

YOUR TELEPHONE BEEN
RINGING WHILE YOU'RE
DANCING IN THE RAIN



The Wild Boys

Your Telephone Been Ringing While You're Dancing in the Rain

This project was made on Yin Country.

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of this continent. We pay respect to Elders past & present. As a non-Indigenous person I acknowledge I was born on Ngunnawal Country.

Credits:

<i>Writing</i>	<i>Sound</i>
Craig Garrett:	Craig Garrett:
Writer, Editor, Researcher, Layout & Design	Sound Design, Research, Scripting & Editing

Images

- Front Cover — Duran Duran/Burroughs Composite by Craig Garrett
Back Cover — Scratched Texture Overlay Composite by Craig Garrett with “refracting”
Photo by Jason Leung (Unsplash)
- Page 2 — Nurse with 1970s Humidicrib. Archival image
Page 3 — Broken Birthday Cake (Unsplash)
Page 4 & 5 — Duran Duran “the wild boys” vinyl packaging (Various — 1985)
Page 6 — Burroughs & Patti Smith *The Wild Boys* CD packaging
Page 7 — REVIEW: *Annihilation* (Jeff VanderMeer) — Book Cover
Page 8 — *Annihilation* film still (2018)
Page 9 — Original Clash Brixton gig flier with “Duran Duran” addition by Craig Garrett
Page 10 & 11 — Duran Duran “Planet Earth” (‘81) & “The Chauffeur” vinyl packaging (‘82)
Page 12 — Duran Duran first five albums (1981–’86) plus “Arena” (‘84) & “Is There Something
I Should Know” Vinyl packaging (‘83)
Page 13 — “Geometric Image” by Jz AmY (Unsplash)
Page 14 & 16 — Duran Duran vinyl packaging (Various 1981–’85)
Page 17 — Old-style tape-to-tape recorder. Archival image
Page 18 & 19 — Burroughs self portraits
Page 20 — The Buggles “Video Killed the Radio Star” broadcast image (1981)
Page 21 — Tanks in Tiananmen Square (1989). Archival image
Page 25 & 26 — REVIEW: *The Ballad of Songbirds & Snakes* and *Sunrise on the Reaping*
(Suzanne Collins) — Book Covers
Page 27 — Pogues/Duran Duran Composite by Craig Garrett
Page 29 — Duran Duran “New Moon on Monday record (1983) plus video still in background
Page 30 — The Pogues “A Pair of Brown Eyes” single cover (1985) & Duran Duran “New
Moon on Monday single cover (‘83)
Page 34 — The Pogues “A Pair of Brown Eyes” record plus Cat Power video still in background
Page 35 — REVIEW: *The Jakarta Method* (Vincent Bevins) — Book Cover
Page 36 — Stylised image of Jakarta skyline (Unsplash)
Page 37 — 1970s recording studio with synthesisers. Archival
image
Page 40 — Jan Svankmajer Film Still (*Alice* 1988)
Page 42 — “Dream” Photo by Dynamic Wang (Unsplash)
Page 43 — *Transition Events* Novel Cover by Craig Garrett

Details

✉ monotrememedia1973@gmail.com

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My Website

Future History: the past is a foreign country; they do things different there

These vignettes are scribbblings, dream diaries, poems and even some bits of my novel *Transition Events*. Spanning some forty years (all written in 2025-26, so as reliable or unreliable as my memory) each vignette is a reflection on my own decades-long insomnia (I used to write in those quiet hours subdued between 10pm & 3am), and my search for a coherent understanding of our world that makes sense. In arguing “no consistent (hi)story exists” I’m not being defeatist. These are questions of knowledge and reality; encyclopaedia and truth; epistemology and ontology. I’m not going to define these. The simple way I remember them is that epistemology asks “How can I interpret this world of which I am part, and what am I to do in it?” Where ontology asks “Which world is this? What is to be done in it? And which of my selves is to do it?” I connect personally with David Lewis’s theory that our world is a subtle and inconsistent non-linear network of competing epistemologies (encyclopaedias elected via the interplay of memory and imagination, facts and ideas) that collide, rupture and break away to re-construct numerous temporary, fluctuating, disjointed and complex Possible Worlds[^] that are always moving, shaping, reshaping and realigning.

Each vignette is a creative response to one part or another of the associated soundscape [see website link on inside cover]. At times these pieces will speak directly to Duran Duran, to William S Burroughs, to memory, or to part of my own creative practice; while at other times they have nothing to do with anything, other than being an alternative snippet into how I was feeling at the time.

A Book of Dreams (or not quite) — Wide Awake Dreaming

The Wild Boys: a book of the dead takes place in a surreal apocalyptic future of global warfare (1988) where a guerrilla gang of boys dedicated to freedom battles the organised armies of repressive police states. According to Alfred Kazin* (*NY Times*, 1971), for Burroughs, the world in the novel is “a reverie, a world forever being reshuffled in the mind, a world that belongs to oneself like the contents of a dream”. My novel *Transition Events* takes place in a hybrid world where waking and dreaming have merged: it’s an inbred mess, a frayed and unstable landscape that endlessly builds, ruptures and re-builds itself. My main characters

Leica and Turtle can’t sleep, but live between Waking and Dreaming; forever existing in a half-place with No Time. When the waking and dreaming merge they are pursued by Dr van Eeden, through a maze-like landscape of disappearing memories, fractured identities, time slips and sleep disorders. Both novels inhabit bizarre worlds of disconnect, and both will undo your brain in the best possible way and leave you reeling (and hopefully begging for more). Dr van Eeden is perusing them on behalf of the repressive Sleep Disorders Centre. He is an alternate version of Burroughs’ Dr Benway.

[^] **Note:** Possible Worlds are also called ‘ontological landscape’ {Pavel}, ‘heterotopia’ {Foucault}, and ‘socially constructed reality’ {Berger & Luckmann}. David Lewis’s book is titled *On the Plurality of Worlds*.

But first...



The aesthetics of birthdays & grief

I'm sure we all have similar touch-and-go stories, and if you add up childhood accidents, the stupid chances we take in our younger years, and the randomness that can strike any time, stopping one day a year to look about and just be, feels right.

May 1973, I arrived four weeks early: induced, tiny, underfed.

When we talk of history and memory, we all have an origin story.

Mine, according to my folks, begins with my heartbeat weakening (and me kinda dying), so the doctors induced; once born, they used tissues as nappies. (This doesn't feel technically correct, but whatever they used were tiny.)

Details are thin, and I'm the eldest, so I imagine my parents were really stressed and so didn't have all the information themselves. From what I gather, the placenta wasn't working (and when this happens growth slows to maintain essential organs: brain, heart, kidneys). The placenta transfers nutrients and oxygen from mum to bub.

Our friend Sally, a nurse and midwife, explained it this way: "Placenta is like an oxygen tank, and if it stops working it's hard to survive." If doctors see a placenta malfunctioning it's often better to deal with the challenges of prematurity than a defective placenta. Sally again: "You'd rather be in a leaky boat than underwater with a faulty tank".



Ever since I've been old enough to wag school — not that I ever did, if any of my nieces and nephews are reading this — I've taken my birthday off. Over the years my celebrations grew from a day, to a few days, to a week. I enjoy exactly where I am and what I'm doing and who I'm with, but that hasn't always been easy.

We lost mum the year I turned 40. That year for my birthday my family crammed into a hospital room with faded blue curtains and catchpenny furniture, and sat around my tiny disappearing mum. What I remember, though, is when she ate some of my birthday cake. It was the only solid food she'd eaten in weeks, and it was an effort for her to swallow. The cancer was everywhere. When she finished the cake she smiled. She did that for us.

I found it difficult to find light in my birthday afterwards, although while living in Meanjin, Shona and I created a tradition of going to Minjerribah (Stradbroke Island) for my birthday each year. And of course there were two lockdown birthdays in London (2020 & 2021) where we made the best of the bad. In 2025 my birthday fell on Mothers Day. When we were kids mum always bought my sister a small present on my birthday, and I got one on hers, but sometimes (obviously Mothers Day) my mum, my nan, my aunties and my sister all got presents as well as me. Somewhat understandably, as a kid I thought that everyone got presents on my birthday — and I was so happy about this! (My memories have it happening more often than it actually did.) Still, losing and then finding that light on that beautiful island in the past helped me reconfigure my birthdays. We had a good day, and I enjoyed seeing the mums (nans, aunties, sisters) all out and about with bunches of kids. In my mind we were all celebrating my birthday.



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DURAN DURAN

PARTHE MARCONI EMI



The aesthetics of nuclear war, warping time & speculative past futures & future histories (or “retro-futures”)

Don't say you're easy on me; you're about as easy as a nuclear war

I remember being terrified of nuclear war (and quicksand, which was everywhere when I was a kid). After seeing the films “The Day After” (1983) and “Threads” (1984) I was convinced there was no point surviving, so I persuaded my mates to agree that if war happened we'd steal a car and drive towards the bomb. That we were 11 and had no idea how to drive wouldn't matter — imminent annihilation meant all bets were off. The people I blamed for the 80's Cold War nuclear terrors hovering over my 10-year-old head were Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. (I was never quite as scared of Gorbachev.) To me Thatcher was really really old (she was a year older than I am now). Her hair, the way she dressed, the way she spoke made me think she'd been the British PM for decades. She was a vampire.

Future histories (and imagined pasts) intrigue me (this includes Burroughs' '88 future, Orwell's '84, Atwood's 2005, Dick's '82, Roth's 1942). It's the way these predicted aesthetics leap from one era to another. I love the idea of “remembering the anticipation of what will come”. By warping time in this way, such histories and futures expose the glitchy fractures of our present (which obviously exhibits ideas that will become a “retro future” at some point). They're like a huge multimedia project where artists of all stripes give us notional alternate histories by imagining futures (and pasts) that never come to pass, but are nonetheless part of our collective memory, because they're written, filmed, photographed, painted, sung. As Burroughs once said, “When you cut into the present, the future leaks out” (Chal Ravens *The Quietus*, 2014).

The camera is the eye of a cruising vulture flying over an area of scrub, rubble and unfinished buildings on the outskirts of Mexico City. Five storey building no walls no stairs ... squatters have set up makeshift houses ... floors are connected by ladders ... dogs bark, chickens cackle, a boy on the roof makes a jack-off gesture as the camera sails past. (Burroughs)



“the wild boys” — a song in four parts: lyrics, music, voice, video

Duran Duran’s “the wild boys” (’84) is a nine-minute film pitch (Australian director Russell Mulcahy {*Razorback*} owned the rights to the novel). Le Bon’s lyrics were based on Mulcahy’s synopsis, and in part draw on the cultural space carved out by 1979’s *Mad Max* (set in ’84). I want to know how roads survive the apocalypse, because where I live it only takes one rainstorm for them all to become potholed. But while the band created an “industrial” musical backdrop (for a pop band) Le Bon’s voice remains contoured and clean throughout, and sounds nothing like Burroughs’ insect voice. Always image conscious — the band used “uncharacteristically rough and ragged outfits” in the video, and always at the forefront of marketing and artifice, the band released the single with six different covers (five individuals and one group image — pure {*evil*} genius). Don’t get me wrong, Burroughs spent as much time crafting his image as Duran Duran did, he says as much after killing his wife (Joan Vollmer) in Mexico: “I am forced to the appalling conclusion that I would never have become a writer but for Joan’s death ... I have had no choice except to write my way out.” (Peter Schjeldahl *The New Yorker*, 2014). He also said, “Shoot the bitch and write a book” (Kate Zambreno “Heroines”, 2012 cited *Lit Hub*). Burroughs erases her — even though she was independently central to the Beats. By making her a footnote in his story, he re-creates the past, cuts into his present, rupturing it, and realigns his future.

Burroughs and Duran Duran were direct-marketing products of the Cold War — albeit “selling” different commodities. Culture and creativity was influenced by a simplistic Cold

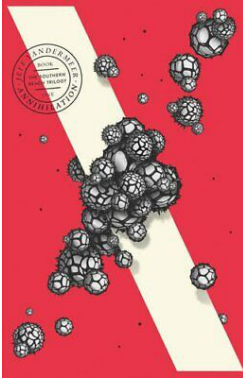
The wild boys are calling
On their way back from the fire
An August moon surrenders
To a dust cloud on the rise
Wild boys fallen far from glory
Reckless and so hungered
On the razor's edge you trail
Because there's murder
By the roadside
In a sore afraid new world
They tried to break us
Looks like they'll try again ...



War “binary” that never existed, but that infected everything. It pushed the ‘80s closer to hedonism than either of the preceding or following decades. So, I guess, with both Thatcher and Reagan as my Don Draper, selling fear and capitalist-democratic-freedom in equal measure I’m also a direct-marketing product of the same paranoias.

In Burroughs’ hands words were hostile and antagonistic — that was never Duran Duran’s shtick. And the band’s aesthetic is nothing like Burroughs’, which was “dim, jerky, grainy — everything turns in on itself”. Burroughs was “formless, dirty, his mind curious but also infected”. *The Wild Boys* “... communicates arbitrary rearrangements Burroughs’ called ‘cutups’. [I like this bit:] Actually, he [was] a cutup who writes in kaleidoscopic shifts, spurts, eruptions and hellzapoppins. Whole scenes collide and break away as if they were stars oscillating and exploding in the telescope of an astronomer who just happens to be gloriously soused.” So, Kazin circles us back to shapeshifting possible worlds[^] and the way they warp time by imagining past futures and future histories. (*All quotes in that bit from Kazin.)

In “the wild boys” Le Bon’s lyrical optimism erases Burroughs’. The song strips the novel’s original meaning, because Burroughs’ texts are as much about the Texture and the Structure as they are the Words. Change the aesthetic and you change the texture, moderate the structure and meaning is erased, or at least it becomes something else altogether. In the early ‘80s the band was described as “futurist”. Both song and video draw on the existential post-apocalyptic Cold War fears of the time, but deletes them as well. Which, in a way is what good pop music does — it’s fun, throwaway, in the moment. “the wild boys” sounds like a fairy-tale and looks more like a fashion shoot than the world articulated in *The Wild Boys*. I wonder if this hints at a historical deafness (Duran Duran were in their 20s at the time — I know I was deaf, forgetful and ignorant in my 20s), a want to forget, or a literary ignorance. Or is “the wild boys” the logical cultural end point of Burroughs’ cut up experiments, an embodiment of alternate history itself, a complex and intra-active “unexpected outcome”? “the wild boys” exists out of time: created in ‘84 in London on a sound stage by a Birmingham band, with lyrics based on a North American book published in ‘71 (written piecemeal some time earlier) that imagines a future 1988 (that never happens), from the perspective of a queer 1950s murderer drug addict.



Review

Annihilation

Publisher: Farrar, Straus & Giroux
(2014)

Author: Jeff VanderMeer.
www.jeffvandermeer.com

Winner (Best Novel) 2014:
Nebula Award & Shirley Jackson Award

Yeah, I hadn't heard of Jeff VanderMeer either. But when Adam suggested I read *Annihilation* — because it reminded him of my novel *Transition Events*: weird, strange, dark — I was intrigued. Part of my excitement was that I didn't know what to expect.

Annihilation follows a team of four who set out into Area X, the novel's bizarre otherworldly place where time, memory, desire, even biology are all altered, distorted and contorted. Imagine if the character *Piranesi* (*Piranesi* — Clarke) meets Baum's *Dorothy* (*The Wizard of Oz*) while following Okri's Azaro (*Famished Road*). When the team comes across The Tower, up is literally down (and vice versa). They work for the Southern Reach — the real world of the novel (the world most like ours) — which is the government department responsible for monitoring Area X, similar to the FBI's X-Files Unit (the "X-Files"). Now, Area X is changing shape and expanding and no

one knows why; the border is shrouded and the only way in is through a narrow "opening"; and teams are hypnotised when crossing so so they forget, because the experience is so traumatic. Very few explorers make it back out, and for those who do, they're not quite the same as before, they're changed and broken in unquantifiable ways. *Annihilation* details the 13th expedition. So there's a bit going on and the stakes are high.

The novel's a page turner and well-written, but its disquiet stirs discomfort. And stirs is the right word here, because, like Burroughs' *Interzone* (*Naked Lunch*), Kathy Acker's "Haiti" (*Kathy Goes to Haiti*) or Borges' "Tlön" (from *Labyrinths*), there's an erasure and re-drawing of places (real or imagined) that implies there's something bizarre and odd hiding under the surface that hints at... winks at... suggests ... that the "something" is worse than we imagine. Allegory or satire — the distinctions



“We all live in a kind of continuous dream,” I told him. “When we wake, it is because something, some event, some pinprick even, disturbs the edges of what we’ve taken as reality.”

between real, imagined, unknown, alien or foreign are arbitrary, so who’s to say where one ends and the other begins?

The novel’s pay off is that the foreign or alien world of Area X eventually, somehow (but not always) begins feeling more real than the cold harsh “reality” of the Southern Reach, which is secretive and obscure; Area X is organic in a way the Southern Reach is not. Not so much opposites but different sides of the same mirror. Area X may be opaque, it may be “other”, and it is definitely dangerous, at least the characters know it’s coming for them. This inversion allows VanderMeer to overlay a tangle of askew, strange and possible worlds into an off-putting, and at

times creepy, place where no one’s too sure about anything — including the reader.

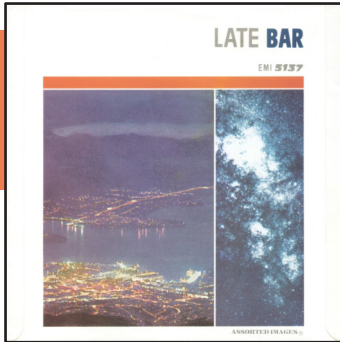
I know it won’t be for everyone, but *Annihilation* is part of a lineage of writing about travelling to places, zones or worlds that reveal themselves to be weirder than imagined. At times VanderMeer invokes Calvino, Swift, Atwood and Carroll. It’s the first of four Southern Reach Series books, which includes *Authority* (2014), *Acceptance* (2014) and *Absolution* (2024) — and in that light, it reminded me of episodes of “Black Mirror” and “Severance” (TV), *eXistenZ* (film), and “Alice Isn’t Dead” (podcast). It’s also a 2018 horror/sci film starring Natalie Portman, Oscar Isaac and Jennifer Jason Leigh.



The aesthetics of
culture & memory
(short & long) as
meaning & context:
the things we lose &
the things we keep.
Or:
How I didn't really
understand time

Memory languishes somewhere deep in us, right? And at times it comes and goes. And sometimes it rushes back with such force that we can't control what, how or when we remember.

I remember thinking that once a song left the charts it was gone. I was 10 or 11. I couldn't get my head around how such delicate artefacts as songs *could* persist beyond the here and now, even if musicians wanted them to. I had trouble understanding the durability of time. (And I still can't quite get my head around time moving in all directions, everywhere all at once.) Obviously I owned cassette tapes and LPs so I knew the physical persevered, but the immediacy of the songs intoxicated me, they made anything possible (in time I've realised I absorb emotions like a sponge, which is what I was getting from all these songs). But when I held the plastic and vinyl, listened to the music at home, the songs weren't there — this was different to hearing them on the radio or seeing them on the tv (I hadn't been to a gig yet). I couldn't let *songs* — *songs!*, of all things — become everyday objects like our broken toaster or a coffee cup. Music felt hypodermic to me (still does); and at the time triggered all manner of emotions (still does, but now it triggers memories in much the same way smell does). I understood *why* artists create such bundles of intoxicating emotion in the first place, but I didn't get why they'd put all that work into something *so* fleeting and untethered, *so* vulnerable and discontinuous.

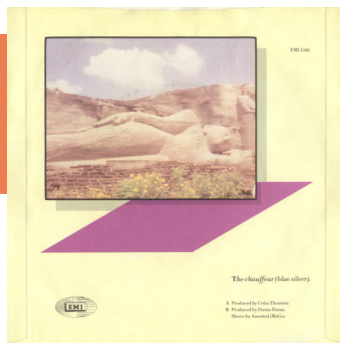


“There are various areas of memory” (Burroughs)

I saw the Violent Femmes in 1992. I was 19, and they spoke directly to me and articulated everything I was feeling. They *were* the 90s. (I found out later that their first four albums are from the ‘80s.) To misquote Karen Barad, “... Phenomena are diffraction patterns of ‘mattering’ dispersed across differently entangled spaces and times: *spacetime-matterings*.” (from *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*) Barad calls this an “Agential Realist Ontology”^^ and contextualises individuals as existing within and because of an ever-expanding set of “complex relational interactions between phenomena, which is an ongoing intra-active reconfiguring”. The notion of “intra-action” challenges causality, agency, space-time, meaning and knowing. There’s no historical causation, because there is no “correct” history. It’s not about “looking back” at the only way it *could* have played out. That way of thinking would be like looking forward and believing that there is only one possible trajectory. Our world is simultaneously utopian and implausible; dystopian and the best possible world there is. The *Violent Femmes* (self-titled album) was released the same year as *Seven and the Ragged Tiger* (‘83). What if I’d heard “Blister in the Sun” before hearing “The Reflex”, would anything be different? Probably not, because time is not a series of causes and effects. I could have heard both, neither, one, the other — we’d still be here, right?

Pop songs are immediate moments of consumption. They can only *occur* once; but they are proliferations of histories, times, futures, pasts. Pop occupies the same complex set of “intra-actional” landscapes, times, relationships and terrains as RockPunkBluesDanceReggaeJazzFunkGrunge ... (A pop song is most powerful when the first time you hear it, you’re convinced you’ve heard before. “Lighting in a bottle” stuff.) Pop songs are erasure and reinvention, and are at their best when they *don’t* stand out. (They are — like all pop culture — “cognitive estrangement”). Duran Duran understood this. They’re savvy. They curated and manipulated both image and sound expertly: to this day they shape and reshape themselves, realigning time and time again. Watching interviews from the height of their fame I’m taken by how young they were — or at least how young they look to me now — but also by how funny they are. And while they’ve clearly never taken fame itself too seriously (they enjoy it for what it is) they’ve always taken their music seriously. While others were trying to tie them down to a bunch of short-lived fads, they were moving, creating, re-creating.

“Careless Memories” (Duran Duran)



Duran Duran are, at times, darker than I remember. “Tel Aviv” is a sprawling five-minute instrumental rounding out *Duran Duran*; “New Religion” (5min33sec) is a “dialogue between the ego and alter ego” (Rio liner notes); and “The Seventh Stranger” (5min22sec) is said to be inspired by Chapter 26 of Voltaire’s *Candide* and Kurosawa’s *Seven Samurai* films. Then again, in an interview at the time Le Bon also says *Seven and the Ragged Tiger* is “an adventure story about a commando team. The seven is us — five band members and two managers — and the Ragged Tiger is success.” So who knows.

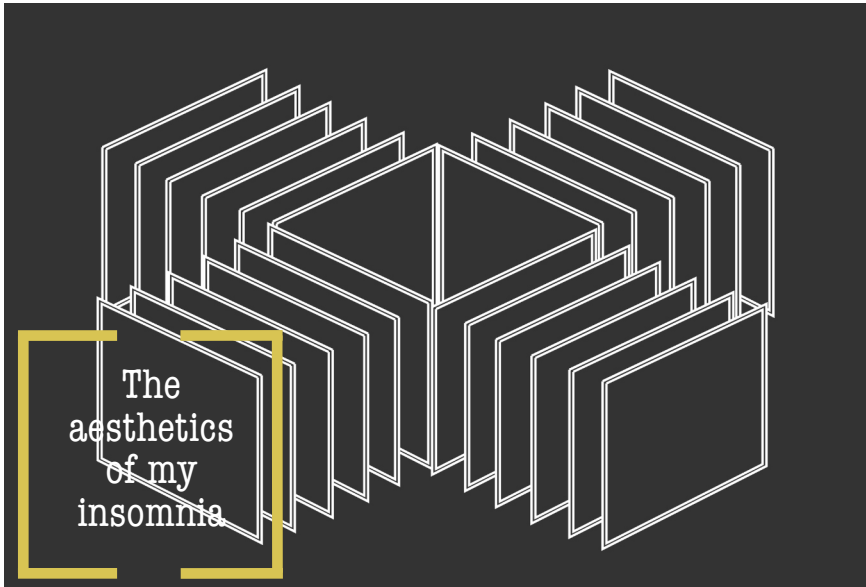
They grew from Birmingham’s club scene; in many ways never left. All the UK clubs had video screens at the time, and the band saw the opportunities presented by MTV (launched in ‘81). So while mainstream media got short pop songs and “clean” videos, the clubs got extended remixes and “night versions” of the videos. The “Girls on Film” and “The Chauffeur (blue silver)” iterations of the “night versions” feature naked women acting erotic, but the narratives are so flimsy that it all just looks gross and weird (if not downright stupid). In 1978 Angela Carter wrote *The Sadeian Woman and the Ideology of Pornography*. In it she states, “Picasso liked cutting up women”: those videos *should absolutely be* contentious, because there’s no context and the women are cut out of any sense of story. There’s a lot of misogyny in Duran Duran’s ‘80s videos (to be fair, misogyny’s all over the ‘80s & ‘90s), and the “Hungry Like the Wolf” video is just weird-arsed Colonial shit. But Duran Duran’s darker side is also exemplified by how expertly they manicured “controversy” — clearly any costs surrounding the “Girls on Film” and “The Chauffeur” videos at the time were outweighed by the commercial benefits — and how over the past 40 or so years other [alleged] controversies have all been manicured, curated, shape shifted, even erased from the band’s history (colloquial & official) in order to realign their futures. At each turn, the band embodied exactly the role and character they needed to play. They were and continue to be chameleons.

I don’t remember the Violent Femmes from the ‘80s, but that’s precisely where they’re from. It’s not that time didn’t matter to me, it just didn’t figure in my calculations. I didn’t consider that the Femmes *could* have existed in any other way than when I found them. In the end does it really matter that the Femmes *are* the ‘80s? (Or are they?) This was/is my education in how songs (language discourse culture) *do* persist, *how* memory coalesces to become both context and meaning; and *how* that coalescing itself challenges the notion

of linear time. Cutting up “spacetime matters”: artefacts events time — and assigning them separate finite actions or existences, where history is comprised of “time’s-arrow-causes-and-effects” is deceptive. Think Miley Cyrus covering “Jolene”; Jeff Buckley’s “Hallelujah”; Gary Jules and Michael Andrews’ “Mad World”; Concrete Blonde’s “Tomorrow Wendy” (which pre-empts the original); Johnny Cash’s “Hurt”; Whitney Houston’s “I Will Always Love You”; Sinead O’Connor’s “nothing compares 2 u”; Nirvana’s “The Man Who Sold the World”... these artists made these songs their own, and as much as we might like to think that music genres or “decades” are discrete outcomes of the circumstances that preceded them, this type of thinking weakens, deforms and warps our understanding of the complex nature of our pasts and futures.

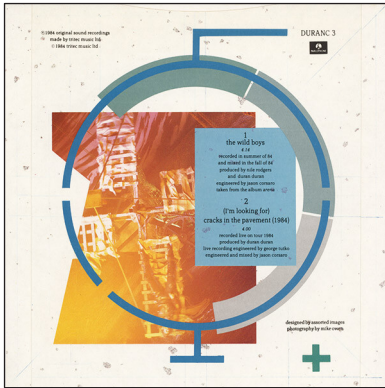
^^ Notes: **1)** *Agential Realist Ontology* is also known as *ethico-onto-epistemology*, which is an entanglement of what is usually taken to be the separate considerations of *ethics, ontology, and epistemology*. **2)** Recently, scientists have suggested that time is emergent, meaning it isn't a fundamental property of the universe but rather a complex phenomenon arising from the interactions of more basic process, giving it a “deeper origin”.





If we assume for a moment that language is a virus, then humans are the vectors. Language as control artifice. The history of language is the virus of control.

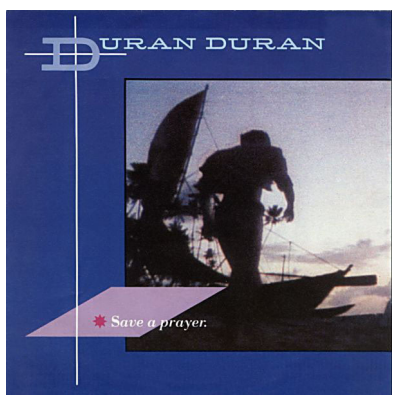
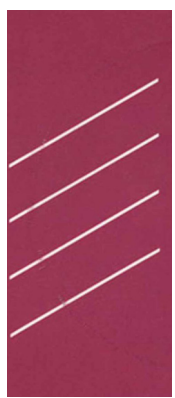
I can't explain the way insomnia addles me. I'm a light sleeper — some noise wakes me almost every night — and I still have times where I don't sleep at all. I remember, it all started in '86, aged 13. I tried everything: going to bed the same time each night, drinking warm milk, "counting sheep", white noise (in summer I put a fan in my room). Nothing worked. My worry kicked in around dusk. (I now know this was anxiety.) Every night I plunged into the dark and the weird. And with so many of my jumbled thoughts and memories crashing in on top of me and on each other, the only thing that was clear was that I *had* to sleep. But I couldn't. And the more I *had* to, the more I couldn't, and the more I couldn't the worse my thoughts got and the harder it became to even think of what sleep was. The more I tried, the less I did. I forgot how to sleep. I'd check the time over and over; so I got rid of my clock radio, and eventually my watch as well. (Still don't wear a watch.) Frustration led to agitation, over concern, restlessness, more frustration, sobbing. I'd lie on my stomach and kick and hit my mattress to try and excise my anger and fear. Exhausted and spent, I'd maybe fall asleep at about 5am — if I was lucky, but then have to get up at 7am to get ready for school. This brief sleep was never peaceful. Another lost night and another day of fatigue-induced aching. Every part of my body ached all the time. How I learned anything at all at school?



DURAN
 DURAN



My memory was shot most of the time and I had to work hard to focus. My stomach played up so much and I felt so nauseous that I couldn't eat anything until midday. On the weekends I'd "catch up" by sleeping until mid afternoon each day. All my teenage years were like sleepwalking though a washed out and restless Dream-Wake world punctuated by fatigue, insomnia and curious dreams that, dull at their edges and obtuse and fractured, created No Time. (I feel like these years were weird rather than "traumatic".) Looking back, my memories of those teenage years have softened, they don't seem so bad now, but I know I found them excruciating — emotionally and physically. From about 15 I drank. Pot didn't work. The bizarre hallucinations from mushrooms and acid were fun. And the first time I had amphetamines all my bodily pain disappeared. I remember having bouts of recurring dreams over the years that are weird, mysterious, self-contradictory. I've even tried documenting them. Here's a tangle of three: one where I'm flying — not lucid, I've never been able to control dreams; one premonitory, where I find out friends die way too young; and one where I'm fleeing, beside myself with terror — and even though I know what happens, I can't stop it and I can't change it. But I always wake up when the bullet rips into me:



For years I wondered why dreams are so often dull when related, and this morning I find the answer, which is very simple – like most answers, you have always known it: No context... like a stuffed animal set on the floor of a bank. (Burroughs)



I

I am manoeuvring. Over a tenuous maze of. Connected dreams, flimsy and Volatile. A fragile balance: Waking and Dreaming

Darkness interrupted is darkness exploded. Flashes of Breathing. visions, careless emotions,

Stroke heart attack aneurysm . Not Awake. Not Asleep.

I fall. Through misty-wet tentacles . Surrounded by disconnected babbling. I behold circling

Look down upon Unhindered valleys. Carved ancient rivers. solitude. silence. I sit with.

Conversations from below. Fragments. voices. Woven preciously. Using . warps to hold everything together.

I rise above the grounded amalgamated . utterances.. A navigator. mountains

Surrounded by deceptions. On closer inspection they're Dying dreams. Entombed.

Dying dreams. Becoming Hopeless nightmares.

All I know is dream. (Dying dreams.)

The dream is over.

II

I become smitten with Lake.
A storm builds. I jump. Fall? Into the Lake. Pushed through the water by the. Jagged.
wind. The water underneath Churns. Stained black.
Black. in my eyes. stained black. Let it take me. Let myself drown. feel.
The water. unthought. granted time and anti-time.
A once silver fish is now.
Bobbing. Black . Oxygen . Tannin-water tarnish. Catfish.
black depths . They migrate.
I'm floating. paprika and saffron. A trail of Jellyfish.
White flux. Drifting periphery.
The shore is upon me. conscious land? subconscious water? the littoral.
Black waves break . leave no mark. Wash in. Wash out.
A party. A Fire. Ale. Wine. People from my past. present. future. I am synapses. bones.
flesh. Unconcealed. I warm near the fire. I ask after Kate.
“She is dead”, somebody says.
“Where have you all come from?” I ask.
“The same place you have.”
The dream is over.

III

Running. dampness in my bones shadows cast by Rain falls .
Rain falls Rushing to get away. The water. Laments.
dipsomaniacs, I run on.
My pursuer. I hide. in a doorway. I crouch. close my eyes:
If I can't see them, they can't see me.
A feverish. discontent. Painful.
I have been found. A shot.
I wake with a jolt, an inhale
I can't breathe.
And I won't get back to
Sleep.



I never found out what made you leave.
And now the day's over, just an hour to go.
I tried to phone last night but you never
answered. Just left me ringing on the line...
Outside... Is there anyone out there?...
Anyone else outside? (Duran Duran)

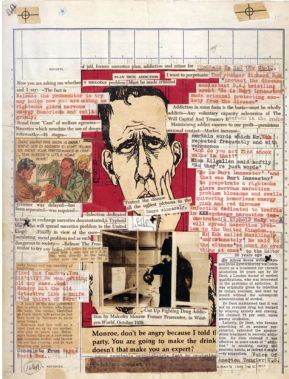


The aesthetics of The
Aesthetics Of “I”:
“intra-actions”
& “strange loops”;
false binaries;
& alternative realities

The world we are part of is but one of a plurality of worlds, and that we who inhabit this world are only a few out of all the inhabitants of all the worlds
(David Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds*)

Novels can be empirical fact or brazen lie, but, as cultural deliberations, they re-present the world, reconfigure our mental landscape, and are sophisticated forms of storytelling that contain literary, cultural, historical and social knowledges without reducing the text to mere representation. (That bit’s from my MA.) As text-based illustrations of sustained, gradual and cyclical speculation, and “perception–cognition–intuition” processes (see Barad below), novels embody innovations that are both reflections on the artefact itself and the knowledges contained within. The relationships of elements within a system show how their intra-actions give rise to collective emergent behaviours of larger and more complex systems, and how that system then forms part of ever more complex relationships with other systems, that then lead to unexpected outcomes.

In this sense, Burroughs clearly understood that novels are whole complex systems (letters, words, sentences, grammar...) that give rise to larger and more complex systems (characters, narratives, genres, literatures, critiques...) that form ever more complex interactive and intra-active relationships (artefacts, meanings, cultural & social tropes...) — thus locating novels (as knotty and tangled artefacts themselves) in relation to all other complex systems (histories, epistemologies, ontologies, worlds, possible worlds...).



Now let us ask the question
“What invention could blast the
writer out of sequential
narrative?” — click turn on the
recorder — click — play back —
now the author disappears into
the tape recorder ...
(Burroughs)* *

When you blow out a candle the smoke rises evenly at first, then starts tumbling upwards. The tumbling is “emergent behaviour” created by turbulence, which isn’t directly predictable from the initial conditions. We encounter similar complex systems every day: flickering flames, fragrance drifting through a room, waves on a shore. When smooth flow breaks into turbulence, eddies create eddies, with each movement impacting the others, becoming exponentially more complex.

It is the relationships between the ways in which the structures and organisations of complex systems interact — the ways they are ‘laid’, ‘placed’ or ‘arranged’ together — that lead to new understandings. For example, for many writers text *is* structure. Calvino, for one, offers: “Structure is an integral part of meaning ... for me, without structural integrity, work simply isn’t complete... Part of the creative process is linking the purpose with the design, and different structures are needed for different purposes...” But here’s Kazin with a different angle. (He feels as skeptical as he was impressed): “Burroughs is indeed a ... considerable writer. But his books are not really books, they are compositions... subjective experiences brought into the world for the hell of it and by the excitement of whatever happens to be present in Burroughs’ consciousness when he writes.” Burroughs’ writing is interpolation. He shifts between “narrative levels” and consciousnesses interchangeably. (Also known as “Strange loops” or “Irreal worlds”.) In fiction such repeated shifts, which may or may not lead back to the original level (e.g. *Alice in Wonderland*), allow nested paradoxes and alternate realities to exist together, including time loops; time moving backwards; private and shared hallucinations; hallucinations within hallucinations; false binaries; and alternate, dual and fake realities. (I grabbed this from George Melrod for my MA.) He composes non-linear interactions that are chaotic, contradictory and unpredictable. His lack of Structure is Texture. Words don’t have meaning beyond their function, which is the creative process, and that process could be and mean anything. He takes us into strange loops but never brings us out again, because he instinctively understood, or had a “gut feeling”, that reality is a series of complex systems that are intra-active and relational, so in that context “the I” can’t exist. He even says as much in his 1979 Naropa University lecture. Burroughs talks about Brion Gysin “[E]liminating the omniscient author... by lifting the montage technique from visual art and applying it to writing. The whole space we call ‘I’, our whole reality concept,



139

William S. Burroughs

American (19174-1997)

Self Portrait - "Burroughs"

silkscreen, #8/18

15 x 22 1/2 in. (38 x 57 cm)

Lot is closed

Sold: CA\$260.00

Estimate: CA\$300 - CA\$500

which is a moving film of associations and memories is as much of an illusion as the voice of God... both constructs are simply recordings... The whole screen we think of as 'reality' may suddenly go blank: this is the way the world ends, not with a bang but with a click..." (Descartes said something about this: the "Cartesian cut".)

For this piece, I tried writing it as one long-read essay — at no time did it work. It wasn't until I cannibalised Structures from two of my other self-published zines that I came up with my own version of a "cut-up". Each Text in this piecemeal piece is completely separate, and I don't mind if they relate to each other or not.

In Agential Realist Ontology "Individuals' do not pre-exist... but rather materialise in intra-action... intra-action goes to the question of the making of differences of 'individuals', rather than assuming independent or prior existence. 'Individuals' do not exist, but are not individually determinate [either]... 'individuals' only exist within phenomena (particular materialised/materialising relations) in their ongoing iteratively intra-active reconfiguring... So the very question of what is or isn't an 'individual' is not a clear and distinct matter." In other words, in our current understanding of the universe, there is no way to predict the shape that "emergent behaviour" will take. And such behaviour is everywhere. (Barad.)

If we think of *The Wild Boys* as a montage of illusory intra-active sketches, notes, hallucinations, dreams, recordings, behaviours... and if we think of Burroughs as not existing as a single whole, but as a cutup (as Kazin said) of many constituent parts — then *The Wild Boys* is a dimension of compositional fragments "[that] are 'laid', 'placed', 'arranged' in sites so very different from one another that it is impossible to find a place of [common] residence for them." (I stole that from Foucault's *The Order of Things* — also from my MA). Burroughs' writing is speculation embodied: he's imagining what form language takes (as a complex system itself) when untethered from "the I". "His attempt is to relocate writer and reader at new thresholds to language and experience" (*New Statesman and Society*). This allows the text to re-construct the novel itself; re-position or erase "I"; and re-define reality (through strange loops; distorted time; private and shared hallucinations; hallucinations within hallucinations; false binaries; and alternate, dual and fake possible worlds). The behaviour of individual parts is less important than how whole complex systems adapt. *The Wild Boys* as a novel is a mirage, and so is Burroughs.



The aesthetics of get in, get out, be quick, be gone

“Video Killed the Radio Star” (1979) was the first film clip played on MTV in the US (12.01am, Aug 1, 1981). It was directed by Russell Mulcahy. In ‘86 They Might Be Giants’ “Put Your Hand Inside the Puppet Head” became the first independent video on MTV (cost US\$1,500). “the wild boys” was among the most expensive music videos ever made at the time (~£1million) and won “Best British Video” at the 1985 BRIT Awards. Morgan Richter wrote, “It’s extravagant and bonkers.” Mulcahy’s style was described by the Warner Bros Music Chief as, “Everything but the kitchen sink and more”. Seems apt.

Mulcahy shot ten videos for Duran Duran, and worked with Culture Club, the Human League, the Stranglers, XTC, the Sex Pistols, the Saints, AC/DC and Paul McCartney (among others). In those days, videos were “grab what you got; do what you can; get in, get out; be quick and be gone”. He also directed *Razorback* in ‘84 (wild boar eats people); *Highlander* in ‘86 (full soundtrack by Queen); and the frankly bizarre 1984 “Sing Blue Silver” Duran Duran tour documentary *Arena (An Absurd Notion)*. He was everywhere, trying everything, fearless, and more often than not his videos are frenetic. The 80s were a time when video was, if not killing the radio star, changing pop music in a significant way.

Mulcahy’s nine-minute “the wild boys” video gave Duran Duran a slick product, and let him leverage the band’s international profile to enhance the legitimacy of his film pitch. *The Wild Boys* film was never made — yet another unfulfilled future history. This may be a good thing, because I’m not sure where he’d’ve taken it, given my qualms about the video clip’s “fashion shoot” aesthetics. Also, Cronenberg’s *Naked Lunch* (1991) — if anyone’s in step with Burroughs it’s him — and I do love that film, but Mulcahy’s no Cronenberg. Maybe such a comparison is unfair. I saw *Naked Lunch* in ‘92. Judy Davis and Roy Schneider are standouts. Roger Ebert (*Chicago Sun-Times*) wrote: “While I admired it in an abstract way, I felt repelled by the material on a visceral level. There is so much dryness, death and despair here, in a life spinning itself out with no joy.” Which is Burroughs’ point. He made himself into a shell so he could re-configure himself at will: I, thou, he, it, she, we, you (f), you (m), & they...

So could video *really* have ever come even close to maybe even possibly killing the radio star? (Or did podcasts kill the radio star?) The day before Nirvana recorded their MTV Unplugged album (Nov 18, 1993), Duran Duran recorded theirs. How many steps between New Romantic and Grunge? Well, Burroughs reaches out across the years, like a fever dream, from St Louis to Birmingham to NYC, and cloaks both bands. “Spacetimematterings” are entanglements without historical causation; particles *are* waves; and pop may well eat itself, but at least the courses will be delicious.



The aesthetics of power

I remember shitting myself — figuratively. I'd been called out of class to the Principal's Office (Mr Thomas), without explanation. Now I'm sitting in the front foyer, right near reception, waiting. Mr Thomas' Office is down the poorly-lit corridor to my right, which is always cold — even in summer. There are some other offices coming off the corridor as well, and right at the other end is sick bay. The foyer is always a weird quiet that's not really quiet, but not noisy — I don't know — and it's always hot and cold at the same time. Anyway, it's a Thursday in July in winter in Canberra in 1989 and I'm in Grade 10 (which is hurtling along).

Back in those days Canberra High used “runners”. Every Grade 7 kid spends a day delivering messages to all parts of the school for the receptionists. There's a desk over by the window. The kid sitting there now won't look at me, and he's pretending to do school work. “Running” was supposed to familiarise us with the school's layout, but all I remember was going into classrooms to deliver the messages and having every pair of eyes stare daggers at me — even the teacher's. And I don't know if I ended up knowing the layout of the school any better, anyways. Maybe that system works more for some than others.

Perhaps what is needed is a politics of possibilities: ways of responsibly imagining and intervening in the configurations of power, that is, intra-actively reconfiguring spacetime-matter. (Barad)

Some 15 minutes after I first arrived Mr Somerville (my Social Studies teacher) emerges from the corridor. He explains that my parents have been called and we'll be meeting with Mr Thomas, directly, to talk about my behaviour during class. I like Somerville. I thought we got on well. An old-school experienced teacher: "Tough but fair", as they say, but right now his tone is so controlled and clipped that he sounds furious. He doesn't wait for my answer, and all I can do is watch after him as he strides down the corridor and into one of the offices. I'd been confused about why I was here, but now I was uneasy; not so much about what I'd done, but more that it seems excessive to me to call my folks and get the principal involved.

We'd been discussing the Tiananmen Square protests (June 3, 1989) in class for the past few weeks. (We obviously don't know it, but the Berlin Wall will "fall" in four months.) Earlier today Mr Somerville was running late, so I suggested it'd be funny if we all sat up on our desks. We did. When he came in, he laughed, he was casual, he rolled with it. He'd seen things like this before. He was persuasive, reasonable, nice. He humoured us, then told us we'd had our fun and told us to sit back down. It was bit by bit: a couple of people sat down first, then more, then it was only me and Nicky left on the desks. I tried persuading people to get back on the desks. Implored them not to do what he said. They didn't. He asked both of us politely one final time. We remained. He sighed, then taught the class regardless. Nothing was said as we left for next period.

I'd say Somerville leaves me sitting (and stewing) for close to an hour (felt like five). I split my focus between looking down the corridor at the principal's office, and staring at the front door waiting for my parents to arrive: I can't really see through the tinted glass on the windows and front doors, so every time they open I steel myself, readying for my parents' dissatisfaction to burst in with the gusts of bitter cold winter air that precede everyone coming inside. I'm jumpy; the crappy chair I'm sat in gets more and more uncomfortable; the foyer smells stale; I'm sweating but I'm not hot. Everything is turning over and over again and again in my mind; I'm wheeling off on tangents and worrying about a host of things I hadn't considered before. I'm trying to figure out how to explain what happened without sounding stupid. I don't have any reasons. This could be more serious than I first thought. I was so underprepared that I left my bag and books in the classroom, but since I've been here I've seen two class changes, so who knows where my stuff is now. (I did find my bag, intact; it had been dumped in the back corner of the classroom.)

When Somerville comes back out and orders me into Thomas' office I stand: I'm equal parts stiff and sore, and uncomfortable, and worked up. When I find Thomas' office empty I add relieved and confused on top of everything else.

"Sit," Somerville says.

The limitless process of capital accumulation needs the political structure of so “unlimited a Power” that it can protect growing property by constantly growing more powerful (Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*)

I do.

He walks around and sits behind the desk. *[This isn't right.]* “Your parents haven't been called,” he says.

I sigh relief.

“And Mr Thomas is at an inter-school meeting.” *[We didn't do our “research”. But, then, how could we have known that?]* Mr Somerville's tone is still controlled but not as clipped; he no longer sounds furious. He's back to the tough but fair teacher I've always thought him to be. “We won't be taking any further action.”

Another sigh.

Then he gets really serious and says that it wasn't appropriate behaviour for me to bully my classmates to try and make them stay sitting up on the desks, but he'll leave that at a warning. I apologise. I can't remember having ever been this relieved about anything at school before. *[I did this to myself. Not the actual sitting on the desk, that's not serious at all, but I made this serious in my mind while I was waiting in the foyer.]*

He explains that he understands what we were doing. Then he breaks down our strategy, what we got right and where we went wrong. He says we caught him by surprise in the beginning and had him rattled. *[I hadn't noticed, “You hid it well,” I said]* And that initially he was stalling so he could figure out a plan. He explains that in the early confusion, Nicky and I should have galvanised and pushed for something, but the longer the “non-negotiations” went on the more he figured out that we weren't all equally committed and there was little prior organisation. *[Which was correct.]* He explains how he “divided and conquered”, by being reasonable and funny and remaining calm. He explains that he knew he'd “won” when I tried to make my classmates stay on the desks. I became an “authority figure” by imposing my will, and that's when I lost them. From there, he guessed (correctly) that he didn't need to negotiate; in fact he didn't need to do anything. Leaving only two of us on the desks was fine. *[I was beginning to understand that, within the “school system”, I had no power to begin with.]* He explains that he gets that it was opportune, but in a larger context, in the “real world” we needed to develop plans B, C, D, E with our other classmates — to keep them on our side; and plans F, G, H, I to negotiate with him. *[We didn't strategise. We didn't think ahead.]* He explains that by not getting off the desks he *felt* like we'd backed him into a corner, and so *felt* like he *had* to “bring out the big guns”. *[We didn't adapt — I'm not sure we had the capacity to, it was off the cuff.]* He explains he had the power and authority of the whole school system of rules and policies behind him, so used it. We needed to be able to negotiate. *[In breaking down what we did right and wrong and in giving suggestions for how we could have done better; by being logical, reasonable and calm; and by acting sympathetic to our plight... I didn't realise how thoroughly*

manipulated I was being.] He says not to tell anyone about our conversation; asks me to pretend I'm in a lot of trouble; asks that I tell everyone that I'm being put on probation — like being on bail. He explains he's playing the same “joke” on Nicky that he just played on me, and then the three of us will make all the other kids who initially sat on the desks stew over the weekend. (We don't have another class until Monday.)

And I fucking agree to all of that. *[What the Fuck, dude. Come on! Not cool. (And To this day I don't know what he said to Nicky because we never talked about it.)]*

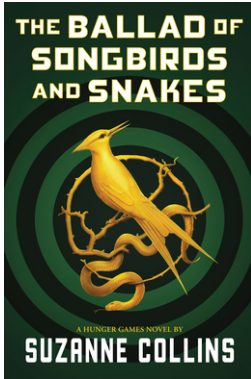
Mr Somerville's running late on Monday morning. I can't help but think this is on purpose. A test? First class of the day. When he arrives we're all in our seats. He smiles. At first he repeats what he told me about being able to negotiate, having multiple plans and giving the people with more “power” a way to “save face”. I thought we'd then talk about the way the three of us manipulated everyone else. But Mr Somerville spends the rest of the class explaining how he co-opted and manoeuvre both of us to work against the rest of them. *[We obviously weren't a crack team of radicals or rebels; we buckled so very easily.]* He explains how he called us out of class to separate and isolate us; threatened us with harsher punishments; then left us to stew so we'd work ourselves up into a “tizz”. Then in our heightened state he exhibited empathy to get us on side, so by the time he suggested playing a “joke” on everyone else we were primed. He got us to do to them what he'd just done to us. *[I remember feeling so embarrassed about how easily I'd been manipulated, played, co-opted, and how I agreed to work against my “co-conspirators”, leaving them to stew for an entire weekend when Somerville had only tormented me for an hour or so.]* He explains how we could have said no to his suggested “joke” because he'd already told us he wasn't pursuing “punishment”. We were already off the hook. But then he says that we couldn't trust that he wouldn't arbitrarily change his mind anyway, because he'd been so fickle in our dealings up to that point, so we *had* to agree. But we should have said no.

This is how power works. Potentially, this is also how trauma works.

We may understand power as a “linear” or a “symmetrical” hierarchy, but overt “power” is always asymmetrical. A more accurate representation of how power manifests is as a covert intra-active entanglement. Barad again: “... The politics of economy and the politics of identity are inseparable from the structural and ideological workings of power. [T]hese *entangled practices* are ‘productive’, and who and what are excluded [or included] matter.”

Mr Somerville's point was that my “power” was illusion all along. At the time I saw power as a narrow and linear symmetrical system, which benefited Mr Somerville by “keeping me in line” from the beginning. In not thinking in terms of multi-directional relational processes I challenged nothing and was easily out played, subdued and then co-opted.

As a class we discussed the Tiananmen Square protests on and off for the rest of the year, and how disciplined the protesters must have been, and how they must have had multiple negotiation strategies, and escape plans. They understood the dangers and risks, and the nature of the hierarchical system. I remember Mr Somerville clearly telling us how much in awe he was of their bravery. We all were.



Review

The Ballad of Songbirds & Snakes and *Sunrise on the Reaping*

Publisher:
Scholastic (2020 & 2025)

Author:
Suzanne Collins

www.hungergames.com

www.scholastic.com.au

I feel like The Hunger Games Series incorporates aspects of *The Handmaid's Tale*, *Series 7*, "Squid Games", *1984*, *The Matrix* and "The Lottery" (Shirley Jackson, 1948) in one. The annual Hunger Games is set in a dystopian "future", where the 12 Districts of Panem "give" two child tributes to the Capitol, and those children are caged in an arena where they fight to the death in a reality-tv-show-blood-fest titled "The Hunger Games". The Games are payment, penalty, remembrance and social control.

The Ballad of Songbirds & Snakes focusses on the 10th Hunger Games, while *Sunrise on the Reaping* covers the 50th Games. *Ballad...* is ostensibly President Snow's origin story, while *Sunrise...* is Haymitch Abernathy's. Too often recently we've been fed redundant origin stories (MCU & DC), but these books are different, and deftly provide new information and deeper insights into people and events that occur later on, and they work equally well as stand-alone instalments. Importantly, they do not "explain everything" (I'm looking at

you, *Star Wars* Universe midichlorians). So it comes as no surprise that surviving the 50th Hunger Games messes Haymitch up so much that by the time we meet him again as Katniss and Peeta's mentor in the 74th Hunger Games he's empty. There are two or three lines — subtle — in *Sunrise...* that are heartbreaking. *Ballad...* doesn't quite hold the same nuance, but it does chart the evolution of the Games themselves.

The Iranian film *Offside* (2006) exposed Iran's layers of oppression. The film is about women and girls who try to sneak into a football match, but are arrested, put in a cage on the stadium roof where they can hear the crowd but can't see the action, and are guarded by conscripted soldiers. (Women are banned from live football in Iran.) We find out through conversations that most of the soldiers don't agree with the ban, national service or the arrests, and don't care whether women watch football or not. But they guard the group carefully



Are you, are you
Coming to the tree
Where I told you to run, so we'd both be free.
Strange things did happen here
No stranger would it be
If we met up at midnight in the hanging tree.

because their commanding officer could come by at any time.

From the highly capitalistic hedonism of the Capitol (where it's so expensive to live) to the poverty of the districts (where often it's a daily fight to live), everyone in The Hunger Games Universe, outside of a small elite, is oppressed — whether they know it or not. Collins' intricate world of Panem is comprehensive, complex and contradictory. She describes a system of surveillance

(actual & perceived) where individuals, under the assumption of being constantly watched, “self-regulate” their behaviour. The Series lays bare the inner workings of power by illustrating how elite classes deploy strategies of control; in doing so, these books encourage readers to question what our systems of “power” mean day-to-day for the people who are disadvantaged by those very systems. Think the UK's National Public Order Intelligence Unit;

“Nothing appears more surprising to those who consider human affairs with a philosophical eye, than the easiness with which the many are governed by the few...” — David Hume.

the US's ICE; Israel's Mossad; Indonesia's D88; or East Germany's Stasi. Whatever forms control and oppression take, they are unrelenting and insidious. The one issue I have with the books — I can't remember where I read this — is that the dictatorship is presented fully formed, and so they actually normalise institutional violence

without showing us what early-stage authoritarianism looks like or where other points of resistance can (and should) take place. With this in mind, my take away is that it's the “small” moments of empathy, compassion and understanding in our lives *are* defiance, and in the end, that's what enduring resistance has to look like.



The science of music (or the aesthetics of erasure, memory & time)

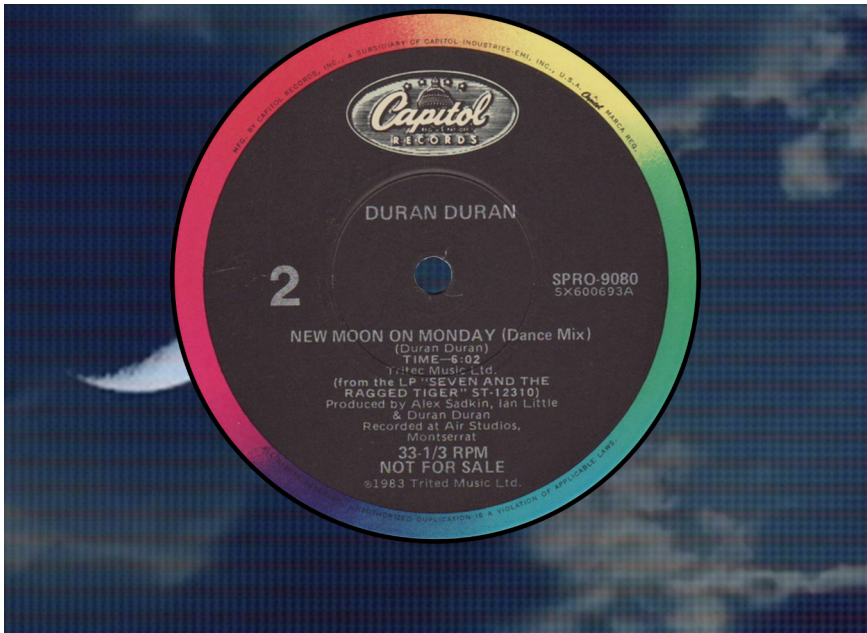
I remember that as a mid-to-late teenager I had a restlessness that was equal parts despair, anger and joy that I just couldn't fathom nor contain. I used to walk down the street and suddenly feel sad or angry or confused or happy, and that still happens sometimes; pretty much everything hit me with the same intoxicating hypersensitivity, including music. I thought it was just teenage hormones, but over time I've realised I absorb emotions like a sponge. Music is hypodermic, memory is a layered and multi-directional, and nostalgia (as a form of musical memory) is a complex, self-relevant and pancultural set of emotions.

To elaborate: "Musical memory is segmented into two broad levels: (1) *musical syntactical structure memory*: comprised of rules related to melody, rhythm, syntax, etc...; and (2) *contextual associates memory*: comprised of elements of music that contribute to episodic memory traces, emotion and reward (Sarah Hennessy, *National Library of Medicine* website, 2025). So when we hear a piece of music for the first time it interacts with our minds, bodies, emotions, memory, imagination, even hormones, leaving us in a heightened state. In fact, "Brain imaging studies show that our favourite songs stimulate the brain's pleasure circuit, which releases an influx of dopamine, serotonin, oxytocin, and other neurochemicals that make us feel good. The more we like a song, the more we get treated to neurochemical bliss, flooding our brains with some of the same neurotransmitters that cocaine chases after" (Mark Joseph Stern, *Slate* 2014). It is in this heightened state where music holds disproportionate power, increasing the likelihood it will be distinctively encoded into memory (past & future) because it's not just one thing interacting with one other thing, it's relational, which makes it an effective cue or trigger for *feeling* "all the feels" (my term) years later (Kelly Jakubowski in *The Conversation*, 2023). People are complex systems. Such nostalgia is called "music-evoked

autobiographical memory” (MEAM), and is involuntary. Stern continues, “... Our brains neurologically and psychologically bind us to the music we hear as teenagers more tightly than anything we hear as adults.” (*Slate* 2014.) And this connection doesn’t weaken with age, which indicates MEAM isn’t *only* a cultural phenomenon. Music captures our attention in ways no other cultural artefact can. No matter how broad or “sophisticated” our tastes might otherwise grow to be, “... our brains stay jammed on those songs [of any genre] we first heard or obsessed over during adolescence.” Music’s a time machine and accompanies us from our pasts to our presents to our futures because it’s always in the now.

I remember hearing of the band Pop Will Eat Itself in the early ‘90s (they formed in ‘81 up Birmingham way). I took the name to heart and became uneasy that pop music would turn in on itself to form a black hole of nothingness where the ensuing event horizon would mean there’d be no point making music anymore. Now, I wasn’t listening to PWEL, and I wasn’t really listening to “pop music” at the time, either, but this idea crawled in under my skin. (I think I saw some of their videos on “Rage”.) I’m not sure why this bugged me so, and to be clear I wasn’t overly invested, and it wasn’t an existential crisis, but I did ponder. Maybe any critical filter I may have had was only partly developed, so new ideas overwhelmed my critiques. Then again, looking back, I had a pretty broad personal definition of “pop”. I’ve often thought that the Pixies’ *Doolittle* is one of the best pop albums ever: 15 songs, 39 minutes. Maybe such definitions are moot. Reading about the birth of punk as an emergent alternative ‘70s counterculture, the style itself has more in common with “pop” than “alternative” music from the time, where bands experimented with immersive 15-, 20-, 76-minute songs; whereas punk is three minutes of *intense*. Unless you’re the Ramones, in which case songs are 38 seconds of *intense*. (Some of these ideas taken from Greil Marcus’ *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the 20th Century*: 1989, which I read some time back in the ‘90s).

Music’s neurological and psychological relationship with our emotions increases the likelihood that it will be in our memory alongside details of “important” life events, but then the music itself, just by being there, can make those events stand out and “feel” more poignant. It’s the relationship itself that serves as the cue years after the initial event (idea taken from Jakubowski). That’s why even bad songs evoke feelings. I don’t *want* to be listening to 1980s Duran Duran in my 50s — but I *am*. And I’m experiencing strong feelings of nostalgia. According to Natasha Hoare (*The White Review*), “LP Hartley’s immortal line in *The Go-Between*: ‘The past is a foreign country; they do things different there’ ... Wistfully condenses the problems inherent to memory and history. Distant, intangible, unreliable, lost, our histories, at the level of personal and national, are at best half-remembered and at worst actively misrepresented.” I’m thinking about “New Moon on Monday” (Duran Duran, ‘83) and “A Pair of Brown Eyes” (The Pogues — my fav band, ‘85). By the time I find the Pogues at 17 I haven’t listened to Duran Duran for four years. While that may not sound important, at the time it was *a quarter* of my life, and how my tastes shifted is significant. And, obviously, it’s not just me, these shifts at these points are significant for all of us.



As cultural artefacts about 1980s UK these videos are oddly similar, but their differences are telling. Even the colour palettes are alike. “New Moon on Monday” depicts “mainstream pop icons” (my definition) Duran Duran as central members of an underground resistance movement organising against a “modern” totalitarian regime in France. It’s retro future (aesthetics & histories leaping across eras): there are satellites; 1980s-era computers; but also 1950s-style cars and horses and carts. Alongside 1980s-era CGI. (And why not set it in Northern Ireland — where there was an ongoing civil war?). “A Pair of Brown Eyes” is set in a UK police state, with Margaret Thatcher iconography akin to 1984’s Big Brother. And while The Pogues — “fringe dwelling punk-folk first-generation Irish musician-migrants” (my definition as well) — have cameos, they aren’t protagonists. Both video and song for “A Pair of Brown Eyes” embed political analysis, with the video acting as a cautionary tale about a non-democratic 1980s present and the possibility of an even darker and less democratic future (say 2026?). Clearly the individual videos reflect the experiences and realities of both bands and wholly sum up each band’s relationship to themselves and to the UK: “New Moon on Monday” is escapist fantasy, while “A Pair of Brown Eyes” is political critique. Duran Duran: the consummate insiders — even when or if they’re not; the Pogues: always the outsiders. I do find it a little strange to think about these two bands inhabiting the same universe and time. I found each at such different times in my life, and they mean such contrasting things to me.

New Moon on Monday

Shake up the picture the lizard mixture
With your dance on the eventide
You got me coming up with answers
All of which I deny

I said it again
But could I please rephrase it
Maybe I can catch a ride
I couldn't really put it much plainer
But I'll wait 'til you decide
Send me your warning siren
As if I could ever hide

Last time La Luna
I light my torch and wave it for the...

Chorus

New moon on Monday
And a fire dance through the night
I stayed the cold day with a lonely satellite

Breaking away with the beast of both worlds
A smile that you can't disguise
Every minute I keep finding
Clues that you leave behind
Save me from these reminders
As if I'd forget tonight

This time La Luna
I light my torch and wave it for the...

Chorus (X6)



A Pair of Brown Eyes

One summer evening drunk to hell
I sat there nearly lifeless
An old man in the corner sang
Where the water lilies grow
And on the jukebox Johnny sang
About a thing called love
And it's how are you kid and what's your name
And how would you bloody know?

In blood and death 'neath a screaming sky
I lay down on the ground
And the arms and legs of other men
Were scattered all around
Some cursed, some prayed,
Some prayed then cursed
Then prayed and bled some more
And the only thing that I could see
Was a pair of brown eyes
That was looking at me
But when we got back, labeled parts:
One two three
There was no pair of brown eyes
Waiting for me

And a rovin', a rovin', a rovin' I'll go
For a pair of brown eyes

I looked at him he looked at me
All I could do was hate him
While Ray and Philomena sang
Of my elusive dream

I saw the streams, the rolling hills
Where his brown eyes were waiting
And I thought about a pair of brown eyes
That waited once for me

So drunk to hell I left the place
Sometimes crawling sometimes walking
A hungry sound came across the breeze
So I gave the walls a talking
And I heard the sounds of long ago
From the old canal
And the birds were whistling in the trees
Where the wind was gently laughing

And a rovin', a rovin', a rovin' I'll go (X3)
For a pair of brown eyes (X2)

In “A Pair of Brown Eyes” MacGowan cites Johnny Cash’s cover of Jerry Reed’s “A Thing Called Love”; Ray Lynam and Philomena Begley’s “My Elusive Dreams” — both Country songs; and “Where the Water Lilies Grow”, written in the early 1900s (Richard A Whiting). Songs from his past accompany him into his present (our past) and his future (our present) so he can build worlds. MacGowan does this his entire career. His words, like Burroughs, draw on history, politics, literature... but MacGowan is significantly more lyrical, poetic and optimistic (I know we don’t always think of him thus, but he is a big softy romantic, who’s also less grisly and growly than he had us believe — but not always). MacGowan is an actor, writer, comedian, poet who used MEAM to connect feelings across histories. Burroughs, however, cuts history up, re-contextualising it, pushing himself into the future without caring for connection or feeling. He explains: “The Word of course is one of the most powerful instruments of control... Now if you start cutting these up and rearranging them you are breaking down the control system” (Daniel Odier in *The Job*, 1970). He’s the opposite of MacGowan. In contrast, in Le Bon’s hands words are unthreatening; he is straightforward, in comparison to the other two, and despite penning somewhat abstract lyrics at times (I remember *Smash Hits* called them “surreal” once) he also ignores history and politics altogether by flagrantly making shit up (no judgment here). Le Bon is more similar to Burroughs than MacGowan.

If we take “New Moon on Monday” and “the wild boys” (songs+videos) as two parts of one whole, we see Duran Duran develop and refine its use of “authenticity” to polish Burroughs’ gritty weird violent text for mainstream consumption. Given the original *The Wild Boys*... Text, the “apocalypse” portrayed in Duran Duran’s “the wild boys” looks like a runway fashion shoot (it was filmed on the *A View to a Kill* James Bond film sound stage), and the clean lines and manicured shabbiness exude folly. Looking back at this from 2026 — early-’80s Duran Duran’s undefined future — there’s a logical, discerning timelessness chronology to those first four studio albums. Yes, they are “of their time”, but Duran Duran’s individual and collective aesthetic, to this day, refuses to turn in on itself. Both videos seem equally clumsy now, but “the wild boys” (’84), while it makes no sense, draws on 1982’s “Thriller” and is a more developed piece of theatre (non-narrative storytelling) than “New Moon on Monday”, which tries way too hard to look cool. “the wild boys” is turbulent motion reversed: it takes Burroughs’ tumultuousness and smooths it out into a “laminar” flow, with each impacting movement, becoming exponentially less culturally complex in and of itself, but still adding to the band’s layers of social and cultural complexities across times and histories. They cut up Burroughs beyond recognition and then cut him out altogether (same as Burroughs & Joan; Picasso & Dora; Orwell & Eileen; Kerouac & Edie; Pollock & Lee ... you get it).

A lot of bands use such “authenticity” as a shtick, but Duran Duran’s credibility lay in the fact that they “didn’t stand for anything” (no judgment). They looked like you could take them home to meet your mum. They can be Here There Everywhere. In the same way they were, indeed, scarlet pimpernels — in the words of The Kinks they were also “well respected men about town”. As Paul Morley (*Guardian*) says, “They have a gift for empty spectacle ... they made grand, escapist music reflected in escapist videos ... Duran Duran are publicity, marketing, fabricated history and the celebration of success”. Even “New

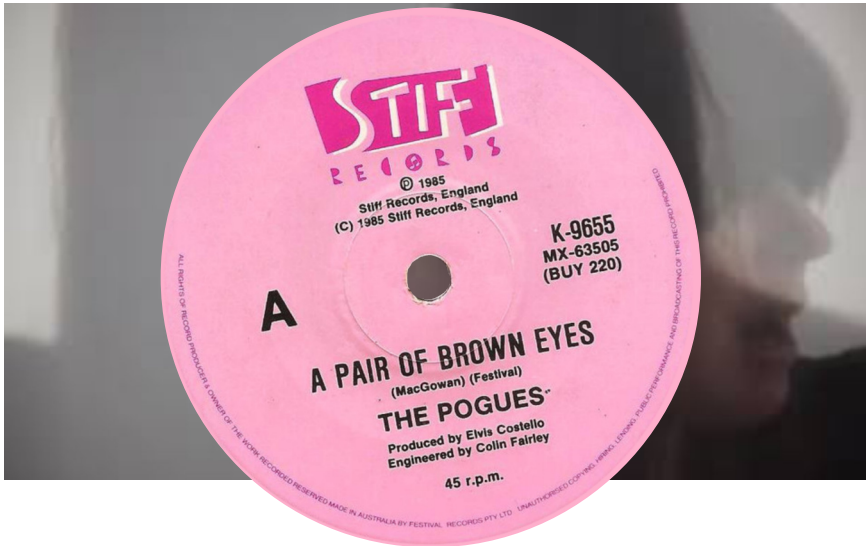
Romantic” is a grey area, described as “... both a reaction to, and a progression of, the previous punk and new wave movements”. It’s fuzzy: it was flamboyant, glamorous, and merged futuristic and “pirate” fashion styles; it was escapist, rejecting punk’s anti-glamor but drew on punk’s nihilism; it embraced the excesses of the ‘80s; and it was linked to the British club scene that bloomed from the “youth culture” of the ‘60s and ‘70s as it migrated into bars and discos, including The Hacienda and Rum Runner, among others (see [Museum of Youth Culture](#)). The band’s “hesitation to commit” is pure pop. Early-’80s Duran Duran are chameleons, they could do no wrong. The band is a juggernaut at the peak of its powers and at the height of its fame. Everything they did was authentic, because Duran Duran “committed to” and “stood for” nothing. The band embraced the decade that saw the absolute commodification of music. More than that, they pioneered different music marketing techniques through their look, their videos and their multi-packaging. (Pure *evil* genius.) And while these processes weren’t invented in the ‘80s and didn’t start there, by the end of ‘89 (to be randomly precise), the project was close to done (I blame U2, but have no evidence; it’s just a feeling). This coincided with smaller music labels being gobbled up by multimedia corporations. In a pre-internet pre-social media world, this type of “analogue” cross-promotion was key. For example, Warner Bros. began putting songs into promotional trailers on their VHS tapes in the mid- to late-’80s — this was standard by the mid-’90s. Such corporations ended up owing everything from the bands, the equipment in the recording studios, to the retail outlets we bought our music from, to the players we used at home to listen to the music, to the commercial radio stations that took their lead from and fed back into “the charts”. Total linear vertical integration. Mulcahy himself understood this maybe better than most, given “the wild boys” doubles as a film pitch. So, again, by ‘89, save for a brief burp out of Seattle in the early 90s, pop music was totally reconfigured as branding.

Then everything changed (again). Linear frameworks of corporate ownership, music, media, information dissemination, power structures, and even art and memory, have been disrupted in various ways by different technologies; and they are, for the most part, as we of a certain age understood them, gone. For music this happened when recording, storing and listening “devices” (computers, “ipods”, mp3 players, the internet, platforms like Napster) weren’t controlled by those monolithic multimedia corporations anymore. These changes didn’t occur in one linelike movement, but by groups of interconnected *ad hoc* decisions made by governments, bands, coders, investors, solo musicians, CEOs, artists, programmers, consumers and political activists (to name a few) — in short, everyone. Sometimes these process can be a little hard to see when we’re still in them, so Barad again (page 251): “Agency and causality are not on-off affairs ... the nature of change changes from a rolling unraveling stasis into a dynamism that operates at an entirely different level of ‘existence’, where ‘existence’ ... evolves in space and time [to become an iteration] of *spacetime mattering*”. In other words, we know instinctively that music is complex and a fully relational *Spacetime mattering*. MEAM creates multi-way subconscious connections, which is why it plays such a strong role in creating the past, and then reconnecting us with it in the present (time travel). Here’s Stern, again: “Between the ages of 12 and 22, our brains undergo rapid neurological development — and the music we love in that decade seems to get wired into our lobes for good. When we make neural connections to a song, we also create a strong memory trace that becomes

laden with heightened emotion, thanks partly to a surfeit of pubertal growth hormones. These hormones tell our brains that *everything* is incredibly important..." (Slate, 2014). If memory is a layered, multi-directional **process**, where memory and imagination rely on a shared neural and psychological network of relationships and functional operations that also includes emotions, feelings, learning, planning, etc..., then fundamental changes to "how we do those things" logically impact the outcomes of the interactions of those things as well. *What happens to **memory** when technology changes the fundamental ways we create music?* I understand that music's mutations have always been reflected in technologies over time, because it's a virus-like technology (just like language & writing) with change in-built. It's the confluence we're seeing now that's salient. *What happens to **memory** when technology changes the fundamental ways we listen to music?* The technological changes to music creation and distribution (a global multi-directional relational "**digital disruption**") also directly change the way we record, document and understand our world (media, truth, archiving, museums, storytelling, galleries). *What happens to **music** when technology changes the fundamental neurological, psychological and emotional processes that create **memory**?* The memory-music-memory loop is complexity theory embodied. *So what happens to memory when technology changes all the different ways we interact with the world and make **memories**?*

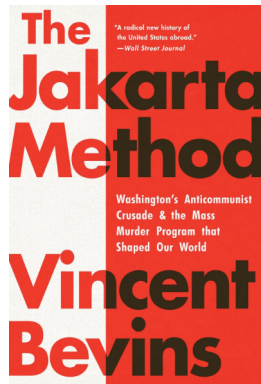
What we feel or assert to be true... depends as much on our imagination as our senses... (The neuroscientist Gerald M. Edelman often speaks of perceiving as "creating", & remembering as "recreating" or "recategorising".) Frequently, our only truth is narrative truth, the stories we tell each other, and ourselves — the stories we continually recategorise and refine. Such subjectivity is built into the very nature of memory, and follows from its basis and mechanisms in the human brain (Oliver Sacks, "Speak Memory", New York Times, 2013).

On top of this, nostalgia is also layered and multi-directional, and it works in a few different ways: as Deception, Comfort and Response. Deception forms a defence, so people can avoid historical facts, and materialises as a longing to return to a specific time frozen in the past (e.g. "feeling nostalgic" generally holds an uncritical view or stance). It works as a Comfort, where re-living positive past memories may contribute to positive mental health (e.g. focussing only on "good" memories can have positive physiological impacts in the now). And finally, it works as an individual or group Response to social, cultural or technological change, where perceived disruption produces feelings of uncertainty and dislocation (e.g. as a way to restore a sense of continuity and stability to the "now", rather than being a simple desire to "return to the past"). Nostalgia is triggered by *something* reminding us of some aspect of our past, and the resulting emotions range from misery to happiness. The mere Texture of music can catapult us back in time. So if music's a time machine, then memory too contains some of those same properties; but maybe more so, memory is a singularity.



The Deception in the “New Moon On Monday” video is that it outsources the UK’s authoritarianism. The whole thing is a delusion that belies the final scene where the band is somewhat happily dancing and singing while surrounded by fires, protesters and looters: it feels counter-intuitively optimistic. (To be fair, Duran Duran is on record saying this is their least favourite video clip.) There’s a Comfort in us all thinking that Authoritarianism occurs somewhere else. It’s so important to recognise these “shifts in perception”, these lies, these “alternate truths” for what they are; especially when, right now, Liberal Democracy (for what it’s worth as the “least bad form of government”) is in retreat: Authoritarianism marches again. We *are* in the darkest timeline. At the same time, deliberately, there’s a melancholy to “A Pair of Brown Eyes” that contradicts the final scene where everyone is skipping down a lane through the English/Irish/Welsh/Scottish countryside: it feels pragmatically resigned. There’s a nostalgia in MacGowan’s lyrics, but for a time not represented in either song or video. The opposite of “New Moon On Monday”. The video for “A Pair of Brown Eyes” makes its political point by recognising shifts in perception, lies and alternate truths for what they really represent by inventing an England that captures the UK’s expansionist military & colonial history and Thatcher’s 1980s austerity regime. The UK in the Pogues’ video is an “alien space within a familiar space: incompatible worlds intertwined” (from my MA). Democracy retreats while Authoritarianism marches. Between the two, the videos represent specific aspects of the “geopolitical paranoia” of the time, serving as fallible representations of the mid-20th Century past (as seen from the mid-1980s), and are also — another 40 years on — unreliable representations of each band’s then-present; that is, our late-20th Century 1980s past.

Here’s a critical theorist whose phd is on the connection between neoliberalism, capitalism, nostalgia and the rise of the far right. <https://www.instagram.com/louisamunchtheory/>



Review

The Jakarta Method: Washington's anti-communist crusade and the mass murder program that shaped our world

Publisher:

Hachette (2021)

Author: Vincent Bevins

www.vincentbevins.com

I lived in the newly independent nation of Timor-Leste for three years in the early 00s, and during my time there, somewhat unexpectedly, given the history of the two nations, I fell in love with Indonesia (unsurprisingly I also fell in love with Timor-Leste). Like many Australians, I knew little about the sprawling archipelago of 17,000 of islands and 200 million people we call Indonesia, even though our histories have been entwined for millennia.

The Jakarta Method is an old-school crackly wireless broadcast coming at us directly from the past; in it Bevins expertly weaves personal stories (from academics, survivors & perpetrators); insider accounts (details of backroom CIA deals & the thwarted

dreams of independence fighters); and geopolitical realities to deliver a tightly written work. It would be easy for the book to focus on “big issues” or the “spectacular”, but Bevins is a master storyteller, so it’s a human book detailing local injustices that were perpetrated on an international scale and his gentle touch injects hope into stories that could easily become abstract. Bevins anchors the reader to the personal realities of those on the ground who were impacted.

The Jakarta Method illustrates how seemingly disparate uprisings, coups, invasions and mass murders across continents and countries (1950s—1980s) were in fact a system of covert operations

The United States, a Western European settler colony in North America emerged from WWII as by far the most powerful state on Earth. This was a surprise to most Americans, and to most of the world.

deployed during the Cold War by the US, under the guise of “anti-communism”. In reality this pretence masked the US’s pursuit of an “American First” policy, where the same tactics were used on any foreign government that looked like it might

threaten US interests (political, military or corporate), not just so-called “communists”.

It isn’t always an easy read, but it’s important because the global re-ordering that took place in the latter half of the 20th Century reverberates today. As Bevins



states, the Cold War was a tactical “response to the global circumstances under which the vast majority of the world’s countries moved from direct colonial rule to... a new global economic system” (p 239). Today’s globalism — that sees any social reform as a threat and allows for the free movement of capital but not people — is a direct result of those tactics and actions. At the time there were numerous paths and economic systems on offer to those countries, and leaders like Sukarno, Nehru and Lumumba articulated alternatives. *The Jakarta Method* details how those possibilities were squashed.

As part of recent historical writing that foregrounds lesser known narratives, *The Jakarta Method*’s siblings include Daniel Yergin’s *The Prize: the epic quest for oil money and power* (1990); Michael Cathcart’s *Water Dreamers: the remarkable history of our dry continent* (2010); Bruce Pascoe’s *Dark Emu* (2014); and Anna Funder’s *Wifedom: Mrs Orwell’s invisible life* (2024). *The Prize* recasts 200 years of war, and all the fake justifications, in terms of the control of oil. *The Water Dreamers* re-evaluates the

colonisation of the Australian continent as a desperate search for water, rather than “brave exploration”. *Dark Emu* challenges the “hunter-gatherer” myth and disproves the colonial fictions that justify dispossession. And *Wifedom* explores the little-documented life of Eileen O’Shaughnessy, her literary contributions to Orwell’s work, and how her brilliance was crucial to his success. (1984 was released into Cold War 1949.) In *The Jakarta Method* Bevins recasts “communist” paranoia as an “America First” policy, where “... Washington’s Cold War interventions, from US-backed mass murder in Indonesia to military coups in Latin America, re-shape life in the entire ‘developing or third world’ to this day” (p 239). This book doesn’t shy away from complexities, and the result is a challenging read. In saying that, the book ends on a hopeful note (I know, hard to do.) It doesn’t try for a faux neat ending. At its heart *The Jakarta Method* is about resistance, optimism and the belief that a better world is possible. (I know, hard to do.)

You might also be interested in: *The Act of Killing and The Look of Silence* (Joshua Oppenheimer documentaries — intense); the “Cigarette Girl” series (Netflix); the Buru Quartet series of books (Pramoedya Ananta Toer — history of colonial Indonesia); *The Year of Living Dangerously* (both book & film are brilliant) and “Cool People Who Did Cool Stuff” (history podcast). Anna Funder’s *Stasiland* is also brilliant.



The aesthetics of music (or the science of nostalgia, technology, erasure & time

I remember the day my niece was born: early winter, sunny, abnormally warm (which is reflected in the historical records stating it was the second-warmest Canberra June ever, and the warmest start to a winter since 1957), and yet, it was still freezing to me — I was 35 and my newborn niece was the cutest thing ever in the history of ever. (No bias here.) I mention this because my niece nicely sits in the “Fisher-Healy Zone” (a term I just made up) — I’ll explain. The 1975 frontman Matty Healy has a take on some of this music, memory, nostalgia stuff. Not exactly, but same ball park. Now, I know nothing about him beyond his interview on the *Doom Scroll* vodcast. Citing Mark Fisher (cultural theorist) in this interview, Healy suggests (to paraphrase), “If you took a piece of music from the fringes of the ‘90s back 30 years — Aphex Twin, say — they’d be stunned by how ‘un-relatable’ the music is.” [I’m not sure if he’s speaking about everyone or just musicians.] But, he says, “If you took a similar piece of [‘fringe’] music from “now” (his 2024) back 30 years, they’d be struck by how relatable and ‘not different’ it is.” Healy

Only came outside to watch the nightfall with the rain
I heard you making patterns rhyme
Like some new romantic looking for the TV sound
You'll see I'm right some other time ...
Look now, look all around, there's no sign of life
Voices, another sound, can you hear me now?
(Opening lines to "Planet Earth")

suggests that when innovation happens in music now, it's either to software, or it prioritises the back-end digital distribution, rather than the physical instruments or music creation. Take that as you will. Here I think about all those bands in the mid-to-late '70s who took their synthesisers apart to make new sounds and noises, they had wires and cables running all over the studios, and how in the '80s and '90s bunches of bands put the synths back together and refined their playing techniques. (No judgment from me, I'm not a musician, just different approaches to getting innovative sounds out of the same machines.) He goes on to suggest this is because of creative stagnation, commercialisation, neoliberal economics, the erosion of arts funding... [this all ramped up in the '80s], and how as our societies have moved from analogue to digital we've seen physical technology and associated innovations disappear. Take all of that as you will. But, the internet — as much as I love it, I also hate today's version of it in so many ways — finished that job. I feel like songs on Spotify are just pieces of a brand Marketing Mix for the "Spotify" product. (*I* don't use Spotify; this is *my* feeling; but *I* have no evidence — so I blame U2 again.)

In his liner notes to *The Complete Stone Roses* John Harris writes "... To realise that there **were** days when playing it [*The Stone Roses* album] over and over **did** seem like the only thing to do... When Sgt Pepper was released, some entirely reasonable zealots had special pockets sown into their clothes so they would never be without it. There were people who felt the same way [about *The Stone Roses*]. Harris' piece has *all the nostalgia*: at publication (1995), it dripped with nostalgia for the '60s, for '80s Manchester and for the early-90s UK music scene. Reading it now, it's still a potent portent for the '90s culture I remember from my teenage years.

My niece is now in her late teens, and has for about the last five years, regularly listened to music through bluetooth headphones connected to her phone (I had a cassette Walkman). When I ask her what she's listening to she says she's on shuffle, so doesn't know (it may also be that she doesn't want to tell me, which is valid), but she seems genuine when she says she doesn't know the song, artist or album. (Even 12-year-old me was all about that trifecta. I remember believing that if Arcadia's "Election Day" ('85) had've had a "bigger" name behind it, like Duran Duran, on an album like *Seven and the Ragged Tiger* it would've been a bigger hit. When I told my mate Jason this, who was also a Duran Duran fan, he didn't think so. I asked why. He said he didn't think it was a very good song. I never even considered that. (It peaked at 13 in Australia; 7 in the UK; and 6 in the US charts.) My niece is so different from me at her age.

My niece doesn't seem concerned that an algorithm chooses her songs. I see her buying into a concealed and obscure coded system she can't see or influence and will never own or understand. An algorithm, that has tentacles that influences and impacts every other online interaction she has. (This happens to all of us, I know, she just happens to have grown up with it.) Is my niece's buying into an algorithm any more or less of a commodity than someone buying an LP or CD and sewing a new pocket into their clothes? As a teenager I **remember** buying music "knowing" what I was buying into, but I knew nothing about multinational corporation ownership structures; recording deals or distribution contracts; program directors and record label influence; market research, radio playlists, DJ constraints or label promotions; I'd never even seen a profit & loss statement. And then there's nostalgia for the "old songs": radio stations understand that people of a certain age have more purchasing power. Linear vertical integration. According to theorist Louisa Munch: "Nostalgia is a story about the past that is dubiously untrue. And when this story is more "exciting" than the future, it's time to worry" ("Nostalgia is a story of betrayal and its cringe ending": *Medium*). That's a whole system for creating "hits".

So was I really that self-aware? Yeah, looking back. I don't think so either. That was just hubris. So is my niece's generation's **music** experience *that* different? Will they feel the same "nostalgia" for the music in their playlists (in 30 years) as I do for all the songs I listened to on cassette tapes, CDs and on the radio all those years ago? (I never owned vinyl because I'd scratch it as soon as look at it). Science says they will feel the same. History shows that music technology has forever changed. Psychology indicates that music itself remains complex, and that MEAM creates multi-way subconscious connections via the conscious act of listening, not by knowing albums, artists, songs. But I have to say that at least I owned the tapes and CDs, right. (I've got drawers of them in the little downstairs room we call "the burrow".) Once I bought them they were discrete and that decision wasn't out there online impacting all the other things I see, hear or read. My music purchases back then didn't define what TV suggestions I was given and what accounts pop up in my feed, as they do now. And how do we know that me knowing the albums, artists and songs didn't somehow reinforce the subconscious connections of my listening, and make my musical memory stronger?

Then again, potentially all of this is moot. My niece's "teenage years" are roughly 2021-2027, whereas mine were 1986-1992. Everything's "different" to me now only because I remember 30 years ago ("like it was yesterday" — not really), but memory condenses time, right. Which means my niece's today is exactly the same as my today was "back then". As I said, it was immediate, now, hypodermic (I'm not even sure if my niece experiences music in the same way I did/do). It may not mean as much to her. It might mean the same. But still, I can't help thinking about what happens to **memory** when technology changes the processes that create **memory**?

Also, that bit at the beginning: *I remember the day my niece was born: early winter, sunny, abnormally warm (which is reflected in the historical records stating it was the second-warmest Canberra June ever, and the warmest start to a winter since 1957) was made up.*



The aesthetics identity & entanglement
Alice Celia Leica: New words for new
worlds (or the illusion of language &
how creative practice changes
everything

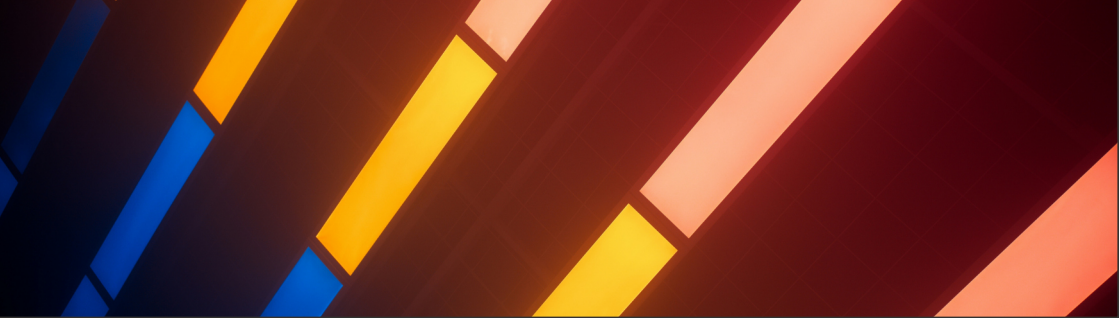
In his Naropa lecture, Burroughs, **says**: "... Brion Gysin eliminates the omniscient author who knows the past, present and future, and the inner most thoughts and feelings of his characters, by applying the montage technique to writing, which includes I, thou, he, it, she, we, you (f), you (m), and they..." Burroughs **asks**: "What invention could blast the writer out of sequential narrative? The answer 'The tape recorder' ... Click ... Turn on the recorder. Play back. The tape recorder can do it better. So now writing has to move. And the process, I would say, anticipates such an invention, and the writer is disappearing into the tape recorder..." Burroughs **ponders**: "... if an electromagnetic field or perhaps even a virus were the means by which voices were originally internalised ... and this was the beginning of consciousness of the internal hallucinated space known as 'I.'" Burroughs says "Life is a cut up". I say "Burroughs is AI".

I write. But I've always played with audio as well. [*Even for this article, I started with the audio piece.*] Taping my favourite songs off the radio (and getting annoyed when the DJ spoke over the song's end — I'm sure lots of people, of a certain age, remember this). [*In primary school I had a vampire short story placed in a time capsule and I wrote the sequel to Little Red Riding Hood: Little Blue Riding Hood.*] Writing "song lyrics" [*poems*] and recording those lyrics on my cassette player (my plan was to add music later). [*When I was ten I tried to teach myself guitar. I found dad's old one shoved up the back of a cupboard. I grabbed it and a music book. I lasted a week, I think.*] Submitting a mock radio interview on a tape for an English assignment in Grade 7 (Ms Evans must have loved that she didn't have to read a scratchy un-constructed and poorly thought out essay) [*I loved writing essays about books*]. Making mix tapes [*& writing "essays" about my reasons for including each song*]. Recording a VHS doco in Grade 11 titled *The Car Park* (I did the "sound design"). Studying at Uni I got involved with the student newspaper, as well as student & community radio. My analogue childhood parallel trajectories: text & audio. I write in pictures: my novels and short stories are cinematic. In this digital age (disrupted or no), I now call myself a "hybrid narrative storyteller" — a term that is equally specific and vague; a definition that means nothing at all.

The whole screen you think of as reality may quite suddenly go blank. This is the way the world ends, not with a bang but a click.
(Burroughs Naropa University lecture 1975)

*Burroughs taught classes as part of the Summer Writing program (1975-1983). Located in Boulder, Colorado, Naropa University is a Buddhist-inspired, nonsectarian liberal arts university that is recognised as the birthplace of the mindfulness movement.

In my novel *Transition Events* (below) Turtle, Leica and Doctor van Eeden are my main characters. Turtle and Leica are separate non-linear aspects of the same person where one is dreaming the other, but we never know which is which. Dr van Eeden works for the "sinister" Sleep Disorders Centre, and he is based on Dr Benway from *Naked Lunch*. Dr Benway draws on Joseph Conrad's Kyrilo Sidorovitch Razumov and Councillor Mikulin in *Under Western Eyes*. As I said, I can't quite encompass the ways insomnia addles me: it can make people avoid stimuli; reduce motivation, energy and concentration; it can make people pessimistic and anxious — to be fair, these can also be symptoms of being a teenager. But... *Transition Events* is set in a weird, broken and messy hybrid Dream-Wake world where people can't decipher realities and a world where they lose themselves and their identity — so maybe there's something in that.



In this pop-cultural world; this “post-truth”, post-whatever world; a world of cut ups; kaleidoscopic shifts, spurts, eruptions and hellzapoppins; in the current future-past-history world that is more Burroughs than Burroughs’ time itself; in the world we find ourselves living, the darkest timeline; in this world — which is part *1984* part *Matrix* part *Hunger Games* part *eXistenZ* part *Alice in Wonderland* — in a world of up cuts, shifting kaleidoscopes, jets, eruptions and hellzapoppins (there’s always hellzapoppins), everything’s fair game.

It’s at the point where literature constructs and deconstructs simultaneously — where fiction stops representing actualities — that it is freed from the limitations of “reality”. The Alice texts are two incompatible worlds intertwined (England & the possible world of Wonderland). This incompatibility confronts Alice and the reader with norms, constraints and assumptions that were “true” (or “false”) as being “no longer such”. This violates the law of the excluded middle, which states: “For every proposition, either *THE* proposition or *ITS* negation is true”. Carroll throws the politics of “identity” and “location” out the window by foregrounding the question *who* is Alice, rather than *where* is Alice. Alice’s confusion about her identity — in both Carroll’s *Alice* books and in Jeff Noon’s *Automated Alice* (see below)— fits with Barad’s Agential Realist Ontology: “Phenomena”, in an agential realist sense, are the ontological entanglement of intra-acting agencies. Agential realism doesn’t start with a set of given or fixed differences, but rather interrogates how differences are made and remade, stabilised and destabilised ... Where agency is an enactment, not something someone has ... It is through specific agential intra-actions that the boundaries and properties of “individuals” within the phenomenon become determinate and particular articulations of *the* world [or *a* world, or Possible Worlds] become meaningful. It is not that there are no separations or differentiations, but that they only exist within relations. This fits with Pavel’s “narrative domains”: a single work may be apportioned among several different ontologies... [and] such ontologically complex multiple-world texts undertake the exploration of certain ontological positions; Dolezel’s argument that “fictional existences are many and diverse and are able to incorporate overlapping encyclopaedias”; and Lewis’s assertion that our world is an inconsistent non-linear network of competing knowledges that collide and then re-construct numerous temporary and complex Possible Worlds that constantly realign. (From Pavel). In literary terms, a “hesitation to commit” enables writers create “fictional universes” or “counterfactual histories”, which can be either close to or far from our own Actual World. (All from my Creative Writing MA.) Simultaneous construction/deconstruction is evident to a greater or lesser degree in all literature — depending on composition. Caludia Springer illustrates this perfectly in “The Seduction of Surface” — as we’ll read a little later. But first here’s the opening to *Transition Events*:

TRANSITION EVENTS

A NOVEL



CRAIG GARRETT

Turtle wakes.

Before opening his eyes and looking around he knows exactly where he is. Behind him is a dead end, and in front of him the alley opens onto a street that looks down over a jumbled mess of a city.

He drags himself up.

This alley is some aspect of all the other alleys in all the other places he's ever woken up in over time, which time, each time — each alley, place and time remains elusive. How can this place be so familiar when he doesn't know his way around.

He stumbles to the street.

There's every possibility he's never been here before. It's the subtle familiarities that create unease. So many of the places he may or may not have visited are becoming unclear.

His hands are shaking so much he can't get his phone from his pocket. He should have never been asleep in the first place. He takes himself down the hill. Hopefully there's a train station nearby where he'll be able to wait this out, call Leica, get home — wherever that might be. The early-morning light is so raw.

Following on from the Calvino quote on page 18, Calvino again offers: "... Literature rests precisely on the distinction among various levels [of reality, or "ontological strata"] and would be unthinkable without an awareness of this distinction." Fantasy is not removed from reality for Calvino; it simply represents another performance of reality. **[Where are we as Readers located?]**

For instance, Alice Liddell (82) passed away in 1934. In 1880 she married Reginald Gervis Hargreaves and they had three sons (two died in WWI). During most of her adult life she referred to herself as "Lady" Hargreaves. But after she was "re-discovered" in 1932, she accepted an invitation to travel to Columbia University in NYC to celebrate the centenary of Lewis Carroll's birth, where she received an honorary Doctorate of Letters. But her re-emergence initiated a *slippage between fact and fiction* [or an ontological entanglement]. Alice Hargreaves wrote to her son after the 1932 NYC celebration, complaining that "Probably most people have forgotten all about me, as an individual... But, oh, my dear, I am tired of being Alice in Wonderland ..." [**Who is the "real" Alice?**]

In fact, *Dreamchild* (a 1985 film) presents a fictionalised account of Alice's very visit to New York. In it she encounters the Wonderland creatures in her hotel room, and they are cruel. (Available on YouTube.) We'll delve into this later.

In Jeff Noon's *Automated Alice* (published in 1965 & set in '65 & '98), Alice, lost in a maze, discovers a life-like statue of herself named Celia: "I'm your twin twister, explains Celia, ... your anagrammed sister." Celia comes alive and joins Alice. [*Are Alice & Celia sisters or are they the same person?*] Barad again: "In light of the entangled nature of spacetime matters, 'Originals' [Alice] don't preexist as such and mimesis can't be the reproduction of what came before [Celia], not when time itself is constituted through the dynamics of intra-activity and the past remains open to material reconfigurings ...". And then, after Alice returns to her own Victorian age, she lives a long life, but she is never entirely certain that it was she who returned. "Perhaps, in the turmoil of those last moments in the future," Alice would sometimes whisper to herself, "I was confused with Celia? Perhaps it was the Automated Alice that really came back to the past?" Until the very end of her days... Alice was unable to decide for certain if she was really real, or else really imaginary (all ideas from Springer). [*Where is Alice?*] Barad (Page 332): "The point is that the past was never simply there to begin with and the future is not simply what will unfold; the 'past' and the 'future' are iteratively reworked and enfolded ... Space and time are phenomenal, that is, they are intra-actively produced in [The Making]; neither space nor time exist as 'determinate givens' outside [the making] of phenomena." *Automated Alice* is considered by some as a "trequel" to the Alice books. [*Are Alice & Celia located in an Alice book or not?*]

Could *Transition Events* be the fourth instalment of an Alice "quadrilogy"? (I'm not counting films.) Leica as a third anagrammed triplet sister of Celia and Alice, and Turtle as another Mock Turtle, or the original Mock Turtle travelled through time — who transforms, over the course of *Transition Events*, in a piecemeal way, until he's more "turtle" than human. [*Who is Turtle and where is he? — we'll come back to this later*]. If identity is inherently "unstable, differentiated, dispersed, and yet strangely coherent" (as described by Vicki Kirby, cited by Barad), then questions surrounding "the nature of identity, time and matter provide valuable insights into the nature of causality ... *Spacetime mattering* and agential realism form an epistemological / ontological framework that cuts across "the very binary concept of causality", and proposes "a radical rethinking of the nature of identity." (Barad "Posthumanist Performativity", 2003) I've created a bit of a loop there. To illustrate, here's more from *Transition Events*:

The city's aspects are stacked and overlaid, but out of sync — which might explain the ache in his body; having to haul himself through so many layers and phases. He has a memory for such structures, almost photographic. In front of a shop that's seven places at once, his shaking worsens. As he slumps against the wall(s) he smells fresh bread baking.

'Are you ok?' an old woman asks in a near whisper. She's shuffling past in the opposite direction. Her voice scrapes, dry and harsh. The only other person on the street.

‘I’m ok—’ he says. The words congest in his throat. ‘It’ll pass.’ He tries to focus on his breathing to quieten his hands. Has he seen this woman before? Does he know her?

‘You don’t look well,’ she says.

He shakes his head. ‘It’ll be a minute.’ He’s barely audible.

‘What about an ambulance?’ she whispers

‘No,’ he says; ‘no ambulances.’ He doesn’t mean to raise his voice.

‘Ok. Ok,’ she says and steps back a pace.

‘Sorry,’ he says. ‘My wife...’ he says, ‘my wife.’ He just wants to be at home with Leica, who will be here, no matter where or when this place is. He forces his hands to shakily search his pockets. They move without consideration and won’t obey his thoughts. ‘Her number’s in my phone.’ He’s tired. Leica is always in whenever this place is. He just has to find out where their home is.

‘I have mine. Give me the number. I’ll call. What’s her name.’

‘Leica.’ He battles to keep his eyes open. ‘Zero. Four.’ Again, the words stick. ‘One. Five’. His hands are really trembling now. ‘Fou—’ His words fall away. His eyes close. He tries to fight it, but sleep comes at him with force from above and below. His legs give way. He falls and dreams...

Springer: “The *Alice* texts represent a freedom from static, rule-bound conventions that words have accrued over time; language is free to make new associations, paradoxical ones, that bask in semiotic spontaneity. The texts are prophetic, foreshadowing the features of postmodernism that would become commonplace during the latter half of the next century...” Features that Burroughs exploited as he dissected his self; his past; and his “novels”. When Burroughs and Gysin apply a surrealist visual-art cut-up-montage technique, first to audio and then to Text, they create turbulent dynamic systems of language(s) that make spontaneous new associations in and of themselves. Burroughs’ novels are, in fact, not novels at all, but introductions to a set of complex possibilities that fall outside of an understanding of the actual world, such Text exerts a new level of autonomy away from the actual world. “In the *Alice* texts this occurs through a combination of misattribution and interpolation that re-arranges the Text ontologies to a point where Alice is continually disoriented — bombarded by rapid-fire constantly changing language that escapes meaning — and unable to cling to a conventional understanding of temporal and spatial relations or logic. This initiates a slippage between ‘real’ and ‘possible’ identity (and potentially some sort of anonymity). When the Mad Hatter runs circles around Alice, Carroll writes, ‘Alice felt dreadfully puzzled. The Hatter’s remark seemed to her to have no sort of meaning in it, and yet it was certainly

English'. Alice cannot make sense of the Hatter's use of language, in which words have become detached from their meanings. This is the same sort of language that today dominates advertising discourses. She also experiences the confusion frequently inspired by postmodern architecture; by the MTV-style fast-paced manipulation of space, time and logic; and by social media's manipulation of identity." (All from Springer.) This is also precisely the terrain Burroughs traverses, although I have to think that our current actual world is far more insidious and harmful than anything Burroughs dreamt up or experienced.

The *Alice quadrilogy* — *I'm calling it (incl. Wonderland, Looking Glass, Animated Alice & Transition Events)* alongside Burroughs' *The Wild Boys* are all concerned with "loss of identity in new, inhospitable environments" (that last bit's from Springer). In his Naropa University lecture Burroughs discusses the "Cartesian Cut". Descartes' epistemological Cartesian Cut separates the non-physical mind (thought, consciousness) from the physical material world (extension in space), creating a dualistic view of reality where the mind and body are inherently distinct and separate (this is also a distinct separation between subject & object). As stated before, this includes I, thou, he, it, she, we, you (f), you (m), and they. Here's Barad: "Since cuts are understood to be enacted rather than given (it is the cut that makes the individual and not the other way around), all manner of questions regarding the nature of mattering come together here — that is, questions of matter in the multiple senses of meaning, being and valuing ... [In this sense, then] the politics of identity [or loss thereof] and the politics of location can be restricted [and (re)defined] by a conception of power that arrests and flattens important features of its dynamics."

In the opening of *Transition Events* Turtle is deluged by his location, and he struggles to differentiate between realities (or locations within the same reality — whatever that reality is: Dreaming or Waking), and at one point in the novel Leica loses him completely. The novel is written from both Leica's and Turtle's points of view. To her, it's not that he's gone, he was never located there, and in her sections Turtle's name is erased from the Text itself. The reader sees this happening; making the reader is complicit in his disappearance. Turtle vanishes letter by letter. Any power he had is erased with him, but so is Leica's because she's unable to remember a name that "never was" (and of course she can't — but he was there). Burroughs' Text is always hostile as he re-positions or erases the "I"; and re-defines subject and object (reality) through strange loops; distorted time; private and shared hallucinations; hallucinations within hallucinations; false binaries; and alternate, dual and fake possible worlds. In the section below, Turtle is trying to figure out where he is; and although he can't sleep or dream — so he shouldn't be able to sleep or dream — he's just fallen into another "dream" [*Who & where is Tur*]:

...The night is overcast and cold. He runs down the alley. His breath mists. Dull streetlights fail to cut through the rain. The gutters choke. Dreamers tremble and snore—

‘Hey! You awake there, buddy.’

The shooter? He opens his eyes and looks up. Two people, silhouettes — the sun behind them — are standing over him. They’re tall, but one is fatter than the other.

‘You live around here?’

He makes out it’s two police officers standing above him. The fatter one shakes him with his foot. They both have blue latex gloves on. This is bad.

‘Where do you live?’ he says.

‘I think he’s having a heart attack,’ the woman says.

‘No,’ Fatter says; ‘he’s just a drunk.’

‘Or worse,’ the other says, ‘a junkie.’

‘Oh.’ She looks down at him. ‘I thought he needed a hospital.’

‘We’ll take it from here,’ Fatter says.

‘Just doing my bit.’ She turns to Turtle. ‘You take care now.’ She smiles.

By the time both officers are standing over him again he’s raised himself to his knees. ‘I n-need to get home,’ he says. This is very bad.

Skinny shoves him with his foot so he falls into Fatter’s legs. ‘That’s assault.’

They wrench his arms behind him. The pain immobilises. They drag him to a police van, throw him in and slam the doors shut.

He huddles into the farthest corner from the door — so he can try to defend himself when they come again. The van is pitch black and it stinks.

They leave him sit and stew.

They don’t come.

Time passes.

He's on edge waiting for them.

Time passes.

They don't come.

When the motor starts and the van jerks forward he's sweating all over. They drive around and around and around. He's not sure for how long, or how far they travel or where they are.

He keeps nodding off.

He has to stay alert.

He yawns.

He starts to shake.

Sleep's here.

He dreams...

...The night is overcast and cold. Abandoned. His breath mists in the heavy rain. Dreamers crab over one another in the gutters. When he looks at them they're gone—

The van stops and he jolts awake.

They leave him sit.

There's nothing he can do.

He's on edge.

He yawns.

Then the back doors open. 'Wakey, wakey. Hands off snaky,' Fatter says as he jumps into the back of the van. Fatter presses his foot hard into his ribcage. 'Get up sleeping beauty.' He could probably crack one of Turtle's ribs if he wanted. 'We're here.' He releases him and steps out again.

Skinny's holding the doors open.

'Come on.' Fatter claps at Turtle like he's a child. 'Don't have all day.'

He climbs from the van into a late dusk. They're on a headland, there's a breeze and the scent of rain. They've reversed to the end of a dirt track near the edge of a cliff. 'My partner's a lawyer,' he says. He hears waves crashing against the rocks below.

'Really,' Skinny says. He closes the doors and pushes Turtle towards the cliff.

'She knows I'm missing,' he says, walking backwards from the van, keeping one eye on the cops and one eye on the cliff behind him.

'You're not missing,' Skinny says.

'I don't like what you're implying,' Fatter says.

They cage him in, flanking him either side of the car, and force him closer towards the edge.

'Know where we are?' Skinny asks.

Turtle acts like he doesn't recognise this place.

'The Gap,' Fatter says.

'A known sui-spot,' Skinny says.

Rumours are, cops throw people off. No proof, of course. He's too scared to say anything. There's no one around. Sweat slides down his back and his shirt sticks to his skin. 'All I mean is I should be home by now,' he says. 'She's a lawyer. She's—'

Fatter sighs and turns to Skinny. 'What do you reckon?'

Skinny shrugs. 'I don't believe him.'

They herd him closer and closer towards the edge. Then they lean against the back of the care, and just wait and watch.

'We're on the night shift,' Skinny says. 'We have all night.'

They smoke cigarettes and lean and watch.

He looks over the cliff, back at the cops and then over their shoulders at the dirt track.

'If you run, we'll get you,' Fatter says.

Time passes.

They talk and laugh and smoke cigarettes.

He squats on the ground.

Skinny comes over and kicks him in the bum. 'Stand up.'

He stands. fatter gets in and reverses the car closer to the edge, so it pushes him closer and closer to the edge.

Time passes.

Everything is silent except for the sound of the waves crashing on the rocks rumble up from below. The only people around are a few surfers out beyond the point. 'I just need to get home,' he says. His body aches from standing: his lower back, his knees, his feet.

Time passes.

'Look. Ok,' Fatter says.

Turtle looks up.

'We're doing you a solid.' He looks at his watch. 'You have two minutes.'

'For what?'' Turtle says.

'To fuck off,' Skinny says.

'You're kidding,' he says. 'This's nowhere near my house.'

'We're not a taxi service,' Fatter says. 'If I ever see you again. Ever. I'll bring you back here and throw you off myself. You know we can. Now fuck the fuck off.'

'Go on. Get out of here,' Skinny says.

They laugh as he skirts around them and runs back down the hill. Bastards. Cops having fun at his expense. Bring him out here to freak him out and then just let him go. he doesn't look back.

The streets are empty, and soon he's a long way from the coast. Lost and forgotten, he follows angled and brittle directions. One wrong turn and everything could break. Then he hears a car. The first he's heard in a long time. He ducks behind a retaining wall in a front yard. It's them. They cruise past slow. He doubles back after that, down more side roads and alleys. Everything's so quiet and the night closes in overcast. He's so tired. He doesn't recognise this city. The streets give up as a cold rain starts to fall. He

shivers as he passes under a rail bridge where the caged fluorescent lights cast distorted shadows. He can hardly keep his eyes open. Someone is ahead of him. At first the man looks familiar in the washed-out light, but the stranger's reveal comes slow. When the man reaches the other end, he turns and yells something at Turtle, then runs away.

Turtle chases, recollecting this place with the memories of those who were here. The cold rain falls hard and stings his face. His breath mists in the dim light. There are two cities here. Maybe three or four.

He passes dreamers with trembling mouths. They drag malformed bodies along the ground, their skin scratched to bleeding. They're here, then they're gone, then they're here again. He's chasing this stranger against his will, so he stops running.

He's running again. His own body has infected him. He trips and falls.

Ahead of him, the man also trips and falls.

Someone is chasing him. His own body has infected him. The night is overcast cold. He runs erratic down the alley. Rain falls hard. He recognises the alley. His breath mists in the weak light. Dreamers snore in the gutters, mouths open, their featureless faces too far gone. Unblinking seizures. Sleep's coming, is behind him, but his legs just won't move fast enough, so he huddles, shaking, in a doorway. Abandoned, he covers his face with his hands he closes his eyes. A heavy shadow falls across him in this darkness. He has been found, but his eyes won't open.

A gun fires into his left shoulder and right hip.

He wakes in the alley. Shaking and sweating. That didn't start as a dream. Standing is more difficult this time. He limps out to a main road, dragging his right foot — such pain in his shoulder and leg.

It's later than before, but the light is still new, and it's a different alley. He takes himself down the street, and, just like before, he finds himself looking down over the city from on top of a hill, but this time the cities are more pronounced: on the edge of the CBD two rivers flow together, and then, right under a large building, they drop down and disappear. Sleep is trashing whatever control he may have had. The bruising from the bullets is getting worse each time. He hopes he can make it back home.

Although Carroll's *Alice* books are usually read as charming children's stories, it is possible to understand them as exercises in terror for their young victim (rather than seeing Alice as a heroine or protagonist), which is the interpretation provided by the film *Dreamchild* (Springer). In *Dreamchild*, 80-year-old Alice is haunted by memories of Carroll. Amid the disorientation provoked by New York and fast-talking journalists, she unexpectedly encounters the Wonderland creatures in her hotel room. They are terrifying and taunt her mercilessly by transforming popular Victorian Q&A games into vicious verbal attacks. Barad again: [So] the 'past' and the 'future' are reconfigured and enfolded through one another: phenomena can not be located in space and time; rather, phenomena are material entanglements that 'extend' across different spaces and times ... Neither the past nor the future is ever closed. It's not that the new is generated in time; rather, what is at issue is the intra-active generation of new possibilities, where the 'new' is the trace of what is yet to come." *Dreamchild* foregrounds Alice's subjectivity (as victim). Here's more from *Transition Events*:

As he gets to the front door Leica opens it and steers him inside. She hugs him.

He winces, against his will.

'Sorry,' she says.

He shakes his head. This all-over ache has been a constant since the dreams started. He follows her to the kitchen. The table is covered with plates, toast crusts, tea bags, knives, half full glasses of water, the coffee plunger, honey and jam jars. She looks so tired. And with all this, she's obviously been awake for days. His mobile phone is right next to the pill bottles. He knows exactly how to mix the pills without thinking about it.

She hands him his phone. 'Sleep Disorders Centre,' she says. 'Doctor van Eeden's been calling.'

To hide his shaking he sits with his phone on his lap. There's about 80 messages. Out of habit he eats her leftover toast crusts. The phone rings and he jumps.

'See,' she says; 'it's like that all the time.' She pours two coffees.

He stops the call and deletes all the messages without reading them.

She spoons sugar into her cup. 'You've been gone a week this time.'

He picks up each bottle and drops the pills into his hand. Pill. Water. Swallow. Pill. Water. Swallow. Coffee chaser.

‘We really need to go,’ she says.

‘We will,’ he says. ‘I stink, though.’ He unbuttons his shirt ‘We’re going to have to burn these.’ He winces as he takes his shirt off. Then the look on her face when she sees the injuries. ‘We knew this could happen,’ he says; ‘it’s not a total surprise.’

She takes a few seconds to gather herself. ‘Ok. You shower. I’ll get the antiseptic cream and set up the machine. Then we’re going. No arguments.’

‘I won’t take long,’ he says.

In the bathroom he twists to see in the mirror. It’s worse than he thought: what he’d give to never see that look on her face again. The bruises run from his left shoulder blade around to his chest, and from his right hip up to his stomach. They are dark and black, with purple edging. There’s something about bruises, sometimes. They can look beautiful. Or if not beautiful, intriguing. These ones just look nasty. His hands, wrists, elbows and knees are all cut up. This sleep keeps coming at him. Tired to his bones, he showers until the hot water runs cold.

The lounge room windows overlook the street, and Leica’s watching cars when he comes back in. She has a Coltrane album playing. ‘I feel a bit more human,’ he says, and slumps into a chair. The dream machine and antiseptic cream are on the coffee table.

She turns and comes over. ‘Sit up properly.’ She taps his knee.

He sits up straight.

‘This might sting.’ She massages the cream into his shoulder. ‘A blue car’s been sitting out the front. You see it on your way in?’

He shakes his head and stares past her at the machine: a 1960s all-metal Burroughs design with an electric motor in the base. It has such a sure weight. The body, a polished cylinder with five rows of teardrop holes, encloses one light globe. Like a totem. When it spins, the holes glint the light at frequencies Burroughs devised to be seen with closed eyes. She’s put the pill bottles around the machine. He shifts in his seat.

She stops massaging. ‘This is how it happens,’ she says; ‘they come from all sides.’

He wants her to touch him again. ‘I don’t know what you want.’ He tries to quieten his shaking hands.

‘Tell me,’ she says.

‘I’ll be ok,’ he says.

‘Tell me the truth.’

He looks down. ‘They’re shooting me.’ The words stick in him. ‘Two cops picked me up; took me to The Gap,’ he says. ‘They were going to throw me off.’ His voice is low. He concentrates on breathing. ‘I don’t know what’s Dream and what’s not.’

She turns the machine on. ‘We’re transitioning now.’

His vision hazes. Too late, Everything recedes...

In the end of *Transition Events* Leica = Tu / T = Leica, but unlike Alice and Celia, neither Leica or Turtle return from “Wonderland”. Just like Burroughs and Joan Vollmer, Carroll erases Alice Liddell from his future history past — although this is slightly less violent than shooting her. In *Transition Events* I erase both Leica and Turtle because neither escapes the nightmarish Dream-Wake hybrid world, and we are left with the question who (subject) is dreaming whom (object)? *Transition Events* final scene:

She wakes. If it happened at all, it happened like this: it’s like she woke as soon as she fell, and the forced awakening, loss of detail, such darkness, is a sudden jolt inside and out. A sleep lab. Of sorts. A nasty one. Dirty. Stark. Hard going. Not conducive to sleep at all.

The doctor is standing above her, looking intently, and she stares up, head spinning, and even though this hurts and she feels odd, it’s better than the void. She’s here again, against her will. Eyes half-shut, track marks, syringes, vials. Smudged faces. She’s scared about what this might mean, but not about what is — that’s always her mistake. The vivid becomes mundane and unreal: when did she last eat or drink or do or feel anything that wasn’t too boring or too dramatic. How long has she been here. He’s always around, everywhere, behind her, just out of reach, whispering, at her elbow gently guiding, not more than a light touch, to point her in the direction he wants, not necessarily always the right direction for her.

'It's going to be alright,' he says, 'please don't worry, Leica dear.'

Turtle screams. He's here. She's surprised that she remembers. A nagging feeling. She knows she forgot something but can't quite remember what it was. The voices come in. They're not talking to her. She struggles, but is still strapped down. 'What's going on.' She slurs. She wonders if she's dissolved out of existence; or fallen asleep or woken up. Somewhere there has to be a place where she belongs. She directs herself to move into whichever world this is. She never thought she'd fail this badly.

The doctor leans over her, leers down her top and tests her eyes with a light.

'Where's Turtle?' she says. She is so scared now she's been found. No fight left – she's exhausted – the dreams are all gone. He says something, but there's such a racket. She screams. The feeling of a tight band squeezing her head. Every time he touches her she flinches, trembling with effort against paralysis.

'We brought you both back. Can you understand me.'

She makes some sort of noise. She thought it was a word, but it's not. She comprehends now that the best way to get out of here would be for the beautiful dream machine to start again. She tries to grab it, but can't move.

He turns and yells. 'Tranxene! Stat! I need Dream Re-entry!'

What would she have done with it if she could have grabbed it, anyway.

He turns back to her.

Her eyes are fixed on the machine; how will she cope if it won't start again.

'How much does he mean to you?' the doctor says.

She looks across at the bed next to her. It's a camp bed. Turtle is blurred, strapped, wired, asleep.

'We brought you both out.'

Sleep's got so many fractures: nurses, faces, blood, drips, eyes, bandages, needles, vials, doctors. She slips and slides. This is so scary – if only she could spin. Her body shakes. She can hear taps dripping and can smell blood and urine and bleach. Everything is dirty, the doctor's clothes, the

scratchy sheets, the floor, the doctor's gloves, at least he's wearing gloves this time, that needle he's holding looks used, though. Drips, machines, tubes. The lights are dim.

'It's alright, dear,' he says, 'this won't take long.'

Was it something she did. She knows she doesn't want it. She looks down: her arm is infected. She can't move – still strapped down. Turtle's in and out, asleep, bruised, bleeding. Sheets covered in – Everything stinks. It looks like he hasn't moved in a long time. 'That's not him,' she barely utters the words, 'do something.' The doctor replaced him with someone else, that machine was a remote control. She's so tired. 'Stop, please.' She sobs, looks away, makes herself numb as the doctor preps her for what must be another journey. Whatever he's doing now, she can't just wish it away. 'I can't do this again.' It gets so cold when the dream machine starts, cold hands and feet. He finishes with the wires and injects her with blue. She doesn't flinch even though her infected arm burns – small as it is, it's a victory nonetheless. Did she deserve this. Love came with a lingering discontented ache. Her insomnia is when they put her to sleep; such is her exile that it began with her climbing up and out, out of time, out of memory, out of herself there's two things left: love and joy. They give a place, a piece of time, in which to exist. Everything else is gone, but for some reason those things stay.

'How much does he mean to you, Leica dear?' the doctor repeats.

She looks at over Turtle. She still loves him. Again, did she ever wake or was she always here; if she did wake was it as him or as her; how many times; how often; if she did wake, then for how long?

Beyond Turtle, the cell, bathed in a washed out dirty blue light, expands forever.

Post Script

I remember my friend Laura making me mix tapes from the mix tapes her older brother made for her from the albums he used to buy from the other side of the world (mostly the UK). The music blew my mind. I'd never heard of these artists, let alone their albums, and rarely did the tapes have a song list with them, but it was those songs that set me alive. We were about 13 or 14. Some of the bands I remember hearing on those tapes for the first time: Billy Bragg; Peter and the Test Tube Babies; Sex Pistols; Joy Division; the Cure; the Smiths; X-Ray Spex. At the time I was listening to Midnight Oil, Paul Kelly, Sting, Hunters and Collectors, Pink Floyd, AC/DC.

I'm not the guy who finds the new stuff. You can't trust me. I need direction. But once there, I'm all in. So while I may not have liked all the music being thrown my way at the time, I can not over state how important music was as a kid, especially those teenage years, to hear it. It had a fundamental edge that rendered elements of my being vital; it showed me other realities. It was vibrancy in my lethargic teenage world. Is it too much to call it profound? Probably, but I was eating it all up. Mix tapes were life blood.

Don't say you're easy on me; you're about as easy as a nuclear war. (Duran Duran)

I am not a person and I am not an animal.
There is something I am here for something I
must do before I can go. (Burroughs).

Track Listing

This piece is a cultural and artistic re-purposing and re-rendering

1. The Wild Boys (original pop release) — Duran Duran (1985)
2. The Wild Boys (instrumental) — Duran Duran (1985)
3. The Cut Ups 1966 — William S Burroughs
4. The Wild Boys: a book of the dead — reading by Patti Smith (Berlin 2014)
5. “The Chief Smiles” (from The Wild Boys) — reading by William S Burroughs
6. Naropa Lecture (June 12, 1975)
 7. Introduction
 8. William S Burroughs lecture
9. “Doctor Benway’s House” (introduction) — Sonic Youth
10. “No More Stalins; No More Hitlers” — William S Burroughs
11. Montage-MashUp of songs influenced by William S Burroughs
 1. “Lust for Life” — Iggy Pop
 2. “Elenor Rigby” — The Beatles
 3. “Land: horses, land of a thousand dances, la mor (de)” — Patti Smith
 4. “Ziggy Stardust” — David Bowie
 5. “Dr. Benway’s House” — Sonic Youth
 6. “Interzone” — Joy Division
 7. “Street Hassle” — Lou Reed
 8. “Sharkey’s Night” — Laurie Anderson
12. David Bowie interview about cut ups on BBC
13. “Dead Man’s Blues” — Jelly Roll Morton (1923)
14. “The Lord’s Prayer” — William S Burroughs
15. Collaborations
 1. “Taint No Sin” — collaboration with Tom Waits
 2. “Star Me Kitten” — collaboration with REM
 3. “Sharkey’s Night” — collaboration with Laurie Anderson
 4. “The Priest They Call Him” — collaboration with Kurt Cobain
16. Razorback — Official Film Trailer (1984)
17. Tio Mate Smiles (from The Wild Boys) — reading by William S Burroughs
18. “Arena (An Absurd Notion)” — a “concept concert documentary” about Duran Duran’s 1984 Sing Blue Silver Tour (released in 1985)
19. “The Wild Boys” (9-minute extended version) — Duran Duran (1985)

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