything down even further. Sand brushes against our sticky skin. In this inhospitable terrain sand settles on all exposed surfaces.

We let ourselves become part of Ethan's haziness in the endlessness of the horizon of his grief. He would drop us off back at school and go and watch COPS or some other daytime TV, I had advanced algebra and couldn't afford not to make it to class, so I would dutifully go back to school. Unsupervised and lost, his routine continued years after the rest of us had left the suffocating small town.

In 2005 a 2000 year old *Phoenix dactylifera* seed germinated. The date palm was named, Methuselah, it flowered in 2011 and is male. In the fall of 2012 *Silene stenophylla*, a flowering plant native to Siberia from the ice age, was successfully regenerated and flowered seeds. The plant had been frozen for 32,000 years.



Fig. 1 'Doomsday' Global Seed Vault, Svalvard, Norway

The Spring Flowers Own

*...Flowers end in frozen patterns
artificial gardens cover
the floors*

*we get up close to midnight
search with powerful lights
the tiniest shrubs on the
meadows
A stream desperately is running to
the ocean*

Etel Adnan

Objects of Affection

We are asleep. Our life is a dream. But we wake up sometimes, just enough to know we are dreaming.^{xxiii} I woke up in a space of privilege and leisure. I woke up and was having a coke with you and you and you.^{xxiv} I tried to make sense of it, feeling my way through the room. The body as material contorts, moves, traverses through terminals of experience. I was feeling my way through rooms, and buildings, bodies. I was searching for something, staying up late, revisiting, revising. *Outside of a metaphor I have a body, but as a statistic I can at least show up on a bar graph.* Can I make a living from it? This reality disrupts a fantasy. Can I live with it? Can I maintain the fantasy to benefit? *Outside of a metaphor I have a body,* inside of my body I have a fantasy. Affective economies bind close to me, inside me. I reach out to the city and the city hums. I reach on the shelf and still have a hard time deciding between the most economical and least complicit. Body-mind-spirit is lucrative, efficiency is chartable, scientifically quantifiable emotional intelligence has use value. Living in the luxury of objects, in the glut of things, living in danger of being submerged in the world of objects, everyday routine, *relinquishing presence by leaving the body and retreating into the mind.*^{xxv} Stuff we can't live with or without.

How to maintain a feeling of forelesket?^{xxvi}

Inside a brick building *work space* is assigned related to a questionnaire: Do you listen to loud music when you work? How important are windows? Can you work with another person in the room?

How much space will your body occupy? How many beers will the conversion rate allow for today. This is time and space, spacetime colliding. It's value and time and nearness and distancelessness at once.

Where and how can I be in love so that I can live, so that I can live with some degree of peace.^{xxvii}

*You like to think that you're immune to the stuff...oh yeah
It's closer to the truth to say you can't get enough
You know you're gonna have to face it
You're addicted to love*

Robert Palmer, "Addicted to Love"

I fell in love with the process of art, like I fell in love with the process of falling in love. *It was not my eyes or mind that learned. It was my body. I fell in love with the process.*^{xxviii} The process is the romance, *romance as the material and embodied practice of producing wonder.*^{xxix} Ambiguous objects become a sort of residual experiment of a process of catharsis, their interiority and the history of their making speaks of transformation. Work can stand-in for a time in life, an expression of a collision of tenses, synchronously personal and public. I didn't listen to advice, I didn't learn a trade, there are no lay-offs.^{xxx} Sometimes, it's a matter of Sisyphean endurance, patience, luck, timing, and a lot of time. Time is the most precious material of all, without time there is no space. Time is a drag. And, if my narrative is driven to destroy itself, I find myself clasp for the flowers, clawing at air. Serpentine thinking leads me back to the beginning. Still, *I dwell in possibility.*^{xxxi} Clichéd and sentimental, memories wash against me like the sea unto the pier.

Where and how can I be in love so that I can live with some degree of peace?

ⁱ Van Zandt, Townes.

ⁱⁱ Wallace, David Foster.

ⁱⁱⁱ Wallace, David Foster. "Goodbye To All That". *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1968.

ⁱⁱⁱ Wallace, David Foster. "Goodbye To All That". *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1968.

^{iv} There is branch in Tibetan Buddhism that constitutes 'the practice of natural light'. Dzogchen is an embodied static awareness of the mind, of imagination, of consciousness.

^v Heidegger, Martin. "The Thing". *Poetry, Language, Thought*. Trans. Albert Hofstadter. New York: Harper & Row, 1971.

^{vi} Body without organs a term coined by Gilles Deleuze.

^{vii} <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FE8Uut3YRdw>

^{viii} Shonagon, Sei. *The Pillow Book*. Trans. Meredith McKinney. London: Penguin Books, 2006.

^{ix} Louise Bourgeois

^x "If the moon did not/ no, if you did not/I wouldn't either, but /what would I not/ do, what prevention, what thing so quickly stopped./ That is love yesterday/ or tomorrow, not//now. Can I eat/ what you give me./ I have not earned it."-Robert Creeley

^{xi} Badiou, Alain. *In Praise of Love*. Trans. Peter Bush. New York: The New Press, 2012.

^{xii} It seems that for Badiou the right conditions for love exist within a conservative, hetero-normative bourgeoisie narrow bounds.

^{xiii} Albert Einstein

^{xiv} Derrida, Jacques. *On Touching – Jean-Luc Nancy*. Trans. Christine Irizarry. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005.

^{xv} Annie Dillard

^{xvi} Across South America almost all working class & middle class households in the city have maids and nannies, often they are girls and women from the countryside.

^{xvii} Levinas, Emmanuel. *Otherwise Than Being*. Pittsburg: Duquesne University Press, 1988.

^{xviii} Derrida. *Ibid.*

^{xix} Jean-Luc Chretien

^{xx} Levinas. *Ibid.*

^{xxi} Elliot, T.S. *The Four Quartets*. London: Faber & Faber, 1999.

^{xxii} Nancy, *Ibid.*

^{xxiii} Ludwig Wittgenstein

^{xxiv} O'hara, Frank. "Having a Coke with You". *The Collected Poems of Frank O'Hara*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995.

^{xxv} Maria Popova

^{xxvi} Norwegian 'pre-love', or 'over-love', describes the euphoria you experience when you are first falling in love.

^{xxvii} John Cassavetes "What I think everybody needs is a way to say, 'Where and how can I be in love so that I can live? So that I can live with some degree of peace.' I guess every picture we've ever done has been, in a way, to try to find some kind of philosophy for the characters in the film. And so, that's why I have a need for the characters to really analyze love, discuss it, kill it, destroy it, hurt each other, do all the stuff in that war, in that word-polemic and film-polemic of what life is. And the rest of the stuff doesn't really interest me. It may interest other people, but I have a one-track mind. That's all I'm interested in - love. And the lack of it. When it stops. And the pain that's caused by loss of things that are taken away from us that we really need."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KD0Aw4kF2yo>

^{xxviii} Anne Truitt *Daybook. : The Journal of an Artist*. New York: Penguin, 1984.

^{xxix} Badiou, *ibid*.

^{xxix} Lorine Neidecker, "Poet's Work". *Collected Works*. Ed. Jenny Penberthy. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.

^{xxx} Dickinson, Emily. "I Dwell In Possibility." *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*. Ed. R. W. Franklin. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999.