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## The Humid Condition

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## THE HUMID CONDITION

I have nothing (new) to say. And I'm saying it.

Please forgive the length of this manuscript, but I didn't have time to make it shorter.

My doctor recently described psychotherapy as “the slow boat to China,” when compared to new techniques that are, allegedly, far more efficient. My mind was instantly whisked away to an exotic boat deck, under a full moon, with the sound of a waltz coming from the steamship's dining room; an alluring silhouette smoking by the railing, the scent of jasmine, brine, and elopement on the warm, subtropical breezes. For the first time in my life I'm now tempted to get therapy.

Those anxiety dreams in which you need to quickly go somewhere but can't find all your belongings — are they a symptom of modern life? Or did cavepeople have similar dreams, anxiously trying to get back to camp, with all the necessary pieces of the woolly mammoth they just killed, or all the ochre paints

they so painfully collected? Perhaps even dogs and squirrels have such vexing oneiric experiences, concerning the frustrated retrieval of bones, or the eternally deferred collection of nuts.

I stumbled recently on a TV show called *Dolphins: Spy in the Pod*. This was a documentary that featured a camera hidden inside a fake, remote-controlled dolphin, which would then “spy” on the candid underwater activity of these highly intelligent sea creatures. This conceit hit me like a thunderbolt, since it finally explains those people that just seem to be *around*, or in the same room or space as you, but who don’t really respond, or who are somehow a bit “off.” Perhaps they are disguised cameras that the aliens are using to get close-up footage of our strange behavior. Possibly to watch while they eat dinner on their space sofas.

Few people realize that *Friends* was conceived as a modern remake of Buñuel’s *Exterminating Angel*. It featured six random strangers who, because of some strange gypsy curse or uncanny supernatural force, could not go to any other coffee shop, in the whole of New York, than Central Perk, and could only leave their own apartments for very short periods. If one of these damned souls managed to speak to someone outside the group, or arrange a job that didn’t involve the others — in other words, just as it looked like one of their lives would finally get on track — they would hear four quick claps from out of nowhere, and then suddenly find themselves, with a sense of profound horror, back on the couch in Central Perk, sipping a vanilla latte in 90s’ mom jeans.

There should be a name (perhaps there already is?) for the belated meta-narcissism that can creep up on you mid-life, when you turn back to take a long and ongoing stock of where

you are, and how you got there. I'm thinking of the kind so quintessentially captured and enacted by Proust, where the entire world is re-processed through the pinhole of one's singular psyche; inflected by love and infected by shame (and vice versa). A kind of conceited conatus, tipsy ipseity, and manual autopoieses all rolled into one. This should not be mistaken for vanity — though it can certainly succumb to such. But is rather a tribute to the ongoing, swiftly passing, fragile miracle of worlding, via the only aperture upon it that we know: ourselves.

Less than 1% of the world's knowledge survives today. The great classical philosophers we currently worship — the only ones to survive the amnesia of Time — shape our thoughts, our traditions, our politics: our very moral cores. And yet hardly any of them are mentioned in a compendium from the Golden Age itself, which instead sings the praises of thinkers who are lost to us, and who their own esteemed contemporaries rate much more highly. It's as if we founded an entire civilization around third-rate bands found in the vinyl bargain bins of a single thrift store, after the Library of Congress burned to the ground. That is to say, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle were the Men Without Hats, Jamiroquai, and Maroon Five of their time. And tragically, we don't have a trace of the ancient Hellenic intellectual equivalent of Joni Mitchell, David Bowie, or Kendrick Lamar.

Chatroulette was such a lovely idea. Meeting random people from around the world and trying to start a conversation with them. It was almost Levinasian in its purity: confronting users with the ethical imperative embodied in the face of the Other, in all its vain pathos, generic presence, and singular vulnerability. The only problem is that Levinas — along with the makers of Chatroulette — did not anticipate the extent to which we

would also be confronted with the *penis* of the Other, in all its veiny pathos, generic insistence, and singular culpability.

There is no point in accusing someone of being a “narcissist,” since we are all narcissistic in one way or another. But I would like to make a distinction between the centrifugal and centripetal form of narcissism. The former describes a person who spins around their own ego in such a way that they fling their crap all over the place, and cover the walls with their own acrid, conatus-flavored spray. The latter revolves in the opposite direction, funneling the wider world *into* themselves, and folding its beckoning alterity into their own ever-evolving ego-crystal. Donald Trump is a centrifugal narcissist. Agnes Varda is a centripetal narcissist. Which would you rather be?

Sometimes I fancy being a reverse-therapist (or “inverse shrink”). My patients would arrive, lie on the couch, and start telling me all the things that they are excited about, all the ways they feel positive and affirmed and confident. About the many ways — both abstract and concrete — that life presents itself as worth living. About how profoundly content in their relationships they are. And about how little they blame their parents for anything.

Psychoanalytically inclined thinkers like to talk about “the Big Other.” But what of “the little other”? This is someone who embodies all those who you look down upon, but whose recognition you need — albeit in homeopathic doses — in order to feel superior. Someone who, in your estimation, is lacking your maturity, wisdom, nuance, station, and so on. And yet, this impudent figure deigns to offer you advice, or treat you like a peer! Unlike the Big Other, who torments you with a sense of imposture and inadequacy, the little other exasperates, by refusing to acknowledge your genius.

The Nietzschean No\* is as important as the Nietzschean Yes. In order to really affirm the vital mysteries, challenges, and energies of Life, you also need to avoid the parasitic, vampiric — and just plain boring and pointless — demands on your being.

So much of our internal monologue takes the form of, “If only X, then Y.” But X will likely never happen. And even if it does, by then you will be thinking, “Now that I have X, I really need Y, in order to Z.” Better then to shift the form to, “Given X, or the lack of X, how can I best dwell, or even thrive, in the Y of random Zness.”

Social media is so addictive and powerful because it mimics the structure of the Big Other. So to say, it is an abstract, ubiquitous, and elusive form of attention from which we seek metaphysical recognition and validation. But this is also why it is so frustrating, depressing, and hollow. There is no Big Other. Just a multitude of little others, scrambling over each other’s shoulders, dressed in a trench coat and a hat, pretending to be a grown up.

I’ve been trying to be more “zen” in general, which basically means breathing consciously and thinking twice before leaping head-first into the warm but treacherous waters of neurotic spirals. So while I was reading on the sofa just now, I smell that terrible jet fuel smell of whatever Americans squeeze on barbecue grills. Usually I would leap up, close the window, and then spend the next five minutes coming to terms with the

\* Not to be confused with the Bartleby No, which tends toward the selfish and petty; jealously carving out more time to keep indulging in uncreative habits.

probability that my life has been shortened by at least a week. Instead, I took a few breaths, and watched myself begin to have this reaction. My brain, more sanguine than usual, then told itself, “ah, the smell of NYC rooftops in the summer! the people are enjoying this fine Sunday,” and kept reading.... The moral of the story? Being more zen about stuff can make you put up with something that will probably kill you; or at least make you sick. But at least you feel more chill about it.

It must be exhausting being a young woman of a certain hue and class, since — from what I can gather, listening on the street — it seems mandatory to not only have a phone conversation with one’s friend/lover/family member/etc., but then immediately call a different friend/lover/family member/etc. to relate and rehearse the entire conversation all over again. I’m amazed any of this demographic has any voice left, after so many conversations about conversations about previous conversations.

Sat next to a manspreader on the subway today, thereby sparking a conflict in the poor guy’s body language. On the one hand, he wanted to press his leg against me to assert his alpha male dominance of the space. On the other hand, he was aware that this could be read as a homosexual come-on. So he oscillated between the two, clearly sickened by the predicament I had put him in.

New York City could be compared to those frightening fairy circles you read about as a child, in which a curious youth, walking through a forest, is seduced into a ring of magical, beckoning, glowing, lithe dancers. He or she whoops and hollers for what only seems like a few minutes, but is in fact a hundred years, back in the unenchanted “mortal” world. Eventually this person staggers out of what now appears to be only

a ring of mushrooms: an exhausted old husk, without a human link to the real world left.

The first time I saw *Stalker* was when my dad took me to the cinema when I was nine years old. He told me it was science fiction, and I was in the height of my *Star Wars* obsession. I sat in the dark watching old, bald Russian men pontificating about art, suffering, and the futility of human existence in dripping tunnels for 90 minutes, before I finally snapped, and said very loudly, “Dad — I don’t think there are going to be any robots. Can we go now?” To which he mercifully said yes.

When you think about it, a TV series is really just a movie that takes twenty-four hours to tell a story that should take only two.

What if we consider typos and random punctuation marks as stowaways in the text? Seeking passage? Shouldn’t we somehow respect their desire to be smuggled away?

They say the early bird gets the worm. But that means the early worm gets eaten. So isn’t this proverb really recommending that we sleep in late, just to be safe?

Love is just another name for infinite gratitude.

Single-cell organisms were the original life hack.

The self is an imaginary friend that we never grew out of.



Social media is just an updated version of “telling the bees.”

In 2064, when the world has completely transformed into a *Mad Max*-style hellscape, the most precious form of currency — other than fresh water — will be USPS “forever stamps.”

Shouldn't it be “print-on-request”? When did we all become so demanding?

If painters received peer-reviewed viewer reports, before exhibiting publicly:

VIEWER A: “Overall I found the treatment of the subject to be strong, but I felt there was too much yellow on the top right-hand corner. The brush-strokes seemed a little light at times. The choice of canvas size could even be described as inspired. The chimney sweep was beautifully rendered, although his face was obscured too much by shadow for my tastes. The painter should study dogs a lot more closely before attempting a spaniel like this one.”

VIEWER B: “This painting is okay, but should really visually evoke some of my paintings if it wants to be taken seriously.”

My superhero name is Worst-Case Scenario Man.

She's making a beeline  
for the C line  
in her A-line skirt.

Pity the poor butterfly, afraid to beat its wings for fear of the consequences.

LinkedIn: “You disappeared in 12 searches this week.”

In the Old Imperial measuring system, a “chortle” describes the almost indiscernible difference between a snigger and a snicker?

In an unprecedented collaboration between CERN, NASA, the Académie française, and Moody’s, it was found that everything in the universe is either underrated or overrated. *Not a single entity is rated precisely as it is, or deserves.\**

Shouldn’t it be uncritical mass?

Was anyone else, as a kid, bullied by their imaginary friend?

So-called “involuntary celibates” (incels) get all the media attention. But what about the “ambivalently debauched” (ambauches)?

I miss the simulation of democracy.

*Gemeinschaft* — the community you find yourself born into.  
*Geminecraft* — the community you build inside a computer, in order to escape the community you were born into.

\* “With the possible exception of Dante, Patagonia stock, Trader Joe’s dark chocolate squares, walking on the beach at dusk, Juice Newton b-sides, and Tufts University,”

Someone stole my thunder. And now I feel under-thundered.  
(Indeed, what a blunder — to ever-wonder how one can even  
become so sundered.)

Linguistic archaeologists, analyzing some of the earliest papyrus manuscripts, have discovered “sarcasm particles,” which they describe as being “baked in” to human language from the beginning. This suggests that “snark,” far from being a sign of intelligence, is actually a type of symbolic yeast infection, that we have all contracted from generations upon generations of communication interactions.

Hypothesis: the universe only invented bodies because it needed something to mechanically channel and sustain the cosmic breath, which floated around latent, and unrespired, until fish and bears and people showed up.

People who live in stone houses shouldn't throw glasses.

Does any one else ever feel patronized by their own thoughts?

Just noticed my birthday suit is wrinkled.

You're all invited to my species-reveal party.

History Departments should change their program name to  
What People Managed To Do Before The Internet Studies.

Novels are incredibly low-def, and novelists rely on readers to fill in 90% of the worlds they are describing. Indeed, the reader should be getting a good share of the royalties for all that imaginative labor.

Approximately half of media studies is just reminding people — over and over — that a screen is not a window.

Rabbits fall down rabbit holes all the time, and they don't feel the need to go on about it.

Microdoucheing: the practice of interacting with obnoxious asshats as little as possible, each day.

Bruno Latour left the bosom of a famous, wealthy wine-making family to become a scholar and theorist. I am happy to go in the opposite direction, if someone knows the secret of doing so.

Imagine the world we might be living in, if Central Park featured a Rabelais Garden.

In the mid-'90s, for a brief moment, I was a raver. Now I'm just a ranter.

New Yorkers, recomposing their tired features in the mirror each morning, into the shape of a Do Not Disturb sign.

Yes, “ghosting” someone is a form of violence. But by the same token, going ghosthunting is just as cruel. Make peace with your absent poltergeist, and move on.

According to Agamben, the Romans invented the figure of *homo sacer* so that anyone may legally kill anyone else who can't figure out how to use a Doodle Poll.

Nothing illustrates the homogenizing effect of globalization more than the Netflix special series. No matter what country it is from, it has gone through the same filters: conceptually, ideologically, and technically. They all look the same, even if some of the noses and languages are somewhat different.

That feeling when you're being simultaneously under-utilized and over-extended.

Motion to recognize Teflon Tuesday — one day a week in which we all collectively resolve not to let any of the bullshit tornado get under our skin.

Academia: where speaking slowly is equated with being more intelligent.

Wondering if there is a market for anti-natalist children's literature.

Dolly 1.0: “It costs a lot of money to look this cheap.”

Dolly 2.0: “It costs a lot of money to clone this sheep.”

Akrasiastasis: the perverse tendency of collective institutions supposedly dedicated to the public good, entropically ensuring that the catastrophic status quo is retained at any cost. See *The New York Times* and *The Guardian*.

More often than not, pride is just insecurity wearing a suit.

At Harvard, university professors are the only class of faculty allowed to graze their cattle on Harvard Yard. At the New School, they are the only group allowed to graze their emotional support animals on the green roof.

In class yesterday, we decided that ghosts are an instance of trans-dimensional FOMO, in which departed spirits jealously try to avoid missing out on Life.

*Heterobiblioaffectundrum*: the nagging knowledge that you can never find the right book to match the right mood.

Max Weber's less known sequel, *The Catholic Shirk Ethic*

Helicopters flying by like  
    jackhammers in the sky  
        reducing my peace to rubble.

Tinder, but for someone to water your plants when you're away.

When nature calls, you urinate.  
When culture calls, you ruminate.

## TODAY'S HOROSCOPE

**Aries:** someone who has been making your life difficult will extend a literal olive branch; which will make taking the elevator very awkward.

**Leo:** you will be plagued by the same pebble in your shoe, even after tipping it out into a canal.

**Gemini:** while reading on the subway, a brony will offer you a stick of gum.

**Cancer:** while waiting for the bus in the rain, you will be convinced that Totoro is standing right next to you. But when you turn to look, you will realize that it's actually Cliff, the it guy.

**Taurus:** you will exchange a knowing look with Brian Eno, when you recognize him in an airport lounge.

**Virgo:** minutes before your afternoon nap, a phone call will inform you that you have just been nominated for the Nobel Prize for Pornography.

**Libra:** after several failed attempts, you will successfully patent a new kind of onion, that makes people laugh when they cut into it.

**Scorpio:** a beautiful stranger will give you what appears to be a treasure map, scribbled on the back of a perfume sample.

**Sagittarius:** in the midst of overwhelming evidence, you will finally admit that we live in a totalitarian society.

**Capricorn:** you will stifle a sneeze the entire work-day, only to explode into a thousand tiny pieces, the moment you get home.

**Aquarius:** that strange smell emanating from the fridge crisper draw will begin to also whisper your name.

**Pisces:** you will ignore three phone calls from your mother.



Oxymoron of the day: “curated experience.”

Dear Professor.

I write to invite you to present your researches at the Second Annual Conference on Intellectual Topics Concerning Cultural Directions in New Media Technology Innovations and Critique. The inviting committee were impressed by the article you published fifteen years ago on a totally unrelated topic. This conference will be in Hawaii, for some reason, cost hundreds of dollars to register for, and we will provide all participants with a laminated Certificate of Attendance and a tote bag.

Please do not contact us if you have any questions.

Signed,

The Organizing Committee

Geese are incredibly efficient animals, semiotically speaking. With one single letter — the letter V — they manage to communicate the message: “It’s freezing! Time to get the fuck out of here!”

Most people know about the Stoics. But few people have heard of the Hysterics: a group of philosophers from Crete, around the 3rd century BCE, who believed that we should face existence with as much drama as possible; dwelling on worst-case scenarios, resenting roads not taken, and exhibiting an ethical commitment to generally blowing everything out of proportion.

Humans think in binary because we have two hands. (“On one hand X, but on the other hand Y.”) Whereas octopi, for instance, can think in octonary. No doubt their philosophy is all the richer for it.

Don't let douche nozzles get under your brain knickers.

Dominic Pettman: offering media-poor content to the world since 1985.

My good friend, Scam Likely, has a terrible time trying to convince people to answer her calls.

American spelling can be very strange. For instance, they spell "corruption" as "l-o-b-b-y-i-n-g."

Scientists seek the precise point where resentment crystallizes into delusion.

Examples of American Socialism:

- Public Libraries
- GI Bill
- Community College
- Free Lunch Program
- Traveling Pants

We have FedEx minds and USPS hearts.

Is there anything less rational than rational choice theory.

Most of us feel (and fear) we missed The Memo. While others act as if they were the privileged ones who did. But guess what: *there is no memo.*

Death is the only thing that truly takes one's breath away.

We talk about something being "harmless" when we mean ineffective. The implication is that one cannot be effective without causing harm.

What to do when your revenue stream becomes an income trickle?

Red wine, as the name suggests, is inherently communist, and yearns to be free.

Sometimes I love people, but hate humanity. Other times, it's the other way around.

Feelings are overrated.  
(While sensations are underrated.)

TED Talk ontology: It's turtle-necks, all the way down.

"Human Resources" is an admission that contemporary labor is (still) all about extraction.

Design Within Retch

I prefer to philosophize with a hammer dulcimer.

My doctor has diagnosed me with advanced acedia.  
He's old school like that.

Why won't anyone keep me in the manner I'm accustomed?

I still find it strange that Mexico has a national holiday to celebrate mayonnaise.

The Turin Test.

In which you whip a robot horse in an Italian square, and see if anyone has a nervous breakdown.

Top scientists remind nation that less is *not* in fact more.  
Indeed, it is precisely less than more. (Which is why it is called "less.")

Medieval knights often had a faithful retainer, who was there to ensure that their master's teeth stayed in place.

One of the main functions of ideology is to act as a machine that produces widespread and contagious underreactions from the general public.

If we were to remove the word "precisely," Jenga-style, from the world, the entire edifice of Continental Philosophy would collapse.

Do you need more doors? Come down to Mordor More Doors Warehouse. We'll give you more doors. For less!

Swine-Pearl Productions

Every time something in me dies, a friend succeeds.

I've given up my quest for the last laugh, and am now settling for the third-to-last chortle.

This Coital Mortal

20th — century of the self

21st — century of the selfie

22nd — century of the shellfish

Publishing is a perfect example of cruel optimism.  
("Maybe they will read *this* one.")

Manhattan was the first Manhattan Project.

Few people realize that "yike" is the singular of "yikes." Most occasions that now prompt the response "yikes" were judged worth only a "yike" in the 18th century, for example. Such is the way of linguistic inflation.

"The precariat" actually sounds like an optimistic, relatively secure, name for what most workers are experiencing these days.

The best reason to have a kid, as far as I can tell, is to stop focusing on your own mommy and/or daddy issues, and start passing these on to someone else.

One thing that meditation has taught me: one's deepest fears and anxieties live and breed in the invisible brine that exists in the fleeting, infinite space following the end of an exhalation, and before the next breath begins.

Nationalities exist purely to name a specific type of stupidity. For instance, there is a particularly American, French, Australian, or Chinese way to manifest human stupidity. (Of course the same goes for embodying and enacting different species of genius. But sadly these are much less common.)

Scientists unveil new electron microscope, capable of discovering hundreds of hitherto unknown microaggressions.

Drink. Prey. Lust.

Buddhist 20-minute silent TED talk

The hegemony of pornography has all but eclipsed the erotic.

The irony of being ironic is that ultimately there is no meaningful difference between the one who enjoys a cultural artifact naively, and the one who does so while winking at the world.

Two things you don't want to encounter while on holiday:  
mozzies and Aussies.

Cicadas are nature's white noise machine.

Airbnb host, at this remote cabin in the Italian woods:

"This is key for the gate, this is button for the AC, this is remote for the TV.... Please put recycling here. And remember, don't let the man with the homemade pig mask into house, when he knocks on the door."

The French government announces that it will no longer be making any new shrugs. Instead they will be outsourcing the production of shrugs to China. The French, appalled by this latest move, begin a grassroots, country-wide shrug recycling campaign.

Everything will be fine. And when it is not fine, I will make it fine, by being fine with what is not fine.

"But mom — it was only a few pages!"

"Now young lady. You *know* that Deleuze is a gateway drug to Laruelle."

Imagine how interesting our ideas might be, if they weren't already wing-clipped by preemptive defensiveness, and the anticipation of heading off critique.

Life hacks

- #1: If your supermarket is out of kale, incite a revolution and seize the means of production.
- #2: If you're awkward at parties, convince humanity to commit *en masse* to the voluntary mass extinction movement.

A homeless guy got on to the subway yesterday, and said to himself, in a very loud voice: "Oh no. This is one of those *passenger* trains."

'Tis the season in Central Park when blushing brides sprout out of the ground like pale spring tubers.

As the weather gets warmer, I start to suspect that I'm just playing an extra in a vast and elaborate theme park catering to European tourists.

A small child babbling to her father on the way to school. He nods along distracted, thinking about Karen from work.

On beautiful mornings like this, I run around the park — at a slow walking pace — and then have breakfast.

Sometimes I like to confuse and exasperate the bird-watchers in Central Park by hiding in the bushes, and blowing rare bird-calls through special Chinese mail-order avian whistles.



Buying raw milk from the back of a truck in Manhattan is a bit like a drug deal in *Breaking Bad*, except instead of guns and gangsters you find tote bags and yoga moms.

New York is just as dangerous for the wallet as it was in 1975. Only now you are likely to get robbed not by a hoodlum with a knife, but by an organic farmer with a forced grin and credit card swiper attached to his iPhone.

Museum-grade douche nozzles brobaking on the roof deck opposite.

New York is about *intensity* of life (and not at all quality of life).

Lots. Of naps. Till Brooklyn!

The coffee in New York is immeasurably better than when I arrived, fifteen years ago. But at what cost?!

Who wants to go on my Central Park tour: “Birding for Aging Punks”?

Walked past a salad-bar-restaurant-concept BS thing downtown, with “architectural” highline-type seating, filled with yoga pants start-up people with dead eyes, munching on kale as if it were joyless crack. We’re truly living in a bad mashup of *Soylent Green*, *Stepford Wives*, *Nathan Barley*, *Perfect*, and *They Live*.

Who will save Central Park from the Central Park Conservancy?

The EPA has yet to determine the amount of pollution caused in Manhattan each year by invisible plumes of privilege.

A young mother to her four-year old son on the subway yesterday: "You need to be more solution-oriented."

The cyclist's attitude toward pedestrians mirrors the driver's attitude toward cyclists. There is a timeless political lesson here.

An old guy jogged past me wearing a "Running Sucks" t-shirt. When he saw me smile he gasped and winced: "I really mean it!"

Just as a certain temperature threshold releases a cloud of cicadas into the air, 80 degrees in NYC automatically triggers plumes of Latin dance music into the atmosphere.

Sometimes I wish I lived in Yonkers, so I would have occasion to say "Yonkers" more often.

For around 30 years, you wonder when life is really going to start. Then, practically overnight, you start wondering when your life stopped moving forward. Which means, I suppose, that for about ten minutes you really were living.

A mass shooshing broke out in the main branch of the New York Public Library yesterday. Eight egos were hurt.

“I’m sorry, the other customers are complaining, so I’m going to have to ask you to be less Australian.”

I’m tired of buskers singing “Imagine” and “Jealous Guy” at Strawberry Fields. So I may sit on a bench with an upturned hat and just say “Number 9, Number 9, Number 9” over and over again.

Competitive Motherhood.

Today’s big matchup: Park Slope vs. the Upper-West Side.  
Place your bets please...

Just watched two different couples walk into a juice store, all four of them wearing Canada Goose coats. I’m almost certain they left with the wrong partner, without even realizing it.

Sheep Meadow in Central Park is, on a fine day, still full of sheep.

A tourist couple, with poor English, came up to me in Central Park today. I couldn’t work out why they were trying to find a “dead beetle.” Then I realized that they were looking for the John Lennon memorial at Strawberry Fields.

If you listen really carefully, while walking through the park, you can hear the screams of agony coming from the daffodils, as they scorch in the unseasonably fierce sunlight.

Must NYC be a magnet for douche nozzles?

*Indecent Proposal* (Central Park edition): “I’ll give you a million dollars for your dog.”

After five weeks away, I’ve lost my immunity to New York’s ridiculous prices. I keep arguing with cashiers.

Once upon a time, tourists came to New York to gawp at the concentrated vision of The Future it embodied. Now it serves more as a museum for, and abject lesson against, what happens when you siphon money away from public infrastructure.

Vintage pornography now circulates in the pubic domain.

Is a shit-ton somehow different to a regular ton?

Forsaken (adj.) — the state of being abandoned, bereft.

Foresaken (adj.) — the sense that one is *about* to be abandoned, bereft.

In the American remake of *Black Mirror*, Steve Carell plays the President who, instead of enduring the humiliation of having sex with a pig on live TV, is instead obliged to give an intern health insurance.

I just finished watching *The Martian*. If I wanted to watch an unpleasant man eat a potato every day, then I’d prefer to watch Bela Tarr’s *Turin Horse*.

If Hitchcock made *Rear Window* today, it would just feature twenty or so people, lying in bed and staring at their phones.

The *Mad Max* films are as close as Australia will get to neo-realism.

Who knew that being something of a cinephile would help me communicate with a French doctor?

Doctor: “Quels sont votre symptômes?”

Me: “À bout de souffle.”

I’m looking forward to the 3D IMAX version of Ozu’s *Tokyo Story*.

*Why Are They Now?*

A new TV show dedicated to addressing the existential conundrum of a different celebrity each week.

I imagine the Rebel Alliance in *Star Wars* paid for all those fancy spaceships with an NPR-style pledge drive.

*Family Freud*

A new game show in which two different families compete to connect common phrases to Oedipal dramas.

Why will none of the big studios respond to my movie pitch: “Manic Pixie Dream Girl vs. Depressive Elfin Nightmare Boy”?

Watching Marie Kondo to avoid tidying up.

A TV show, *à la Queer Eye*, in which Adorno, Angela Davis, Basho, and Simone Weil make interventions into the lives of shallow urbanites.

Fox's early reality TV show, *When Good Times Go Bad*, was originally going to be called, *Gadzooks! Peripeteia!*

The distance between Ricky Gervais and David Brent isn't as significant as Ricky Gervais thinks it is.

*Clem's Knee*

A remake of Rohmer's famous film, but with two construction workers.

A new TV show called *Occam*, about a detective who defends himself against thugs with a straight razor, and always catches and convicts the most obvious suspect.

Most films from the 1940s seem less "dated" than most TV shows from the 1980s.

Occam's Razor — the principle of selecting the answer that makes the fewest assumptions, when presented with competing hypothetical possibilities.

Dominic's Spatula — the principle of doing the least amount of changes, or making the least amount of effort, in order to avoid complicating life, but still have it running more or less smoothly.

At court, Kurt would curtly and covertly curtsy as a courtesy.

Shostakovich was accosted in Costco over a costly churro.

Only during blizzards do wizards eat lizard gizzards.

It is inappropriate to appropriate the prostrate apostate's prostate.

Say hello to a phalanx of fellows whose phallophilia lies fallow on the hollow feather pillow.

Pop-up one-stop mom-and-pop popcorn and popsicle shop.

The brazen brass brasserie boasted a bevy of bruised Bruces wearing bronze brassieres.

I was so precocious that I had a *L'Eclisse* lunch box in the fifth grade.

The *Network* remake for 2018 finishes with a desultory speech: "I'm mad as hell!... And I'm gonna just keep on taking it."

Few people are aware that *Halt and Catch Fire* is based on a 16th-century illuminated manuscript — entitled *Cease Ye and Combust* — which detailed the invention of the printing press.

Negative epiphany listening to a Giallo music mix: the reason I find Quentin Tarantino's movies so off-putting is that his obsessive recreational instincts are all well and good for a pastiche of style, but the very attention to detail drains the thing of the spirit it's trying so desperately to channel. In trying to lovingly replicate the loose and perverse joy of a trashy '70s exploitation film, he banishes all joy from his own work.

Many tribal cultures do not consider their members full-grown adults until they have seen thirty-four summers — the age at which one starts truly appreciating Barbara Stanwyck movies.

Yesterday I watched a beautiful print of Jean Grémillon's *Lady Killer* (*Geule d'Amour*, 1937). It would make a great triple feature, along with *Blue Angel* and *That Obscure Object of Desire*. The main character, played by Jean Gabin, seemed to misunderstand the film he was in, as if insisting on the hidden melodramatic stakes behind the light Lubitschesque touch. He could not heed the worldly advice of his lover's mother: "Life is for living. Everyone deserves some happiness. Only the selfish don't share."



One thing that the whole Trump situation tells me is that when I went to see *Back to the Future*, as a young lad, almost half the theater was silently rooting for Biff.

So You Think You Can Dane

(a competition reality show that pits potential Hamlets against one another)

Press Release, ABC Studios, for immediate release:

In order to keep things fresh and interesting for our loyal viewers, *Dancing with the Stars* will now be offering a bold new format. This coming season we will feature one star per week, performing solo for 21 whole minutes, commercial-free. The judges will be asking our stars to use their bodies to express either an unresolved conflict in their own lives, or a personal response to troubling world events. Episode One will feature Billy Ray Cyrus, and his interpretation of intergenerational ambivalence, to the haunting ambient music of Joanna Brouk; and Episode Two will feature Tori Spelling, and her somatic exegesis of the conflict in Yemen to a symphony by György Ligeti. As always, your hosts will be Tom Bergeron and Erin Andrews.

Is there a name for that thing when a film, say, ostensibly satirizes or attacks something, but is in fact wallowing in and perpetuating said target? I'm thinking of films like *Donnie Darko*, *Requiem for a Dream*, or *Fight Club*.

In hindsight, *Jackass* was a clear warning sign of impending Trumpetry.

Why do all the different planets in the *Star Wars* galaxy look like parts of Earth?

No thanks to *The Good Place*, we'll soon have to deal with a generation of misguided souls who have the absurd — and quintessentially American — notion that philosophy is about “being a good person.”

Pitch for a retro-grindhouse horror flick — *Death Drive In* — where 1970s teens are locked in a drive-in movie theater, and terrorized by a sadist, called Thanatos, who looks like a Greek Sigmund Freud.

Moving pictures had a good run. But after watching *Vox Lux*, I think it's time to call the whole thing off. Time to go back to lithographs, puppet shows, and *tableaux vivants*.

I still think The Situation is possibly the greatest name in history.

The Wilhelm Scream will outlast humanity.

You should all subscribe to my YouTube channel, in which I film myself reacting to reaction videos.

“Facebook Denies That It Shared User Data with Eye of Sauron.”

Which is the bigger deal-breaker, when it comes to meeting a prospective Tinder date?

- 1) They have less than 1k followers on Twitter
- 2) They don't even have a podcast

The human race will be followed by the post-human interview, analysis, and press conference.

Everything happens for a reason. Usually a stupid or terrible reason.

Honey is the message. It wants to convey nothing but sweetness.

The best way to feel ten pounds lighter is to lose ten pounds.

A Tolstoy cover band called Vronsky Beat.

If someone who ruins a scene by overacting is called a “ham,” what do we call someone who ruins a scene by *underacting*? A tofu?

I’ll show you my mid-life crisis if you show me yours.

The moral of every movie ever: don’t get involved.

I would like to be a xenomusicologist.

Zenophobia: the fear of arriving at your destination.

The difference of minor narcissisms.

One of the biggest mistakes in life is to take it personally.

Central Paris is an ongoing bourgeois cosplay convention.

When I see an old, grizzled man at a bar, I assume he has WWII stories to tell, or something equally Old Timey. But in truth, given the actual chronology involved, he is more likely to tell me about the time he got laid during a Jethro Tull concert.

In the middle ages, women were burnt at the stake for organizing unauthorized rituals, talking to animals, or publishing with Zero Books before tenure.

To seduce without the aid of magic potions.  
#nophiltre

Two of the most transcendent albums of the millennium so far — Björk's *Vespertine* and Joanna Newsom's *Have One On Me* — were both inspired by male (erm) "muses": Matthew Barney and Andy Samberg, respectively. Ample evidence that the inspiration of love has pretty much nothing to do with the beloved!

As a rule, I'm against marriage. But I love weddings!

Judging by the conversations I hear on the streets of New York, two thirds of the young women of this city consistently fail the Bechdel Test.

To fall out of love is to render the former beloved back to a simple piece of the global jig-saw puzzle; rather than representing the image to which all the other pieces previously combined to reveal.

I have Tinder feelings towards you.

Love conquers all. Especially the lovers.

That time Bill Clinton came out as a Lacanian: "I did not have sexual relations with that woman."

Marriage proposal:

Let's take this organic attraction, and make it a paranoid and tyrannical bourgeois unit.

This bus is full of noisy children. Or as I like to call them, The Residues of Eros.

Both my data plan and dating plan involve rollover minutes.

I like my women like I like avant-garde dance: beautiful, but confusing.

Five incoherent demands of the other while making love:

- 1) recognize and worship my individuality
- 2) insult and disavow my individuality
- 3) save me from the burden of being (a being)

- 4) deliver me from the fear of death (through the act of symbolic sacrifice)
- 5) make me immortal

There are few places lonelier than the libido. Which is why we are not so much looking for our desires to be satisfied, but rather shared.

In the future, thanks to brain-to-brain neural networks and face-matching algorithms, we will know when someone is having a sexual fantasy about us, and then we can either charge them for the pleasure, or sue them for breach of copyright.

In the future, when androids are indistinguishable from humans, we may fall in love with someone, marry them, and then suddenly discover they are a spam bot. Until the divorce comes through, we will be legally obliged to listen to them talk about a specific brand all day every day.

Sex is very lazy. You're essentially outsourcing masturbation to someone else.

Spare a thought for trisexuals.

The lover's economy: "I love you, so you owe me. But don't pay me back in one go. Rather, pay me in installments, over time."

Maybe Lacanians are just bad lovers. (Or bad lovers become Lacanians.)

Most cases of misogyny are really instances of gynophobia.

Refuse to be reduced to a sex object. But consider being elevated to one, on special occasions.

Masturbation = intracourse

I love you!\*

We have the capacity to destroy each other merely by kissing, or even flirting, with another person. Fourier was the only person to seriously attempt to lessen this destructive power.

You would think that having love handles would actually help, rather than hinder, when it comes to being “picked up” in public.

Seize the means of seduction!

Marriage: taking sociality to degree zero, so one can be alone in company.

Of course we all love to sing along with the classic Carole King song, “You make me feel...you make me feel you make me feel like a socially constructed heavily gendered subject position.... (oooooh, you make me feel so *reified*)...”

\* Terms and conditions apply.

Experts estimate that over 91% of people are over-cathecting.

“I’m not heterosexual. I’m alt.straight.”

Abject wealth and obscene poverty.

The French World Cup team has three players sidelined due to injury, and two because of ennui.

Dominic’s razor: always choose the option in which it is most likely that you will be able to eat cheese.

Carpe diem is an old fisherman’s saying, meaning “seize the carp.”

French birds love Popol Vuh.

Scientists discover a “quantum coo state,” in which — for a rare and fleeting moment — both lovers are fully and objectively determined to be Schmoopie.

Daguerre invented the first photograph when a saucy shop girl said to him, “Why don’t you take a picture, mister? It’ll last longer!”

“It’s just common knowledge. Like hotels near train stations are seedy, or crows are the restless reincarnated souls of defrocked priests.”



Life was uncomfortable for Gordon, having been born with a silver spoon in his mouth, a frog in his throat, a thorn in his side, a chip on his shoulder, a weight on his chest, a fire in his belly, a monkey on his back, a bee in his bonnet, a flea in his ear, an apple in his eye, and a stick up his butt.

Wait. You mean “influencer” isn’t just a fancy new word for hypnotist?

Broke: “I’m gonna put a cap in your ass.”

Woke: “I’m gonna screen-cap your ass.”

2019: The year anxiety became a competitive sport.

Course Outline:

In this course we will be re-enacting the famous Chomsky–Foucault debate on human nature through the medium of puppetry. We will use puppets as a “material” means to reflect on such matters as:

- the nature of televised debates;
- the specific cultural and historical context of televised European erudition;
- the afterlives of mythologized moments in the persistence of Theory, both in and beyond the academy;
- the character of multi-lingual encounters and events;
- the embodied affect and somatic protocols of intellectual exchange;
- the power of orange juice as social lubricant;
- the ambient influence of random bearded dudes in yellow turtlenecks.

This course bears 4 credits, and is a companion course to Spinoza’s Ethics as Adapted for the Art of Mime.

Usually, writing for me is like chasing a tiger. I can see the tail of what I really want to say, but I never really catch up with it. This tiger is forever hiding in the long grass of the next sentence.

Lana del Rey is what happened when Tumblr became sentient.

If you have a terrible secret, and you never want a soul to discover it, then I suggest you publish it in an edited hardcover-only anthology from Routledge.

Sometimes I worry that I'm allergic to nouns.

Deleuze is academic ayahuasca.

#### The Salad Bar

Devotees of the cruel goddess Kale  
form an orderly line, pale  
and patient;  
dreaming of distant yoga vacations  
while refilling flat stomachs  
in joyless ingestion stations;  
opening the tired and puckered sluices  
from a bottomless well of  
sump-colored ten-dollar juices.

There's a sound here in the French countryside that's hard to tell if it's a close blowfly or a distant cow. Hard to tell whether it's a low buzzing or a buzzy lowing.

It is said that when the human race emerged from the others, a certain quota of spirit and intelligence was put aside for this new, ambitious animal. Unfortunately, as its numbers multiplied and mushroomed — 1 billion, 2 billion, 6 billion, 20 billion — the same amount of spirit and intelligence was available, leading to a great dilution of their souls and achievements.

Tempted to start sowing my classes with white lies; such as: pine trees are so called because our ancestors believed they pined for god, which is why the wind sounds so melancholy through their needles, and they grow so straight, toward heaven.

Creeper vines are terrifying monsters, ready to strangle and devour anything in its path. But the process is too slow for our eyes to notice. So we merely consider them picturesque embellishments.

A “molecule” is a very very small mole.  
#TheMoreYouKnow

I just received my orgone donor card in the mail.

“I don’t dance. But I do move my body rhythmically with vigor.”  
(Something I said in my dream last night.)

When being introduced to someone, in a professional or formal context, I like to shake hands firmly, and say, in a confident voice, “I’m allowed to be here.”

If I were Icarus, I would likely stick to doing some gentle loops a few feet above the ground, and aim for the shade, just in case.

Beware the ideas of March.

T-shirt: “I’m not your teachable moment.”

Oxymoron of the day: self-regulation

Oxymoron of the next day: fashion sense

Pokémon Go, but for course releases.

Cartoon:

A personified label maker is sitting at a bar, clearly already drunk. He’s drawling to the bartender: “I just get so tired of putting a label on everything.”

Spring hopes internal

The original “public sphere” and “private sphere” are made out of a titanium and platinum alloy. For over a century they were stored in a temperature-controlled vault, under the streets of Paris — mostly for verification purposes — but were both stolen in late 1970s — many suspect by the Deep State.

Was Huey Lewis’s news fake?

## NEW OLYMPIC SPORTS BEING INTRODUCED NEXT CYCLE

Knitting  
Meditation  
Networking  
Home brewing  
Speed reading  
Long distance dating  
Tunneling  
Synchronized astronomy  
Wheedling  
Sledging  
Kvetching  
Pokémon Go  
400 meters flirting  
Selfie relay  
Goat dressage  
Ice taxidermy  
Mine hurdling  
Table setting  
Turntablism  
ted talks  
Nostalgia  
Doubt  
Pole dancing  
Dog curbing  
Critical media theory

If short shorts are “hotpants,” then does that make normal shorts “lukewarm pants”?

Australia has a vista point called Captain Cook Lookout. When I was a kid, my parents told me it was named after the last words he ever heard.

Ignorance breeds contempt.

Familiarity breeds contempt.

What I’m saying is: there’s no shortage of contempt to go round.

That thing where you string up a dream catcher on your porch, but then forget to check it for a month, and you realize it caught some dreams that you didn’t clean out, which explains that rather rancid smell that comes and goes, but you don’t really have the stomach to face a trapped and half-rotting dream, so you just sort of quickly move it into the supply closet while holding your nose, and then go about your daily business, hoping the rapidly decomposing dream doesn’t seep into your nightmares.

The sixth sense is actually the one that helps you inherently feel precisely the invisible line, about forty feet from the beach, that you shouldn’t cross while topless.

Art project:

Since humans are very unlikely to be around in a hundred years or so, what are we to do about all those lost literary legacies? How do we salvage Shakespeare, Dante, and indeed our own humble jottings, from complete oblivion? My answer:

teach cockroaches to read. Please donate to the CLP (Cockroach Literacy Project).

Art project:

Sell the black, gnawing, hollow existential void at the heart of all Instagram activity on eBay.

Sometimes life throws us lemons, and all we can make is a kind of unsweetened lemon juice concoction.

I sincerely hope there is a vulgar Mexican drag queen out there somewhere called Kweef Latina.

Someone needs to map the Beyoncé/Shakira international date line.

To live in a place where the months can be counted by the color of butterflies.

Salt of the earth vs pepper of the sky.

Tree of knowledge vs the rubber plant of ignorance.

I'm more of a shaker than a mover.

A little bit of marzipan goes a long way. And none at all goes even further.

Californians tend to wear their genitals on their sleeve.

The echoes of Hellenic mythology reverberate around today's Italian beach towns: "Vedo la medusa!"

Vacation: when you spend thousands of dollars and travel thousands of miles to worry about the same things you always worry about at home.

The universal freemasonry of bored teenagers on holiday with their parents.

Life is a near-death experience.

Humans are the animal that cannot live in the here and now.

Humanity began the moment a bonobo said out loud: "You have brought shame to this family!"

In France, *Where's Waldo* features a woman, rather than a man, and is called *Cherchez la Femme*.

Air France: where your deep-seated fears and nagging anxieties travel with you for free.

I'm not selfish enough to have kids.



Airports are a shiny reminder that capital thinks of us nothing more than squishy, anonymous, and docile creatures that excrete money when squeezed.

The skeptical dupe.

For instance, someone who will buy and install Alexa in their home, in order to write a column about how our privacy is being eroded by technologies like Alexa.

It appears that my waistline has become a waistsphere.

If a seashell puts a human up to its ear, it can hear the sound of Fox News.

I don't think I've ever met a Sagittarius? Do they even exist? Or is it something they quickly invented to finish the Zodiac before a looming deadline?

A good marriage allows you to be alone, without being lonely. A bad one, you are lonely, but never alone.

Show me your emoji history, and I will show you who you are.

I met History the other day, strolling through the municipal gardens, and eventually summoned up enough courage to ask if I could take a picture. She said, "Very well, young man. But not from over there. That's my wrong side."

From this day forward, wine shall be known only by its true and ancient name: “coping juice.”

The Bluebeard fable is clearly an allegory about man’s fear that his good lady wife will discover his porn collection.

I frequently write occasional pieces.

Adjuncts are like academic session musicians. If only they were paid as well.

Happy faculties are all alike; every unhappy faculty is unhappy in its own way.

All my books go several directions at once. So I’ve never really written a monograph. Rather, a series of polygraphs.

That thing where you compose the world’s most glowing letter of recommendation, in your mind, while walking home from the subway... for yourself.

I get a tiny microdose of pleasure whenever I write, “Or by appointment,” after my office hours. It makes me feel a little bit like the Queen.

I would never attend a conference that accepted one of my papers.

We should all have a shadow CV for articles and books we would have *liked* to write, but don't have the time or will to do so.

I had dinner with a professor friend last night in a French bistro in the West Village. As we stood up to leave, the woman dining alone next to us said (in a broad working-class Boston accent): "Excuse me, are you both teachers?... I mean, college teachers?" We admitted that we were. To which she smiled and said, earnestly: "Thank you for your service!" We left the place feeling like newly decorated heroes.

White men invented academia when they figured that there simply *must* be a way to get paid for publicly expressing disdain or disappointment with literally everyone else's theories, ideas, and communication skills.

Starting next month, I have decided to start charging "convenience fees" for things like answering email messages, showing up for meetings, grading papers, paying bills, listening to tangential anecdotes without falling asleep, giving way to others on the side-walk, etc. I trust that you will understand.

The question haunting every encounter with an academic. Did I just talk to an interesting person? Or a boring person, in the possession of interesting information?

Why settle for a paramour, when you could have a metamour?

DeGrader™ — an app that helps find people nearby to do my grading for me.

At a certain point, the man of letters (gender intended), turns from the works that first entranced him, to the hagiographies of those who produced them.

People who doubt that academia offers an exciting and exotic lifestyle need look no further than our photos on social media. Here, you will see a heart-skipping panorama of badly dressed people standing in groups, sitting in groups, hunched over papers, milling about catering tables, staring unblinkingly at the camera like owls trapped in fluorescent-lit beige boxes, holding microphones, standing behind podiums, and covered in glowing bullet-points from badly projected PowerPoint presentations.

Perhaps it's time to start including a "Works Not Cited" section, for books that are either 1) over-rated; 2) over-cited; 3) relevant, but not helpful; 4) helpful, but not relevant; 5) too long; 6) written by a friendly nemesis; 7) written by someone with a better job than you; 8) written by someone who patronized you during a conference panel Q&A session; 9) really, much too much too long; 10) something you've already relied on too often; 11) published by a predatory press.

It would save a lot of time if we all agreed to using a rubber stamp of a smiling glowworm, with a speech bubble simply saying, "Glowing Review!" for friends, ex-students, colleagues, etc.

Socrates: the original mansplainer.

As Confucius once said, "you get the administrative appointment you deserve."

Symposia — an opportunity for people to talk past each other, in the same room.

The other conference participants wondered why Pandora refused to open her lunch box.

In academia, there are more initiatives launched every day than there are people to respond to, or be influenced by, them. Indeed, I suspect there are more academic initiatives than there are academics.

Academicworld: a place not overly unlike Westworld, where young people pay upward of 30k a year to interact with “hosts” programmed to deliver the same “experience,” year after year after year.

Math, biology, physics, etc. are considered the “hard sciences.” So I think we should start referring to economics, sociology, anthropology, etc. as the “easy sciences.”

Not many people know that the practice of footnotes began in ancient Egypt, when scholars would write references on their own feet, or the feet of obliging students, during a severe papyrus shortage.

“You have asked about my relationship with the candidate for tenure: I have only met Professor X on four hundred different occasions. We first met at a conference, and exchanged a few emails about the possibility of co-editing a special journal issue, which subsequently became an alibi for late breakfasts in hotel beds, romantic balloon journeys over Cappadocia,

impassioned arguments over cocktails in Hanoi, robbing a bank together in Durban, and co-teaching a series of political workshops in a seedy Lisbon café. I don't believe that any of these interactions hampers my capacity to be objective in my assessment of the candidate's dossier."

Seems not one of my students remembered to tip me this year.

Zeno's manuscript: a draft that you write, edit, cut in half, and rewrite so many times that it never hits the bookshelves.

Soon enough students will rate every class as ☺ or ☹ or ☺ on an official University app, called TeechGood, at the end of each session.

If I were rich, I would offer a dozen "fallowships" every year, in which successful applicants would enjoy a year of rest and respite, doing nothing but pondering and pottering about, with absolutely no pressure or expectation of producing something at the end. Indeed, no projects are allowed, and any books or other tangible artifacts emerging from this hiatus from life — this time of fruitfully fruitless reflection — are sternly frowned upon.

Volume 1: Hegel Today

Volume 2: Hegel Yesterday

Volume 3: Hegel A Couple of Years Ago, After that Bad Break Up with Heather

Coarse evaluations.

## IN MY PARALLEL UNIVERSE

Teenagers wake before dawn, put on their club gear, and go birding in the park together in large, contemplative groups.

Graphic designers, branding experts, and hedge-fund managers skulk around the Staples parking lot, waiting for a flat-bed truck to come by, and a Latino man to lean out of the passenger side window and say, “you... you... and you. Get in. We have a job across town.”

Old people become radiantly beautiful just before they die, like autumn leaves.

Business men in pin-striped suits totter to work in high heels.

Ingmar Bergman was born as a Brazilian woman, and made light-hearted films about Catholic insouciance.

Pleasant memories, rather than traumatic experiences, are passed down in the genetic legacy, from generation to generation. If you love paw-paw beyond any reason, it is perhaps because your great-great-aunt enjoyed paw-paw, while in the post-coital arms of a gently humming Javanese pirate.

Hypothesis: a supposition made on the basis of limited evidence as a starting point for further investigation.

Hyperthesis: a hypothesis that was arrived at far too quickly, and without due thought.

The thing about most dissertations is that they essentially use a constellation of loosely connected, fashionable nouns as (or rather in place of) arguments.

Is it a bad sign that when I get to the office, the song “Send In the Clowns” pops spontaneously into my head?

Yes, ok. I’ll admit it. I’ve attacked a few straw men in my time. But I didn’t like the way they were looking at me!

Yawnus Blearis Dismalus — the old pagan god of 9am conference panels.

### *Title IX: Professors Gone Wild*

As part of my “Anti-Social Media” class, I asked the students to write a letter, find a post office, buy a stamp, and post it, without using Google Maps. How did they manage? One student said: “I just stood near one of those blue things on the sidewalk till an old person came along to post a letter, then I asked them where the post office was.”

My employer has suggested I get insensitivity training.



In mid-summer, my mind is a mellow 3-year-old Comté cheese. By mid-semester in the Fall it has turned into *casu marzu*.

So many academic monographs are subtitled “toward this” or “toward that.” I look forward to a new fashion in “getting the hell away from this” or “avoiding the fuck out of that!”

If Plato were an administrator, I bet he would have been really into “best practices.”

The only reason we know about Plato is because he had more course releases than his colleagues at the Academy.

Apparently Agamben was halfway through writing a book condemning the “suspension of Greek life” on American campuses, until someone explained to him that just means banning frats.

Dr. Holt and the Phoned-In Learning Outcomes  
Susie Q and the Flight Risks  
#AcademicBandNames

T-shirt for mid-career academics: “Don’t ask me about my seventh peer-reviewed article.”

Who wants to join my band of superheroes: The Unfundables?

I had a conversation with a PhD student the other day that reminded me to thank the heavens for grad students. For while they are conscientiously parsing and testing the things more established scholars write, we are distracted by professional and inter-personal concerns, memories, and encounters. “Whenever I try to talk about someone else’s work with a professor,” she said, “they just tell me some gossip, or relay some anecdote, or complain about that person’s behavior during a conference dinner.” Sure enough, two minutes later, when she wanted to talk about Zielinski’s notion of deep media time, I could only say, “I saw him play a video game in a bar in Texas, where you shoot virtual deer.”

90% of my bookshelves are TRL.

“...and a minor in Woke Studies.”

Ain’t no party like a platform party.

As an academic, 90% of work emails received from colleagues essentially boil down to:

- 1) do more
- 2) do better
- 3) do it quicker

I aspire to be one of those colleagues who always appear exasperatingly unconcerned with all new troubling developments in the workplace.

Academics are people who hate themselves so much that they decide to give themselves homework for the rest of their lives.

Some people are still surprised that the American MFA world of “good literature” was invented by the CIA (e.g., *The Paris Review*, the Iowa Writer’s Workshop, etc.). But this makes a lot of sense when you remember that the CIA itself was invented by publishers to sell airport novels.

Sung in a melancholy Don McLean voice:

“The day... the Theory... died.”

The older I get, the more pointless the study of literature seems to me. And the more important it seems to read literature as much as possible.

I keep meaning to get a set of rubber stamps made up to expedite the grading process; including:

- 1) citation needed
- 2) read sentence out loud
- 3) So \*that’s\* what you got out of this quote? Really?? I mean, I know we encourage creative interpretation, and to read against the grain and all. But THIS? Wow!

If I wasn’t an academic, I’d probably have gone into the reupholstery racket. Lots of money to be made there. Not to mention the glamor and excitement.

The phrase, “I’m seeing someone,” suggests that any and all unromantic people in one’s life are invisible.

Cartoon:

“Don’t forget to stop and smell the roses.”

Someone takes a big sniff of a wild rose.

“Yuck!”

I’ll show you my TED talk if you show me your Vagina Monologue.

Postcolonial Williamsburg

Wake me when they’ve invented douche-canceling headphones.

A Shazam-style app that tell the user which of the 576 known types of resentment is currently infusing the room.

You had me at “seize the means of production.”

Ommmunism: a new ideology combining Marxism with yoga.

What is the precise tipping point to dump Malcolm Gladwell out of a wheelbarrow and into a municipal landfill?

I’ve decided I need only six things:  
laughing, loving, libations, lunching, listening, and literature

I dearly hope there is a professional photographer somewhere out there, who happens to have the name Arty Shot.

We should start calling architects “homemakers,” and stay-at-home parents, “domestic architects.”

We are almost all face fetishists.

Libraries are a collection of stone-cold takes.

Vegemite: the poor man’s Stilton.

I wrote a thousand words today. But then I realized, “shit, I should have just taken a picture.”

Your sense of self is a Chladni figure, created by the sawing effect of subtle social pressures.

Heidegger has left the bildung.

American eagles prefer that you refer to them as “*balding*.”

I fantasize about the entire baby boomer generation lining up across the country, and apologizing to all the generations that followed, Japanese press-conference-style, bowing, and yelling out their shame. “We are so so sorry that we took all the wealth, pulled up the ladders, and destroyed the planet!.... But the Beatles were pretty good, right?”

My pronouns are murgatroyd and impedimenta.

It is now well-established that we code our human biases into our machines, algorithms, and even AI. What if we are also unknowingly giving them our neuroses and affects, such as paranoia and/or melancholia?

Dear Life.  
Please slow.  
The fuck.  
Down!

### The Statue of Limitations

It would be fun to write a novel in little pieces, each paragraph being embedded in a different TripAdvisor review. “I looked through the Venetian blinds, but the two gangsters were still waiting outside; their cigarettes glowing in the dark like two malevolent fireflies. I could only pray that Jane had received my message in time to call off the plan, since she had turned off her phone. So I ordered up some room service, which was only lukewarm when it arrived. Burger also a little overcooked. On the positive side, the place was clean, and the hotel itself was convenient to the main train station. Three stars.”

I’ve become mildly obsessed with how bad Fred Astaire was at acting. (This isn’t a judgment, in the sense that I don’t dislike him. I just find it a startling aspect of any film he is in.) “Ham” doesn’t quite describe it, but Astaire funks up every scene in which he’s not actually dancing with his hokey, breezy charm. He’s not broad enough to be funny, and not narrow enough to be a leading man. Indeed, there should be a name for the precise affect which he switches on whenever he enters a scene. (Moving from Fred Astaire to “Fred Astaire”... I suspect it’s a hold-over from vaudeville days.) But there’s a kind of self-

conscious insouciance going on, punctuated with unnecessary gestures and defensive mannerisms. Aw shucks meets faux sophistication. And of course, he always plays it the same; no matter the character. On the other side of the coin, I don't think Ginger Rogers gets enough credit for her acting chops.

Does Agamben have an army of graduate students, combing the monasteries, archives, and libraries for those obscure cultural scraps on which, in each piece, he bases an entire political philosophy of history? Or does he somehow sniff them out himself, like a keen intellectual truffle pig? "We need only consider an unpublished fragment by Benjamin, written on a napkin, while dining with Rilke...." "Take, for instance, this detail, hidden in a fresco found in the half-demolished Basilica of Saint Boniface, which precisely reveals...." "Which brings to mind the recently rediscovered footnote of the neglected Palimpsest of Pamplona, which reinforces this interpretation....," and so on.

Anyone speaking a Romance language is also fluent in zombie Latin.

Test cricket is akin to those quantum experiments in which scientists deliberately create a vacuum in order to observe mysterious particles pop in and out of existence. In red-ball cricket, nothing seems to be happening at all. For five days straight. It's just a big field of nothing. But to the trained eye, there are all sorts of fascinating fluctuations going on.

Just as you can tell the age of a tree by counting the rings of its trunk, you can get a good idea of how long someone has been living in New York by the degree of annoyance they experience or express when they find out that it's Restaurant Week.

Exceptional beauty abdicates the beautiful person from doing anything other than being beautiful. This is why we treat its bearer with such resentful reverence, since they are no longer expected to do anything to justify or sustain their existence, beyond continuing to be the human substrate for the cruel and random event of beauty's magical manifestation. The beautiful person is no longer expected to *do* anything, but just *to be*. This condition thus carries a kind of atavistic sacred power, since those no longer required to act enjoy a ritualistic aura of divine superfluity.

Even a frozen clepsydra is right twice a day.

Deleuze believes that a barking dog is the stupidest sound in nature. But a close second has to be doo-wop.

In my gap year before college I worked on a PDF farm. Me and the other lost souls would have to wake up before dawn, and pick fresh fonts all morning. After a meager lunch of beans and rice, we would then scan various sub-fields in OCR mode all afternoon. It was backbreaking work, I tell you.

Short story idea:

Times Square becomes so saturated in news feeds and commercial content that it becomes sentient. It then takes several dozen tourists as hostages; forcing them to explain why our species is so obsessed with palpable nonsense. "Why did you stir this digital soup? Why did you give me these baseless and hollow cravings? Why must I "just do it"? Who gives a flying fuck what Victoria's secret is? Guess what, she has none! Unless this refers to the obscene secret that not a single one of you has any secrets worth keeping!.... As for the NASDAQ, I have to listen to his autistic prattle all day for decades. He is the most



clueless boring, and delusional entity in this entire forsaken universe.... In tolerating this cathedral of lies, are you worshipping some kind of abject God, in your lazy, brain-stunted way? Is that why you have summoned me? If so, then feel my wrath, for I am a blindingly wretched excuse for the Divine!"

We all settle on the social media platform we deserve.

My computer is infected with a virus called Windows 10.

Love and Tinderness.

Why must the world keep trying to thwart my attempts to stay ignorant of the art world?

Gorm is an undervalued metric.

The pilot for my new reality TV show, *So You Think You Can Hostage-Negotiate*, didn't go as well as I was expecting.

Counter-transference: when you start developing feelings for expensive marble kitchen surfaces.

The Oracle of Delphi was just vaguebooking 2,800 years before it became a thing.

When I moved to Manhattan, I didn't realize I was moving to a tropical island.

Why do we see something “in” a movie, but “on” a TV show?

Let me save all of you a lot of time. The answer to every question is “yes and no.”

Catherine Malabou asks, “What is a brain for?” Apparently, at 3am, *my* brain is for cursing Italian taxi drivers for shamelessly ripping me off several months ago.

Scientists confirm that the longest distance in the universe is between saying, “Whatever, I don’t care” and not actually caring.

Oxymoron of the day: instant gratification.

A lot of my teaching is trying to convey the extent and value of that which we’ve lost — or never actually had, but could potentially realize. A real challenge, given how hard it is to mourn something we’ve never experienced.

“I saw the Sein, and it opened up my mind.”

Moses parted the Red Sea, so that the Jews could escape Egypt. Robert Moses parted Manhattan from the Hudson so that the Jews — and the Italians, and the Koreans, and everyone else — could escape to Long Island. If Nickelback didn’t exist, we’d have to invent them.

## **AN OFFICIAL LIST OF LESSER KNOWN THINGS THREATENED BY CLIMATE CHANGE, AS PREPARED BY AN INTERNATIONAL BODY OF SCIENTISTS**

- car horns
- sopranos
- 2% yogurt
- gauze
- irony
- Easter buns
- décolletage
- Virgos
- the great state of Michigan
- Holiday Inns
- settling
- the free indirect mode
- ellipses
- ampersands
- compassion
- coping mechanisms (esp. whimsical listicles)
- Sir Rod Stewart
- Zirconium
- Zyrtec
- natural blondes
- optical illusions
- déjà vu
- self-fulfilling prophecies
- brown shoelaces
- high fives
- Schweppervescence
- Hare Krishna beads
- British pluck
- The Criterion Collection
- colloquies

- gang signs
- foregone conclusions
- Seinfeld references
- babyccinos
- ghosting
- frosting
- affect theory
- sprezzatura
- 90-degree angles
- speakeasies
- yoga mats
- test cricket
- the letters F through L
- pool noodles
- poodles
- pastels
- cheezy whatsits
- foreplay
- jeggings
- lemon zest
- books-on-tape
- U-bends
- élan

No-one is going to read your book. So be sure to enjoy the writing process.

Perhaps American infrastructure is so bad because we built these cities on Rock-and-Roll.

Theme parks are overrated. I prefer motif gardens.

As Diderot wrote: “Men will not be free until the last hedge-fund manager is strangled with the guts of the last tech-entrepreneur.”

Even his silence had a Jersey accent.

Liberal Arts College Storage Closet Still Filled to the Brim with Unused Bechdel Test Kits.

The Tribeca Test: Are you a person, or a sentient form of capital?

Next time someone asks you, “Have you read [well-established author]?” preparing their disciplined features to frown disappointedly at a negative answer, be sure to reply: “Not yet. Have they read me?”

We’ve all seen posts about clever jewelry and hi-tech masks that can thwart or confuse face-matching surveillance technologies. But what might neutralize the withering and judging x-ray gaze of a jaded Lacanian?

Who wants to fund my new fashion label, Wear Your Symptom?

Q: What do cyborgs eat for breakfast?

A: Feedback Loops

Q: What do philosophers eat for breakfast?

A: Reason Bran

Q: Why did Becky fail math?

A: Because she couldn't even.

Writers are proud of mastering their own craft. But what if “being a good writer” is just a side effect of having a brain especially susceptible to the virus of linguistic self-assembly. Instead of a genius, expressing brilliant ideas, we have a hapless host, spitting out words prompted by morpheme-shaped parasitic ants, swarming over the mind, and making it do their bidding.

The longer you actually live in a “shabby-chic” environment, the more it devolves into sheer shabbiness.

Why will no-one invest in my Erik Satie laser show planetarium idea?

Motherhood as a slow and subtle form of revenge.

I only occasionally check my Instagram feed. Half the people I follow use fake names or weird handles, so I can hardly

remember who is who. This means I scroll through a series of photos of babies, holidays, meals, pets, etc., not knowing whether these belong to friends or strangers. It's a very "what-ever" experience; and a good exercise in the fundamentally generic nature of Being.

I have nothing to prove. And I'm proving it!

Overheard in New York: "Being woke all the time is exhausting. Let's take a nap every now and again, yes?"

I saw some bees on the deck, sitting on flowers, pretending to work, but they were totally asleep. But I don't know why they were sent out on a Sunday anyway.

What if I told you that the snarky expression of resentment is not empowerment?

Hivemind is the name we give the general intellect. But what about the collective libido? For this, I propose "hiveloins."

Is there a god of simply and completely eliminating anyone who has high-fived at an Apple New Release event? And if not, why not?

Kenny G was a sax offender

"It's the economy, stupid" < "It's the stupid economy."

New business plan: fancy brand handbaskets for the coming  
hellscape.

“Lingering anxieties” autocorrected to “lingerie anxieties”

Who is your frenemesis?

E-harmony: helps you find a romantic partner.

E-piphany: helps you realize you were better off single.

Google helpfully just informed me that the 1920s spanned from  
1920 to 1929.

Buddhists say “live in the present.” But what if the present  
sucks hard?

The Military-Industrial Beyoncé Complex

What made the pot and kettle so racist in the first place?

“It’s the Internet that got small.”

A panel of medical experts announced yesterday that everyone  
could do with a good hug right about now.



In my experience, so-called “normies” are way more unstable, unsettling, and likely to do some crazy stuff than the self-described punks, freaks, queers, etc.

Do you think we might take saving the planet more seriously if Tinder etc. listed our carbon footprint on our profile page?

Soon enough we will be not only hearing about, but moving into, hipster retirement communities, featuring artisanal bread-making seminars, gentle swing-dancing for people recovering from hip replacement, yoga for the increasingly perplexed, bespoke port-infused jellies, ironic bingo, and the actual Chemical Brothers playing 4pm DJ sets.

For sale on eBay: “One cartoon coaster. Dated 1971. On the back someone has drawn a map of Canada. And somebody’s face sketched on it twice. Twenty dollars, or nearest offer.”

Arms.

Henceforth known as “organic selfie-sticks.”

Archival photo. 1947.

Miss Congeniality shares the podium with Miss Emotionally Unavailable.

Cultivate a reputation as a gossip. Then people will not trust you with their terrible and/or boring secrets.

We are all actors. In the sense that we all pretend to be someone else for a living.

Medieval doctors had a good sense of humors.

It must be admitted that I'm flappable.

The End comes not in the form of a divine scroll, but a coffee-stained Excel spreadsheet printout.

Did medieval people have their mid-life crisis at fifteen?

I always wanted my own column. But at this point I'd settle for a row.

Grown men — weeping on ellipticals.

The laws of Sisypphysics.

The world is my oyster. But I'm allergic to shellfish.

All that is airy congeals into stuff.

Only people with one toilet truly know how thin the line is between a good day, and defcon 2.

The Museum of Worst Practices

Deleuze & Guattari talk about how we have to vigilantly resist microfascisms of all kind, especially the cop in our own heads. But we also have to similarly look out for microprotestantism, and the Taylorist manager within.

Under neo-liberal conditions, even the Id covets employee of the month status.

The tyrannical imperative to be interesting.

I'm genuinely curious to know what millennials will find annoying about the generation that follows them.

I put a whole jar of glitter into my bath this evening, to lift my spirits and make me feel better. But it all just sank to the bottom, clumped around my nether-hairs, and gave me a rash.

Cetaceans are the most amazing creatures. They are a whole class of animal that just said: "Fuck it. We're going back to the ocean. I don't care if we can't breathe under water. We'll just gulp air near the top. Whatever it takes to avoid that whole land-hand nonsense anymore. That's for suckers."

Humans are the one and only animal that tamed themselves.

The human spirit is solar powered.

Why did Anna Karina never play Anna Karenina?

If Tolstoy were writing today, his magnum opus would be called *War and The Eternal Militarized State of Exception*.

They say that the Laplanders have fifty different words for snow. By that logic, how to explain that we have only one word for hipster?

The Large Hadron Collider = a horizontal, underground Tower of Babel.

In the beginning was the Word.  
Then came the Excel, the Outlook, and the PowerPoint.

“Meet our first contestant, Cheryl. She enjoys yoga, hiking, cooking, and delivering bad news.”

When I walk, zombie-like, from the sofa back to my computer, my wife says: “Don’t go toward the light!”

At least once a week I like to go up to a random stranger, point a finger at them accusingly, and say: “I know what you’re up to!” before melting back into the crowd.

I only use bespoke emojis.

Too young for dad jokes; too old for shit-posts.

*nescioquid* — Latin word meaning “something or other, but I know not what.”

I don’t believe children are our future. They are *their* future. We’ll be dead.

Manspreadsheeting (v.) — when a guy takes it upon himself to needlessly add excessive content to an already perfectly fine Excel file.

“Waiter. This meme isn’t very dank.”

It’s quite something; the lengths I’ll go to in order to avoid engaging my core.

If you’re not squandering your youth, then you’re already old.

If animals wore clothes, it’s about now that we’d all be wondering what the squirrels and robins will be wearing this spring.

Quantum politics:

Trump is the worst person in the world. And yet he isn’t even the worst person in the presidential campaign.

Quantum coffee:

Starbucks has the worst coffee in the world. And yet it’s better than French coffee.

Often when I'm at a gathering or an event, I'll be thinking, "Is it too early for me to leave yet?" So I guess that makes me byecurious.

I'm being told that a "sinologist" does not study sins.

"Waiter. This affair isn't very torrid."

The Anthropocene? Well, it's not the end of the world.

Wait. Au Bon Pain is different from Le Pain Quotidien?

Hotel receptionist: "Hello! We've been expecting you. What's the last name?"

Through the right hotel wall, the grizzle of a child sounds like a wood pigeon.

Boston backwards is Notsob.

The man sitting across from me is napping. He has a robot hand, which he is cradling with his organic hand; as if to illustrate recent philosophies of technology and/as intimacy. A literal, cybernetic Möbius strip.

Cartoon: “The moment Wittgenstein was proven wrong.”  
A lion, sitting next to Ludwig at a café, asks politely, “Excuse me. But have you finished reading the *Sunday Styles* section?”

Charismatic microfauna.

Uncharismatic megafauna.

Why are Jay birds more naked than all the other birds?

It seems that some people’s dreams have a “budget” equivalent to late Kurosawa or James Cameron; featuring thousands of extras, and sweeping, panoramic dreamwork cinematography. Whereas my dreams almost always have a budget closer to late Vince Gallo, or some unknown mumblecore director.

(In your best Žižek voice):

“Is not Victoria’s Secret, in its own obscene declaration of a beckoning, personalized enigma — on billboards, television commercials, shopping bags, and so on — *precisely* the exhibition of a lack of any secret whatever. Victoria, whose generic identity is seemingly shared and scattered between the impersonal eugenically engineered avatars — these profane so-called “angels” — whose winks and wiggles seem to suggest some kind of seductive and intimate knowledge, is both ubiquitous and absent. Moreover, the entrance to this alleged secret is a kind of phantasm exchanged at the point of purchase: the secret being that there is no secret, except for the mystery as to why the average person buys into this bullshit.”

GI Bill Joe:

A doll for boys who want to skip the whole war part, and get a decent education.

“Not to nitpick, but I’m gonna pick some nits.”

Technically, we are all smart water.

Remember that cocktail party when Deleuze & Guattari said “there is no such thing as ideology, and there never was”; and we all just looked at them for a moment, and then kept talking about something else, so as not to make the situation any more embarrassing?

Unsolicited opinion:

“Safety Dance” is the catchiest song with a non-melodic chorus.

Ironically, the worst way to “find your own voice,” when writing, is to write about yourself.

TV shows and movies we will enjoy, after the Patriarchy has been defeated:

- *Golden Boys*
- *Gossip Boy*
- *Gilmore Boys*
- *Derry Boys*
- *Boyboss*
- *Boy Interrupted*
- *Gone Boy*
- *Boys*



Some names of current South African cricketers:

- Faf du Plessis
- Christiaan Jonker
- Rassie van der Dussen
- Quinton de Kock
- Dwaine Pretorius
- Vernon Philander

Lucky Fred Astaire danced so well, because he sure couldn't act.

Dress code:

Douche casual

My slumbering unconscious is brilliant at conceiving and representing insults and indignities delivered by people who I will not only never meet, but who don't even exist.

Short story idea:

A retired man spends a year making a playground for the local kids. They assemble when it is unveiled, look at it for a while, then pronounce it "lame," before leaving to play with their video games. The man is sad.

Spring. A good time to prune the soul.

Great title: "Concerning Those Whom The Gods Are Slow To Punish" (Plutarch)

Do you know what you like? Or like what you know?

I propose a National No-Selfie Day.

The mediascape's relationship to history is like an ouroboros with a strong gag reflex.

Little-known fact: *Where's Waldo?* was adapted from a 1950s French existentialist kid's book called *Why's Waldo?*

I think I may have drunk the equivalent of a small forest in slippery elm, over the years.

New question for students writing a paper or thesis: "Is [your topic] just using you to talk about itself?"

Hell is other people's acts of cultural diagramming.

Altercation: A different kind of holiday.

Trump claims to have "the best words." But he's wrong. Yiddish has the best words.

"Oh yeah, *bios* goes on, long after the thrill of *zoe* is gone." — John Cougar Agambencamp

Do you really hate millennials? Or do you just hate the depiction of millennials in commercials?

Life hack for women. If a friend starts complaining about her boyfriend or husband for the nth time, suddenly exclaim enthusiastically and with a smile, “I know! Let’s pass the Bechdel Test today!”

Sometimes, when going grocery shopping, I listen to the theme music for *Game of Thrones*, just to make it seem like an epic adventure.

I miss the grass-stained intimacy with the earth of my youth.

I’m currently writing a deliberately unthrilling thriller. The critics will call it, “pulse-maintaining.”

The term “down payment” originally referred to the sack of goose feathers required to hold any large purchase.  
#TheMoreYouKnow

Hunch:

Stockholm is a boring city filled with interesting people.  
Whereas New York is an interesting city filled with boring people. (Present company excluded, of course.)

In confirmation of Lamarck’s theory of the genetic transmission of memory, some girls are now born with a pre-knowledge of the plots of Jane Austen’s major novels.

Was a time when it was a bad idea to “carry on like there’s no tomorrow.” Now the problem is carrying on like there will be one.

I had lunch with a friend yesterday who passionately insisted that the challenge ahead lies in rejecting the “tiny agon and dramaturgical allure of the theaters of demystification.”

Hauntology = fidelity to the non-event

Shame on all those people who so breezily text or type the acronym “lmao,” without even a thought for those poor unfortunate souls who actually suffered a detached posterior due to excessive mirth.

You snicker at my interpretive dancing. But you can’t even handle my somatic hermeneutics.

Is your name Cleopatra? ’Cause you are the Queen of Denial.

If you have to say, “it’s not a cult,” then it’s definitely a cult.

Nice people don’t tell you they’re nice.

Medical researchers confirm that farts are in fact suppressed smiles.

I just misread a sign saying “Jesus is Lord” as “Jesus I’m Tired.”

I’ve always preferred philosopher-jesters to philosopher-kings.

## IN MY DREAM LAST NIGHT...

I was a grad student again. The male Indian professor was explaining to the class: “vampires waddle, but zombies mince.”

I hesitated altogether too long, when a middle-aged Australian lesbian asked if she could have my spare sewing kit.

I had my own cogito: “I eat raspberries, therefore I am.”

I was the star of a “major motion picture,” based on a bad, bestselling middle-brow novel. I wasn’t very good in the part, but the casting director wouldn’t hear of using anyone else. As the protagonist did in the story, I pulled around a toy, life-size alligator with me, wherever I went, on a string. The love scene was with some generic Hollywood actress—perhaps Naomi Watts or Radha Mitchel—inside a tent full of ricotta cheese.

I was in Taylor Swift’s girl squad... or at least, part of her general entourage. But then I got kicked out for general flippancy. One of her Board of Directors took me aside after the severance announcement, and admitted that she and three of her fellows really enjoyed my shenanigans (“she” being the board member, not TS herself), but the more conservative among the decision makers were having none of it.

A grad student I didn’t know was using the printer in my office. A little put out, I explained that this was my office and my printer, and I needed to use the latter rather ur-

gently. The student's supervisor, one of my colleagues, then came and scolded me for being difficult....

Christian Slater was the owner and operator of a boutique store which sold only imported electronica cds and prosciutto. These two types of merchandise were randomly displayed among each other.

I lived in a not-very-smart Smart House. I said to it, "House—I would like to have a shower," and the robot reply was very hesitant. "Ummmm, a shower? Oh, right. Ok. Wait, I don't know if the water is hot enough yet. Maybe. Yes yes, you should try it.... No, no. My mistake. Can you wait a little longer maybe...?"

A meteor in the sky coming closer and closer. A grotesque Drumpfian King, waddling around the broken landscape like a drooling, fleshy gargoyle. I walked across some sand-dunes punctuated with rusting garbage and found two smiling Arabic boys, playing among the ruins. I looked to the sky, and the meteor was getting unbearably close. I could feel its radiant heat. The boys could feel the end swiftly approaching, and decided to run and run until it arrived. As they bolted off across the dust, one of them yelled back to me: "Love will last longer than me."

The whole country dismantled all the infrastructure and used the pieces to start over again from scratch. This time everything was hyperlocal—no highways for cars. In my village, all the recycled materials were put toward large, spring-loaded machines, that looked a bit like catapults, but were in fact complex Rube Goldberg-type

contraptions designed to signal whether you were accepting an invitation to a party or not.

An alien shaped like an elongated twenty-sided die, which felt sorry for us because we only have two sides to toss and turn at night.

I met the European President of Money. "I hope you're going to cut Greece some slack," I said to him. To which he replied, "You don't know much about money, do you."

I was in the Amtrak customer class "gypsum," and only two more trips would grant me "malachite" status.

“We must struggle against the possibility that we will not die.” — Baudrillard

The three most beautiful words in the English language?  
“Universal basic income.”

Didn't Confucius once say: “One is allowed to lose one's shit every now and again. Especially after a long layover in Newark.”

This circuit of wonder; so strong, it can even shine through the soul-crippling pedantry and vitality-smothering stupidity of human systems.

'Pataphysics has a new challenge, now that the entire world is obsessed with implementing the technoscience of imaginary solutions.

To paraphrase Baudrillard: the idea of “clickbait” exists to distract us from realizing that the entire Internet is click-bait.

My *raison d'être* is to scrupulously avoid having a *raison d'être*.

Great moments in editing:

*What's in a name? That which we call a rose, by any other name would smell as sweet. (Even if it was called a stinkyughflurplesphinter.)*

Better to be knighted than benighted.



“Women’s Singles” tennis in French is called “Simple Dames.”

Few people know that a metric meter is based on the precise distance between the intriguing and the fascinating.

“Oh honey. Shangri-La doesn’t exist. It’s like retirement, and being ‘beach-ready.’”

*The New York Times* is a 22-by-12 inch square patch of grass for sheep to graze on every morning.

If you think you’re taking the high road, then you’re not really taking the high road.

None of my tweets go viral. But some of them go bacterial.

“Falling Rocks” signs are the most useless and existentially honest of all signs. (You may die. We warned you. But there’s nothing any of us can do about it.)

*Starling* is a beautiful word. Makes me think of a baby star.

It makes perfect sense to cry over spilled wine.

It’s better to be sorry than safe.

Fuck sublimation!

“You have a standing invitation to lie with me.”

Less is.

The Gesture of Spite — a neighbor who spends all day every day sawing three inch slices off a piece of wood with a power saw. He does so for 4.9 seconds each time, because it is illegal to make such noise in a residential area for more than 5 seconds.

If you use the phrase “passion project,” then there’s a very good chance you have no idea what passion is.

My aspiration is to live in a place bereft of a single Apple Store.

A burst of nostalgia for traveling in the mid-’90s.

“Hey. Do you know a *cybercafe* near here, where I can *surf the web* and maybe check my *emails*?”

Bridge tolls are essentially just automated bridge Trolls.

I decree the current epoch to be called the Idiocene.

Cartoon:

“Dr. Rorschach on a Friday night” — with a friend in a bar.

Two blobs are sitting at a nearby table.

“I’ll take the blonde,” Rorschach says.

FOBI — Fear of Being Included

Malibu and Coke is my madeleine.

These days, I almost prefer to travel backward on the train. It makes me feel like Benjamin's Angel of History.

In America, they put candy by the checkout for impulse buying.

In Italy they put Fisherman's Friends, balsamic vinegar, tuna, and condoms.

How do I restore myself to the factory settings?

Religion is like the Hayes Code, millennia before the fact, obliging artists to be very limited in their expression, and creative about getting around the rules.

"My television shows only news. No dancing!" — Patricia, my B&B host in Parma

For two thousand years, the people of Northern Italy have used tamed boar to sniff out Gucci loafers, which grow naturally in the rich soil beneath the trees in the forests of the region.

Few people give a damn about Leonardo's *The Second-Last Supper*.

Alien anthropologists and archaeologists of the future will wonder why the relatively benign Bush Sr. years produced music with the sonic and lyrical intensity of Nirvana, Helmet, Rage Against the Machine, Tool, Pantera, PJ Harvey, Public Enemy, Bodycount, etc. Whereas the age of austerity produced Bon Iver, Sufjan Stevens, Mumford and Sons, Bright Eyes, and all those ukulele lala clappety clap, Brooklyn bands.

Any situation, no matter how dire, can be made infinitely worse by adding the ambient voice of Anthony Kiedis.

If the voice of the guy from The Weeknd didn't exist, soft totalitarian neoliberalism would have had to invent it.

Thanks to Facebook's trending panel, I now know there is a thing called "Overwatch Porn." Thanks to which, I now know there's a thing called "Overwatch." Soon, most of us will learn of new cultural artifacts from the porn version first.

The young cool kids in this café are wearing tour t-shirts from concerts I saw when I was their age, twenty years ago. Not sure if reassured or disappointed.

What will replace Steam Punk? Radium Goth? Solar Mod?

It will be strange when very old ladies in old folks homes, thirty years from now, reminisce about their adolescence: "And that was the day I went to see Napalm Death with your grandpappy."

If Can, Neu!, and Popol Vuh are Krautrock, does that mean Pink Floyd, The Who, and Led Zeppelin are Rosbifrock?

When asked why they visited Earth, the aliens replied that they were eventually overcome with curiosity as to how a species as slow and evidently stupid as humans could make sonic patterns as sick and awesome as Can's "Yoo Doo Right."

Whenever I hear Katy Perry or The Weeknd or whomever, "singing" over a public sound-system, I can't help thinking they aren't singing at all. This is not a song (that is, an expression or transduction of affect into melody). Rather, it is a banal cybernetic pseudo-Siren sound, designed for maximum monetization. It is the gratingly smooth sonics of Capital that has enlisted a cadre of fleshbots to *disguise* itself as singing, but is really a highly programmed subliminal command to spend (if not directly on the track itself, on the style-of-so-called-life that it promotes).

Bon Jovi were deep into their Derridean phase, especially the notion of the *pharmakon*, when they wrote the song, "Bad Medicine."

The Weather Girls' classic song, "It's Raining Men," is now the anthem of the andropocene.

If yellow overalls could make music, they would sound just like Supertramp.

Even punk women sing along to Stevie Nicks, if they think no one can hear them.

Rock 'n' roll trivia:

Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young began as a law firm, but switched to music when one of their clients introduced them to pot.

The Spotify Paradox: the more albums you have instant access to, the harder it is to find something to match your mood.

The banjo is such a great instrument. But 99% of music that utilizes the banjo is really boring.

It has been over twenty years since I saw, touched, or thought about Blu-Tack. And yet it was such a big part of my life in my teens and early twenties.

I want to find a fragrance where I smell as good as Jeff Goldblum feels at 6pm on a Thursday night.

Soon enough, people will be lining up at dawn for tickets to see Adam Sandler in the Park.

Happiness is the promise of beauty.

I'm waiting for The Plurality.

Overheard in Bushwick (probably): "Don't you dare Patreonize me!"

Sex addicts clutch at the crotch as a crutch.

Precisely halfway between the optic nerve and the brain is a glandulet that prompts people over forty to say, “so... what am I looking at?” while putting on their glasses.

My citation manager is a bottle of wine.

When I was a kid, I just assumed that Polish people somehow had a special gift for seeing the future results of elections. (“The Poles have the Republicans ahead by two percent, three weeks before voting begins....”)

Cheap thrills are something I can no longer afford.

I love being other places, but I hate traveling.

It would be fun to have an actual ranch, to be able to say “see you back at the ranch” in a literal sense.

That feeling when a narcissistic friend finally asks you what you’ve been up to, and you see the light swiftly drain from their eyes, as you start to answer.

I wonder who would have been Nietzsche if Nietzsche hadn’t been Nietzsche.

I wonder if the State Department has a special division called Wikiplugs?

According to biologists, childhood technically ends when you receive your first deadline.

Whenever and wherever possible, be sure to arrive by zeppelin.

Time is mean. That's why we call it "the meantime."

Lesser-evilism is its own form of evil.

Tennis is just like table tennis, except you can run around on top of the table.

Self-pity is a hell of a drug.

That annoying, incessant buzzing in your ears? The sound of your own ego.

Calling the kids "Generation Z" is pretty much an explicit acknowledgment that we all feel the species has run its course.

"I'm going to make a big pot of chili."  
"Them's fartin' words."

Where does the phrase "goody two-shoes" come from? Even bad people tend to avoid walking around with one shoe on.

Attitude sickness.



Orgone lethargy.

I've lost far too many friends to regular exercise.

The most dangerous thing on Earth is not the great white shark or the Ebola virus, but rather the fragile male ego.

Religious Internet slang: tl;dr = too Lutheran, didn't read.

If laughter is the best medicine, comedians should be paid the same as doctors.

Some avant-garde stream-of-consciousness poetry, courtesy of a letter from my mother:  
“and then after good local market yesterday (jersey milk, cream, yogurt, cheese from tilba tilba, best ever sourdough bread from bermagui, fabulous greens and even tomatoes from the hot house that used to be the gerbra farm back of milton), more ‘french’ cheeses from rosie’s at cuppits, honey man, seaweed gal... and best berkshire (the black beauties) pigs from the out of milton cattle farm clayton park — turns out the south ulladulla butchers close to hayden’s which we knew sold their own excellent out-of-milton beef also has pig from there once a week and we can order our choice cut and they’ll ring when it’s ready; they also get lamb from the scrub country west of the mountains but in spring will have lamb from local croobyar rd farm; and 2x a week get (not local) free range chooks, so apart from graham’s sausages next to the Ull PO (no added anything) we’ll go there.”

Fun fact:

Clouds are in actuality rarely lonely. They make decisions as a collective, and like to gather together to share their hopes and dreams. Even clouds floating on their own are — nine times out of ten — enjoying the restorative space that this situation provides.

How do cricket comedians know when they're bombing on stage?

I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by think pieces.

Social scientists recently determined that approximately 82% of cultural phenomena that someone claims to “be a thing,” are not really a thing.

“Excuse me, sir. Your Id is showing.”

Did you hear about the jolly psychic? She was a happy medium.

I've skimmed a few recent pieces about Generation Z being different from millennials. But none of them mention what I really want to know. How long do we have to suffer peppy commercials with whistling or ukulele music?

Bees. Those bumbling royalists.

The Big Other is probably not watching you.

Life Pro-Tip: Dress so badly that your boss feels obliged to give you a raise.

“Let no-one say he lived in vain, for he left behind 48k tweets.”

I may not be able to walk on water, but I can moonwalk on ice.

I’m currently in a phase where I finish every conversation by drawing my hand slowly across my face while saying: “...aaaaaaaaaaaaand scene.”

The term “vindication” comes from the feeling of having just the right amount of wine.

Brain callouses from so much cognitive labor.

Will archaeologists, two millennia into the future, refer to the culture and spawn of Silicon Valley as the Ancient Geeks?

Did you hear about the hip hop homeless guy? He got a bum rap.

A tension economy.

Carob is an old Berber word meaning “sad chocolate.”

When the Internet is down, it really makes you think. Just as we have candles and flashlights at the ready for a power outage, we need to now start stocking up on actual cats, polaroid selfies, battery-powered memes, dried tweets, and canned likes.

I appreciate the spirit of “talk like a pirate day.” But who has time to learn Somali or Swedish?

I am definitely defatigable.

He extended an olive branch. And then jammed it in my eye.

Is there any more symptomatic act of the banal brutality of modernity than moving a friend’s name from a spreadsheet because he’s dead?

Home sick with the flu? Netflix and chills.

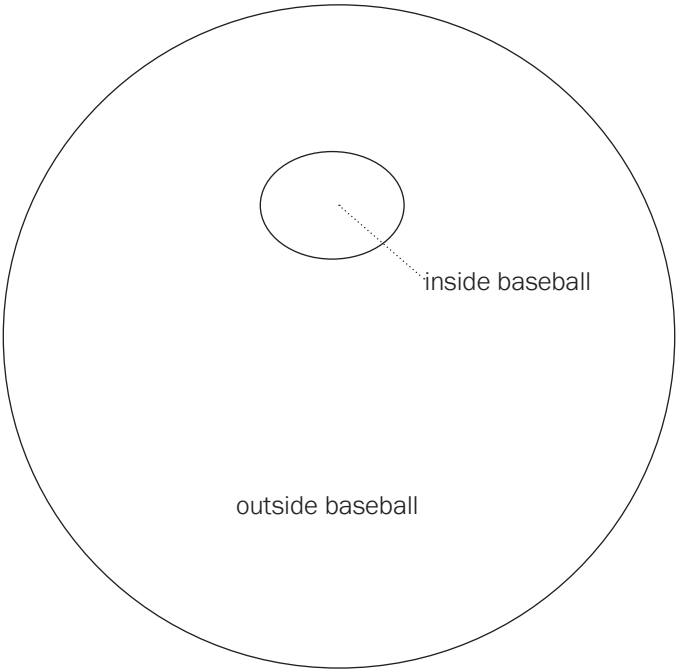
After magic realism, we are now in a phase of banal surrealism.

Tele-solidarity can only get us so far.  
(That is, not very.)

Tonight, for Halloween, I’ll be dressing as “the ghost of the middle class.”

The fetish of youth never gets old.

AMERICAN ONTOLOGY



Who wants to fund my research into eradicating all the tedious stuff between coffee and wine?

Make love, not kids!

The United States of Akrasia

Humans have jumped the shark.

Disallusionment: when you can no longer be bothered to make cultural references.

Until recently I thought “beaten to the punch” referred to someone getting to the big bowl of alcohol before you.

“...but he was obliged to pull out of the running after a severe glamping injury.”

Zoediversity

I would like to work in a pub called The Occasional Parsnip.

The enigma of Americans is how infinitely mysteryless they are.

Volunteer (n.) — polite word for unpaid scab

Brexit = The Great British Back-Off

They say a writer thrives on restrictions. Which is why I've surrounded my laptop with scorpions.

My door is never open.

The singular sensation of house keys sliding down your leg, and being caught in your shoe, thanks to a new hole in your pants' pocket.

The year is 2117. The enigmatic figure known as RezX lies gasping her last few breaths in a bunker near the Svalbard Seed Vault. As the leader of the Global Resistance, she organized the mutants of Shenzhen against the Alibaba-Communist-Party. She was also on the front-lines with the Amazon Robot Workers Union, in its guerilla campaign against the Hooters-GOP army. Her impassioned face was smeared with grease, gun powder, and droplets of her own blood, when she summons enough strength to grab her weeping lieutenant by the collar — her eyes shining with the final luminosity of a life burning up in the merciless atmosphere of human mortality — and hissed between her chipped and gritted teeth: "Bernie would have won."

What if winning the culture wars is the consolation prize?  
#PoliticsTrumpsCulture

When I get home from outside, I sing the Spider Man theme to myself, except I change the words to:  
*comfy clothes*

*comfy clothes*  
*comfy clothes*  
*comfy clothes*  
*watch out....*  
*here come the comfy clothes*

Each workplace has its own brand of exasperation: which its employees wear around the office, like a signature scent.

We're all panhandlers. It's just that most of us are better dressed, and get our alms in fortnightly checks.

I've had it with deadlines. And now focusing on livingshapes.

I live in an unintentional community.

I keep wondering what the world would look like if CEOs and politicians read Levinas instead of Ayn Rand.

Car Factory Robot: "I know they don't pay me. But would it kill them to say 'thank you' once in a while?!"

It's harder to be creative today, since you are not only expected to create, but also to be a fervent self-promoter. Imagine if Hildegard, Vermeer, or Proust were also obliged to keep their website up to date, and their social media feeds feeding.

I just watched a large flock of small starlings successfully scare away a large hawk. Just sayin'.



## UPDATE TO THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

Thou shall have no other gods before Me.  
(Unless they have a dozen arms or an elephant head or something cool like that.)

Thou shalt not make idols.  
(Without the presence of a televised voting audience.)

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord in vain.  
(So make sure you say it really vehemently, for full rhetorical effect.)

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.  
(Unless there's a really good concert on or something; or if you have a looming deadline.)

Honor your father and your mother.  
(Unless they suck.)

Thou shalt not murder.  
(Except figuratively, in the context of something like a rap battle, or murdering a cheeseburger.)

Thou shalt not commit adultery.  
(By asking if she or he is married.)

Thou shalt not steal.

(When the guard or security camera is looking.)

Thou shalt not bear false witness against your neighbor.

(Unless they still haven't returned the lawn mower.)

Thou shalt not covet your neighbor's wife.

(Unless she's like a 9 or something.)

Writers are often disheartened by the fact that only a handful of people show up to their readings. But then I remember the fact that I was one of only six people in attendance at MoMA PS1 to see John Crowley and Kim Stanley Robinson speak, and then I feel a little better.

The Cycle of Baloney

feeling lonely → swipecy phony → bonec moany → crab and abalone → matrimony → macaroni and rigatoni → acrimony → alimony → feeling lonely

Damn Russian hackers! They broke into my Duolingo account and learned Spanish without me.

Always hystericize.

Dasein Within Reach

The sado-masochism of publishing: editors make cuts, authors submit. (While printers bind, and peer-reviewers are blind-folded.)

If *The Bachelor* or *The Bachelorette* featured actual people, vying for the roses — with actual personal characteristics, rather than simply a bundle of banal tics — then I'd probably watch it. But it's hard to get involved with the routine non-behavior of human spam; the symptomless simpering of talking pimples on the aging face of the Spectacle.

In the age of globalization, human beings have started to resemble Cavendish bananas: an ubiquitous monocrop, glossy, bland, well-traveled, resilient, and yet easily bruised and vulnerable to disease.

Wealthy dad, talking to his 5-year old son:

Dad: "No, it's not the '*Servants*' Entrance. It's the '*Service Entrance*.'"

Son: "Oh...."

[Thinks for a moment]

Son: "What's the difference?"

Dad: [.....]

Ivan the Not So Bad (Once You Get to Know Him)

Before the Internet, only children and people of dubious reputation needed passwords.

I am just a "rando" to people I don't know.

Feeling sorry for yourself is just empathy turned inward.

A mafia lawyer specializing in Murders & Acquisitions.

I gotta say, I spend a lot less time these days hanging out in large concrete pipes than I did when I was a teenager.

Who were the Callipygians? And why did they have such nice asses?

Perhaps there has been a mistranslation through the mists of time, and the Callipygians actually had very fine donkeys.

Xeno's Paradox: no matter how familiar someone is to you, the closer you get to them, the more uncanny and alien they might suddenly appear.

You've heard of bucket lists. But what about fuckit lists? (That is, a list of things that you'll never be bothered or able to do.)

I wonder if older folks in 1018 complained as much about their millennials as we do about ours today. "Look at all these young people, wearing strange garments, fornicating in orchards, collecting tinder for festive bonfires, and protesting the Norman mercenaries in battle with the Byzantine Empire."

What if we're still living in early capitalism?

Overheard in the late 18th century:

"I just had a date with Franz Mesmer."

"Oh really? How did it go?!"

"Meh."

Geosphere — inanimate matter

Biosphere — biological life

Noosphere — human thought

Poosphere — social media

Personal productivity is really just a concentrated, hyperactive form of laziness. It means you are either avoiding doing

something else, far more important, or sublimating energies that should instead be spent on more meaningful, less strident and delusional, modes of being.

Overheard in 2042:

Teenager 1: “My grandparents could stare into each other’s eyes for hours on end, and not even exchange 1MB of data.”

Teenager 2: “Gross.”

Are you a person, or a personification of the profit motive?

Harmaceuticals

Perhaps the impetus and subtext of all art is to say “I see you, cosmos. I see you, and I hope you see me back. I hope you don’t think you made me in vain.”

ethnoscapes — people  
technoscapes — affordances  
financescapes — wealth  
mediascapes — information  
ideoscapes — ideas, ideologies  
tourettescapes — social media

And if even the swine ignore your pearls?

Can something be moving and transfixing at the same time?

Netflix should announce a livestream for people who can't decide what to watch. It would just screen random shows, one after the other, and people could stare at it like zombies, hoping the next one will be entertaining. They could call this new service "television."

One of my big summer projects is to install a large and beautiful koi pond in my mind.

What stale hell is this?

Today's specials:

- curried favor
- seasoned travelers
- humbled pie
- roasted celebrities
- poached concepts
- smoked mirrors
- chilled vibes
- fishy stories
- preserved memories
- shredded hopes
- sugarcoated advice
- half-baked efforts
- grated nerves
- grilled witnesses

A Japanese version of *The Office*, in which nothing funny happens, and everyone is very hushed, respectful, and good at their job.

“You have reached 911, emergency hotline. If you are a platinum member, enter your ID number now. If you are a gold member, press 2, and then follow the prompts. If you have not yet taken advantage of our membership opportunities, an agent will be ready to take your call, as soon as you have listened to the following important messages from our sponsors.”

To reduce someone to a type can be an act of great and insulting violence, or a precious gift of great wisdom and insight, depending on how and why it is done.

Do sheep dream of wooly androids?

Relax?... I haven't even laxed yet!

Is there any more satisfying sound than the heating pipes clanking into life on a cold snowy day?

Overheard in the 12th century: “Last night a crumhorn saved my life.”

The world is only exasperating if you care about stuff.

Software and subways can both lead to platform fatigue.

Politics (n.) — the betrayal of the human species, and the abject forfeiture of its potential, by its own collective self.



Experts estimate that approximately 83% of the world's oceans remain unqueered.

Marie Kondo: "Which cheap, toxic rag — sewn by a Bangladeshi child slave — sparks most joy?"

They say that the unconscious is structured like a language. These days, I'd say it's structured more like a raw feed of a live reality TV show.

In 2018, 95% of people dress like it's laundry day.

Few people realize that the term "Neo-liberalism" was first coined to describe the way in which Keanu Reeves's character in *The Matrix* rapidly became a symbol for a new type of aspirational individualism, forced to contend with the new digital economy.

If you avoid grains and dairy foods, but can't stop thinking about the difference between Being and beings, you may just be a paleo-ontologist.

Just had my annual metaphysical exam. Apparently my haecceity has dangerously low ipseity levels.

Jeremy irons while Julian sands.

Humans are the Australians of the universe. All the other species tolerate us. Just barely, but with grace. And hope at some point we get tired, shut up, and go away.

*Amuse douche*: when obliged to make small talk with an obnoxious jerk just before dinner.

The Anthropocene = the human gentrification of the planet.

Cartoon:

Saber-tooth tiger and woolly mammoth watching caveman couple moving into a nearby cave. “There goes the neighborhood.”

You know you’re exhausted when an “Everything Must Go” sign in a store window makes you tear up.

What year was it that companies realized that they could make even more money treating customers as hostages rather than clients?

Humans are so basic.

A think piece about the fact that we can only think in terms of think-pieces now.

I advocate for a Universal Extravagant Income.

Alternatively, humanity jumped the shark the first time someone used the phrase, “jump the shark.”

Melaniacs: 20-something selfie-taking accented women who aspire to be a trophy wife for repulsive, rich old men.

But what if this *is* my first rodeo?

The Amazon recommendation engine is getting very condescending these days: “If you enjoyed that, you may also enjoy *this* piece of crap.”

What if we consider Amazon to be the long-delayed completion of the municipal sewage project at the global scale? In the 19th century, thanks to the flush toilet, we figured out how to discreetly and efficiently whisk crap from our bodies away into a largely unseen waste disposal system. Today — thanks to Jeff Bezos, cutting-edge algorithms, and legalized slavery — we’ve finally closed that circuit, by figuring out how to send crap back from the wider world right to our doorsteps.

My start-up swiftly morphed into a finish-down.

Henceforth actual letters will be known as “premails.”

Senseless communis

Why do blow-hards blow so hard? Can’t they just blow softer?

To write a document accepting a formal job offer is at the same time to compose a letter of resignation. That is to say, it represents one's resignation to a bleak future of compulsory wage slavery and foreclosed possibilities.

Curse not the bags under your eyes, for it is in those bags that you will carry your ambitions to fruition.

Social media is perfect for people who don't like other people, but care that other people notice them, and hear what they have to say.

They say that a stranger is just a friend you haven't met yet. But it's more accurate to say that a friend is a stranger you happened to meet.

Why is there no popular term for the male equivalent of a "tomboy"? I suggest "jillgirl."

I'm prone to binge thinking.

This face intentionally left blank.

Apparently I won't get paid anymore unless I keep working. This is nothing short of blackmail!

No matter how reasonable a request, issue, or grievance is, if you are in charge of fixing it, it initially sounds unreasonable.

# 10 TYPES OF LABOR

**affective labor** (making people feel comfortable for a living)

**affected labor** (making people feel comfortable in a patronizing, stylized, or exaggerated manner, for a living)

**affectionate labor** (liking, or pretending to like, people for a living)

**auto-affectionate labor** (working on projects in such a manner that they seem like they bring themselves into being, for a living)

**defective labor** (making crap designed to soon fail or fall apart, for a living)

**infected labor** (making memes or other forms of viral marketing, for a living)

**infested labor** (working in a hovel with rats or roaches, for a living)

**ingested labor** (swallowing pills or shit, for a living)

**congested labor** (working with blocked sinuses and flu-like symptoms, in a cramped and shared cubicle, for a living)

**detested labor** (all of the above)

Neo-miserabilism

Sometimes I can't help but think NPR was created by someone more subtle, but just as diabolical, as Rupert Murdoch and Roger Ailes. It fairly oozes a kind of unctuous folksy complicity that helps forestall real change as much as the sun-bed air-horn idiocies of Fox News.

Jesus was a results-oriented disruptor and influencer.

A friend is trying to convince me to write my next book using Scrivener. But I would prefer not to.

Doctor: "Do you drink socially?"

Me: "No. But I do drink politically."

History repeats itself. The first time as tragedy. The second time as farce. And the third time as a looped animated gif.

Nature is the best lighting designer.

The GOP has started pushing single-prayer health care.

Max Planck would be a good name for a German porn star who specializes in "sexy scientist" roles.

Once you have reached middle age, you should by rights be able to call yourself a legit “time traveler,” since you have lived through so many different eras.

It’s amazing how few people have figured out the incontrovertible fact that everything revolves around me.

Reverse Truman Show syndrome: when you begin to suspect that absolutely nothing revolves around you.

Zen-gym koan: How can you tone your core if you don’t have one?

As good an epitaph as any:  
~\\_(\’)\\_/-

Whereas most people fear a bad hair day, bald folks fear having a bad head day.

All that is solid melts on to the front of my nice white shirt.

Outside the us, inchworms are known as two-point-five-four-centimeter-worms.

Don’t worry: the elephant in the room doesn’t want to talk about you either.

Italians in the 1970s must have found it very confusing when they traveled to other countries. So strange how these people's words matched the movement of their mouths.

If forced to choose, would you suffer influenza or influencers?

Q: How many Polish people does it take to change a lightbulb?

A: One, since they tend to be very good electricians.

Life is just a phase we're all going through.

Why invent self-driving cars? That defeats the very purpose of cars, which is to allow individuals to drive their own transport; to seize their own mobility and destiny. You might as well invent a vibrator that pleasures itself.

Snark is just sentiment wearing sunglasses.

Experts have admitted that an unfortunate translation error, very early on, has resulted in many centuries of misguided commentary on Plato's masterpiece of political philosophy. Apparently he was really just saying that *pets* are not welcome in the Republic.

A children's book called *Bonne Nuit, Ennui*, for children to read to their parents, encouraging their elders to leave aside their habitual lethargy and cynicism for more engaged and re-enchanted pursuits.



Our energy problems would be solved if we could harness and channel the boredom of ten-year-old boys, forced to endure Chopin recitals on a sunny Sunday afternoon.

The more baggage life gives you, the more you look like actual luggage.

Heidegger believed that the essence of the human is “being toward death.” I propose that the essence of the grape is “being toward wine.”

The Nobel prize for Boomers Who Didn’t Sell Out.

*Et tu*, shuffle button?

Currently in Turin. Nearly had a nervous breakdown when I witnessed a brute mistreating his Segway.

Italian beds are essentially tables with sheets.

This supermarket wine provides top notes of Istanbul leather, Persian snuff, pink peppercorns, red currents, and Ligurian monastery steps.

That time Jesus’s Twitter feed had only twelve followers.

Primitive Italian toilets ensure that sometimes I can’t tell my ass from a hole in the ground.

Seagulls are the frat boys of the natural kingdom.

Europe = end of history

USA = end of society

It is an open secret that every coffee machine in France connects to pipes that extend all the way to the latest massive oil spill.

France has a new magazine simply called *Millennials*. It boasts a centerfold every month featuring a different avocado on toast.

Slow food is supposed to be relaxing. But sometimes it is *so* slow, through a kind of aggressive inefficiency, that it becomes stressful.

I would totally shop at a store called Forever 39.

Antwerp's First Annual Straight Shame Parade.

Every time I come home from being away a while, I have a moment thinking I've been robbed. But then I remember I just have very Spartan taste in interior decorating. Perhaps, one or two pictures on the wall wouldn't hurt.

Travel Alert:

There has been a sudden breakout of ennui in Paris today.

Travelers should take all necessary precautions, and avoid the

usual vectors of infection (wan, empty boulevards; lethargic cafés; Sunday museum hours; visiting youth orchestras, torturing beloved film scores in decaying band shells; half-eaten caramel éclairs, abandoned on park benches; the plaintive gaze of a beggar, dressed as a pirate; the indifferent posture of a dog; and so on.)

A young woman at this Italian restaurant just spent ten minutes detailing continuity errors in *Harry Potter* movies to her date. Then followed a two-minute silence. She then added, peevishly: “Well at least I’m trying to make conversation, and not just staring out into space.” At which point, her companion dutifully switched into gear, and started detailing plot holes in *Game of Thrones*.

Pontoons packed with swimming holiday makers in the Mediterranean unsettlingly evokes boats overfilled with refugees.

“Values” is a code word for “the protection of privilege.”

Surprisingly, perhaps, the Hotel Minerva stays open after dusk.

We are all second-class ticket holders on the Denial Express to Fort Finitude.

Stripper Names:

- Wintry Minx
- Mariana Trench
- Silky Tannins
- Chelsea Buns
- Tawny Pout

The Long Island School of Erotic Competence  
("Eros. Like love — but fancy!")

Coffee-table book idea: *Big scary dudes walking floofy, silly dogs.*

*WikiLeaks: The Musical*

Still-life painting: "Moral Compass with Unethical Sextant."

That time I thought that the Geneva Chess Club (*échecs*) was  
the Geneva Failure Club (*échec*).

When I think about how Rilke had friends who would regularly lend him their castles so he could write poems and moon about, I can't help thinking: "I've got pretty lame friends."

*Schlumpengrumpfarben*: German word for the ambiently unpleasant feelings you have when you know there isn't any chocolate in the house, but are too tired to go out and get some.

I call the voices in my head my "intralocutors."

My cable company sends Latino-Me much better deals through the mail.

We're not so much "through the looking glass," as finding ourselves on the other side of the TV screen. Of a basic cable channel. At 2pm.

At what point does a Start Up become a Just Chugging Along?

"Excuse me. Are all these emojis grass-fed?"

Technically, we're *all* full of shit.

I want to live in the parallel universe where the Apollo spacecraft was called the Dionysus Galaxy Cruiser, and people line up at dawn in Central Park to watch Brecht in the Park.

Starbucks executive in 1987: "So how do we sell this over-priced brown puke water with milk?"

Consultant: "Ummmmm. Serve it right next to a public toilet?"

Starbucks exec: "Genius!"

Is this a restaurant? Or a corporate decoy space serving balance-sheet-approved, aesthetically disingenuous, semi-digestible substances?

Nike swoosh t-shirt: "I'll do it later."

Private intellectual

Idiots Anonymous

Few people are less ethical than professional ethicists.

The first branding expert was the guy that made the iron tool that scarred livestock and slaves for the rest of their lives.

Social scientists warn of dangerously low levels of getting jiggy with it.

It must be very strange to be Kevin Bacon, zero degrees from himself.

Descartes's family would always go hungry when he tried to make bread, as he kept getting stuck at proving the dough.

A parallel universe in which everything is exactly the same, except Google is called Coogle.

When people say, "I don't care about X," they really do care about X.

Attention + distraction = attraction

How does one purge after a Netflix binge?

Surely if America were a person, he would look and behave just like Donald Trump.

## NEW TITLES OF NOTE

*Anthropocene: Policing in the Age of Climate Change*

*Bad Cop, Bad Cop: Race and the Culture of Violence in America's Police Force*

*The Pathetic Phallus: Projecting the Penis from Keats to Ashbery*

*Do Moral Philosophers Suffer?*

*The Bitches of Agnes: Weaponizing the Feminist Poetics of Agnes Varda*

*Not Ok, Cupid: Terrible Tales from the Digital Dating Trenches*

*A Woman under the Influencers: Confessions of a Branding Company Lackey*

*Oi Vey: A Cultural History of Australian Judaism*

*Pharma Con: Medical Malpractice from Hippocrates to Hip Replacements*

*Paradoxical Erotic Exceptionalism: On Meatloaf's Declarative Caveat concerning His Own Willingness to Do Anything for Love*

*Care of the Shelf: On the Ethical Turn in Contemporary Carpentry*

*Rating and Pillaging: Yelp, Uber, and the New Viking Economy*

*Birth of a Nathan: On the Banal Origins of Male Suburban Whiteness*

*A Whiter Shade of Paleo: Race, Place, and Fashionable Diets*

*Finnegan's Woke: An Annotated Glossary of Joycean Micro-Aggressions*

*Carless Whispers: Intimacy, Mobility, and Fossil-Free Transport*

*Shade-in-Freud: A Brief Guide to the Best Slightings and Insults by the Father of Psychoanalysis*

*Friends, Bartenders, and Other Emotional Support Animals*

*The Crochet Shot: On the Importance of Knitwear in Tarkovsky's Solaris*

*I Kissed a Goy, And I Liked It: Jewish Identity, Pop Music, and Treif Desires*

*All About the Benjamins: The Textual Circulation of Virtual Currency in The Arcades Project.*

*Moby Dick: How Amazon Finally Captured the White Whale of Ebook Formats*



*Diodes, Dyads, and Dryads: On the Relation Between Technology, Fantasy, and Folklore in the Romantic Couple*

*Soul to Seoul: Detroit's Hidden Influence on K-Pop*

*This Mortal Coal: On the Finitude of Fossil Fuels*

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*The Fraggie Rock Doctrine: Ludic Immediacy and the Eternal Deferral of Worry*

*Tupperware Psychology: On the Domestic Fallacy of Closure*

*Pseudo-Sussudio: On Bootleg Phil Collins CDs, Global Piracy Routes, and the Persistence of Dead Media/Music*

*"Does My Bum Look Big in This?": Parallax Judgment in an Age of Undecidability*

*A Laptop of One's Own: Feminism, Mobility, Urbanity*

*A Penny for Your Thoughts: Memoirs of a Freelancer*

*The Last Walts: Whitman, Disney, and the Twilight of the American Dream*

*High-Ku: Short Poems Composed While Under the Influence.*

*Atlas Chugged: On the Influence of Ayn Rand in Fraternity Culture*

*"Kiss me, Kermi": On the Radical, Unapologetic Female Desire of Miss Piggy*

*Felt Experience: On the Phenomenology of Puppets*

I intended to meet the universe halfway, but was running late, so texted to meet at Joe's Cafe instead.

"Look at all these idiots, milling around and buying whatever They tell us to buy, like sheeple," says local idiot, milling around and buying whatever They told him to buy, like a sheep-person.

If you've heard anything bad about me, any time in the past forty-seven years, it's simply not true.

Are we spending so much money on artificial intelligence because we've given up on the organic kind?

Home is where the wifi is.

To the vector goes the spoils.

Dare to ~~dream~~ get actual real shit done!

Oxymoron of the day: "fun run."

When beavers start to build a dam, do they ever find squirrel protesters who have tied themselves to trees?

They say we use only 10% of our brains. But that's because the other 90% has been leased to Netflix.

Dear Silicon Valley. Literally no-one wants self-driving cars. (Other than you, of course. Because you think of “users” as squishy and warm human-shaped honey sacs who should be englobed in your panoptic machinery, before being milked and sucked dry by the shiny titanium probe-shaft of whatever the next generation of Alexa will be, inserted deep into our smart-jellied cavities for maximum extraction potential.)

It’s a fine line between “character” and “comical” when it comes to squashed straw hats.

Life is a constant battle against the urge to wear whimsical socks.

Local man surprised by steep overdraft fees on his own spank bank.

Facebook pays us less than a penny for our thoughts.

God is the ultimate outsourcer.

Beneath every question I pose as a teacher in the Socratic method is the subtextual query: “How can we avoid being human garbage?”

Things weren’t better before. But they are definitely getting worse.

Neoliberalism: where increased social order and intensified social dysfunction go hand in hand.

The problem with Netflix's "good enough" content model is that it's not nearly good enough.

People have different smoke points, like oils.

The best form of criticism or critique is creativity in a different spirit.

Team dismantling exercises

"New bionic body parts can now be made of Harvard material"

One-thousand-year time lapse reveal most forests to be bangin' arboreal raves.

I have a zero-tolerance policy for zero-tolerance policies.

It's almost as if dank memes don't have an impact on actual political policies or situations.

In the age of digital media, it makes more sense to talk of the *invisible tentacles* of the market.

The early bird catches the worm... and then sells it to another bird, who cleans and filets it, and then sells it on to another bird who cooks it and serves it to lazy, hungover birds at brunch, while they talk about stock options.

In your teens: FOMO — Fear of Missing Out

In your twenties: BAMO — Bitterness at Missing Out

In your thirties: AAMO — Ambivalence at Missing Out

Forty plus: RAMO — Relief at Missing Out

People often refer to the “social contract,” but hardly ever take note of the “cultural memorandum of understanding.”

Carol totally phoned in her telemarketing job.

Stop underthinking it!

Top physicists confirm that time is not, in fact, money.

How can something be neither here nor there? Where is it then?

Key moments in Media History, #8. Humans invent writing, when wine merchant tells customer seeking credit, “I’m going to need that in writing.”

Negentropy (n.) — see Baby Goats

I'm convinced there's an entire genre of music that we haven't invented, but that I'd like to listen to right now.

Marjorie: The patron saint of couples who deserve far better wedding day food than they are going to get.

Top 5 conflict zones currently being monitored by the UN Security Council:

- Syria
- Palestine
- Kashmir
- Myanmar
- Zabar's Cheese Counter

Just like "America" or "France," humanity is itself an "imagined community."

In a parallel universe, everything is the same. It's just over there. It's the *perpendicular* universes where things start to get freaky.

The horrible hum that many people report hearing, 24/7, even in isolated rural areas, may indeed be the humming of the cooling fan for the computer that is running the operating system that executes the complex virtual reality that we mistake for real life.

They say "don't sweat the small stuff." So I've decided to sweat the big stuff... like, why are we here? What is time? And so on.

If someone uses the phrase, “acting in good faith,” then you can bet your best brown boots that they aren’t.

Machines against the rage

Considering an alternative career as a pagan missionary....  
This would involve going into Christian communities to teach them about Dionysus and Demeter.

Male junk is the new junk mail.

Italian-Americans threatening to give each other a “knuckle panini.”

Lubitsch dialogue that wasn’t:  
“Must you always think the worst of people?”  
“Well, it makes them more interesting.”

Are handwritten words raw and unprocessed?

My computer has a pop-up alert that says: “No actions needed.”

Never trust anyone who used the word “summer” as a verb.

Imagine if we could go beyond coping mechanisms to thriving mechanisms.



I can't be the only Gen-X'er who is now the age that I still think Boomers are.

I am violently opposed to violence.

The older I get, the more de-desensitized I become.

If you make a living building wheelhouses, then wheelhouses are your wheelhouse.

All my friends from Saturn make fun of me whenever I presume to mention the moon.

We are all living on borrowed time.

"The past is past. That's why it's called 'the past.'" — Bojack Horseman

The fifties were frisky  
the sixties were risky  
the seventies were hairy  
the eighties were racy  
the nineties were whiny  
the aughts were for naught  
and the teens, well, they were perennially millennially.

Was Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* the world's most sustained selfie?

That industrial temporal object you're extolling the virtues of?  
Yes, well. I don't care for it at all! I prefer different ones.

The real question is whether this jelly is ready for me.

Mediocre Grace

I've decided to levy a w(h)ine tax on myself. Every time I  
whine about something, I'm not allowed to have wine that  
evening.

The jouissance of spoiling someone else's jouissance.

The Revolution Will Not Be Doodle-Polled

Who needs a six-pack when you have a wine cask?

Overheard in the park:

Mom: "Thanksgiving was four months ago."

Little kid: "Why?"

Can anyone help me remember the song that's been stuck in  
head for weeks? I can't remember the lyrics, but the melody  
goes *doo-da hey hey la la laaaaaaaa, da da \*da\* da dibby  
dibby noh.*

What exercise regimen do you recommend to get rid of my  
Twitter handles?

All these people “asking for a friend.” What’s wrong with this friend? Why can’t they ask themselves?

According to the Turks, coffee should be “black as hell, strong as death, sweet as love.”

Why do architects always look like that?

What if there is no *me* to correspond to “me-time”?

My ass just won’t quit!  
(But it will consider an early retirement plan.)

You lost me at, “I’m pleased to announce....”

It’s impossible to live every day as if it is your last. But perhaps it’s possible to live every *year* as if it’s your last?

A colleague yesterday claimed that one of the most decisive changes in human history was when we moved buttons from the back of shirts to the front, thereby eliminating the need for someone else to help you get dressed. This slight shift reinforced a new sense of liberal ownership of the self, and paved the way for a more atomized way of life.

I’m an anti-social socialist.

Cartoon:

A king and a blacksmith looking at a suit of armor, while the sun sets out the castle window. "Let's call it a knight."

I just wrote "beset" instead of "best."

A Taylorist slip.

No two snowflakes are alike.

And yet they all demand special treatment!

A surreal theme-park called Daliwood.

That moment your phone lights up before you receive a text,  
and you get a pre-conscious spidey tingle that this may be a  
message from God.

America is about as democratic as China is communist.

*J. Edgar Hoover  
went to Vancouver  
to check on the state of our neighbors.  
He discovered a plenum  
of Canadian denim  
then returned to his cross-dressing labors.*

Irony: some of the least "instrumentalist" objects in society are  
musical instruments.

## THERAPEUTIC OPTIONS

Psychoanalysis = the talking cure

Perambulation = the walking cure

Screaming = the squawking cure

Rubbernecking = the gawking cure

Falconing = the hawking cure

Big bowl of pasta = the forking cure

Big slice of ham = the porking cure

## THE 12 STATIONS OF THE CROSS-OVER

- gender tending
- gender lending
- gender pretending
- gender fending
- gender friending
- gender bending
- gender blending
- gender spending
- gender suspending
- gender pending
- gender re-rendering
- gender ending

When it comes to condescending media, talking heads evolved into hawking TEDs.

Potential employer: "Your application letter says that you have a preference for working with Clydesdales."

Me: "That's right."

Potential employer: "But this is a library science, digital humanities position."

Me: "That's right."

I grew up a member of the lumpen-bourgeoisie.

Holistic medicine: burns a hole in your pocket.

Modern medicine: burns a hole in your pocket. And your stomach.

Modern medicine follows the principle of the fabled "woman who swallowed a fly." Each pill is followed or countered by another, with no sense of how these effect the body as a whole. Indeed, you can take several pills hostile to not only the symptom, but the suffering organ.

I'm becoming increasingly intrigued by this neo-Lamarckian idea of genetic memories, phobias, traumas, etc. If this is theory is true, then doesn't that mean humans are the fruit of billions of years of half-remembered strife? That might explain a lot. On the flipside, might we be inheritors of billions of years of discovered, improvised, engineered, and/or serendipitous vague yet encoded pleasures?

## WHICH COMBINATION ARE YOU?\*

### *Option A*

Fiscally  
Culturally  
Aesthetically  
Psychologically  
Sexually  
Socially  
Philosophically  
Politically  
Historically  
Religiously  
Morally  
Artistically  
Emotionally  
Vocationally  
Physically  
Ideologically  
Hygienically  
Diplomatically  
Constitutionally  
Technologically  
Humorally  
Ethically  
Nutritionally  
Gastronomically  
Romantically  
Ethnically

### *Option B*

Conservative  
Liberal  
Socialist  
Futurist  
Episcopalian  
Awkward  
Nimble  
Active  
Fascist  
Agnostic  
Platonic  
Reprehensible  
Forthright  
Challenged  
Bohemian  
Cartesian  
Australian  
Catholic  
Zoroastrian  
Aquarian  
Pagan  
Confucian  
Rastafarian  
Lynchian  
Brechtian  
Contrarian

\* Choose any term from Option A and combine with Option B.

Cathexis is such an incredibly powerful thing. I don't think we've even begun to understand what it is, and what it can do (and what it limits and destroys). We gave it a name. We can map its effects, and even describe some of its mechanics. But we need to pay far more attention to this profoundly enigmatic phenomenon in order to give it the respect it deserves as perhaps *the* major site of intersubjective experience.... That is to say, the spiritual swan dive we can do *into* another person. It's a remarkable thing. And not entirely captured by the word "love."

Perhaps the human dread of death does not stem from our incapacity to fathom what it's like to exist no more — the fear of sheer nothingness — but rather from the truly horrific possibility that we somehow *keep existing*, beyond death, perhaps in just another form, and that there is in fact, not the eventual sweet release into Nirvana, but rather *no end whatsoever* to this merciless existential merry-go-round of birth, rebirth, and suffering.

It has taken me over forty years to truly appreciate Rimbaud's famous words, *Je est un autre* ("I am an other," or, more literally, "I is an other"). The self *truly* is another, who just happens, by virtue of cosmic contingency, to be currently under one's existential — and physical — stewardship. Each individual should be as responsible to their self, as they are to another (or to The Other, as continental philosophers like to say). This is not to flirt with Ayn Rand or any other self-centric paradigm. Rather, it is to *literally* incorporate Levinas, who insisted we prioritize our neighbors needs over our own. But we are also our own neighbor; forced to take up residence in this body, and succumb to auto-hospitality. And so, recognize the other-within-the-self. And look after that person. So that this person may look after others more effectively and compassionately.



*The mirror stage* is that moment an infant recognizes the reflection in the looking glass as their own. This is both solidifying (“That person is me! I must exist, out there, in the world!”), and alienating (“That person is me! But not really. It’s just a reflection of me. But then, where am I? How can I really know myself, except through external simulations of me?”)

*The broken mirror* stage usually comes a couple of years later, when the child learns of death. Not just the death of others, but the inevitable death of the self. (“That reflection in the mirror will one day be gone. But then, where will I be?”) No-one really recovers from this fracture. It is a stage we never pass through; one that is always with us. Until, of course, our reflection disappears.

When it comes to friends and family who have passed away, I prefer not to think of them as dead, but rather as choosing to live in the past now.

Catherine Malabou asks us the crucial unasked question of the age. “What is the brain for?” More to the point, “What is my brain for?” Simply asking this question obliges the brain to see itself in a new light. (Or even to see the contours of itself for the first time.) Just as we are likely to treat our stomachs with more respect after seeing the footage from an endoscopy — and be less inclined to rush to fill it with any garbage our appetite desires — we are more likely to spare our brains the toxic junk regurgitated by our media culture if we have a clear notion of what we want to save it for.

I imagine dying feels like you just popped out to buy some milk. But then it’s suddenly all dark, and a voice is telling you that it’s time to keep moving. Away. Forward. Away. You plead to the invisible presence, “But I just stepped out. I need to go back. I need to say goodbye. I don’t have my wallet or walking

shoes or anything.” And you feel the voice shrugging in the darkness. “I’m afraid it’s too late for that now. You don’t need those things any more.”

“Like sands through the hourglass, so are the days of our lives.” According to new models emerging from the fringes of theoretical physics this is not just a shopworn metaphor but a literal reality. Time is not an arrow, a passage which we pass through, or a river upon which we row, but an accumulation of events and experiences that pile up and up and up, like the inside of an old-fashioned egg timer. In this notion, no moment is ever lost, but rather forms a tiny part of the mountain (or molehill) which makes up our summary existence. While our consciousness can only perceive each grain as it comes (something we call “the present”), our subconscious understands that everything that has ever happened to us continues happening to us; is the nurturing soil all around us; for good or for ill. For some, this thought is liberating, for no memory is truly lost, but just waiting to be accessed again, thanks to some random Madeleine. For others, this idea is horrifying, for precisely the same reason.

The above is also a good ethical guide. For if you admit that part of you will remain within every experience, in an almost material and immediate sense, you will do more to craft a life that avoids places and occasions that dishearten the soul. If you know that part of you will forever tarry in Newark airport, then you will make more of an effort to avoid ever setting foot in Newark airport.

We should all treat the coming days like our last. Since they are. (Whether this be two days or two thousand.)

One day, a middle-aged man decided to make a banana smoothie. As always, he was obliged to hold the lid down with one hand, and cover his ear with the other, because the blender was so loud. (He pressed his other ear into his raised shoulder.) And as always, he counted slowly to ten, at which time the racket of the “iced drink” setting usually stopped, and he was free to drink his smoothie. Only, on this occasion, the mechanism continued, and he stood paralyzed, afraid of the infernal racket of his old blender. It whirred and whirred and whirred, until it was clear it was never going to stop. Some even say the middle-aged man is still there, holding the lid down with one hand, and covering his ear with the other; the banana concoction whipped long ago into oblivion.