

per·tur·ba·tion

noun: perturbation

1. anxiety; mental uneasiness:

“a growing awareness that they might one day, face dementia, caused them deep perturbation.”

2. a deviation of a system, moving object, or process from its regular or normal state or path, caused by an outside influence:

“The principal generation mechanism of a tsunami is the displacement of a substantial volume of water or perturbation of the sea, usually attributed to earthquakes, landslides, volcanic eruptions, glacier calvings or more rarely by meteorites and nuclear tests.”

Cold Dark Matter

(A verbatim account of a voice conjured up from the future, by a reputable spirit medium at a seance held in Blackpool at the weekend, leaving out untruths, the superfluous and gratuitous personal detail)

Albion¹ - Time is out of joint and compressed anxieties are here streamed back to you in spoken word and fleeting tricks of light.

We are an impoverished species and the idea we have of you, has been eroded over time.

Figments of sound and filaments of light scratched out in the ether.

What little we know is fractured - pieced together fragments of the great digital age that never bore its fruit. *Toxic tail-end-capitalism.*

The time when society itself, was nothing more than a universal market.

Chronic psychological and physical perturbation.

Ableism² always somewhere - at the heart of your oppression.

Before the darkness - the boundaries between colours shifted - the prism had altered - you looked to signs and symbols of youth, of health and vitality.

Full lips and perfect white smile, contoured and unblemished bodies.
You could be gods if you so desired.

You measured your heart and blood. Perfected and augmented, edited and spliced - you believed in the raw power of data - the cult of the *quantified self*.

Would-be parents began screening out the un-born for certain diseases, conditions and *unacceptable differences*.

Well marketed opportunities to eradicate human frailties at a genetic level, meant that those who possibly might succumb to dementia could be weeded out, and those who dared to test their likelihood to succumb to neurodegenerative conditions, began to take their own lives.

Spontaneous straight sex became taboo. The eradication of undesirable conditions and the drive to secure the perfect colour-way, emotional strength and intellect - meant the risks were unthinkable.

Health professionals gently coerced the undesirables to self-sterilise their bodies, in order to avoid bringing children into the world, while the wealthy continued to adapt themselves in other ways.³

You hid away the imperfect and lonely in plain sight.

The day to day anxieties of your children became unbearable - natural responses to all the stresses of life were transformed into disorders, pathologised and reduced.

The young were set on a path of impossible aspiration - you could be everything you ever desired - and more.

Language that you used became lazy and superficial - shorthand - you set yourselves up for failure on a catastrophic scale, and in a world where you were told everything is possible if you want it badly enough, when you didn't succeed, there was only one person to blame...

You were given pseudo-explanations for attitudes and behaviours that didn't conform, but never looked to the roots.

*I, Me, Mine*⁴ - a shimmering blue halo around each and every face.

The image of perfection.

When the dream was shattered - you began to turn inwards - compelled to self annihilation.

Global contagious ideation.

A catastrophic breakdown of the human self.

For the poorest and the oldest it was too late - moved far from home - ending their days in sprawling institutions, decorated by your artists - prisons in all but name.

Your 3-dimensional printed hearts - stopped beating.

And then there was that - *great - dark - time*.



THE DARKNESS

(Suspend your disbelief)

What do we think we know about that displacement of water and land, of people and places?

Drowned in data. Drowned in slick black plastic oceans - a noxious confluence of ideas and market and matter.

The insects died, the tide rose and the air tuned black, yet with the whitest smiles and plumpest mouths, people stood stock still - and watched - unable to process what was real anymore.

You couldn't believe it was actually happening.

Dark ages - a between the times - when all but the purest of your infants lost all of their teeth⁵ and faded before ten years were through - and the elders took all the bread and wine. Transubstantiation.

Transfused and enthused - they took to the inland-islands, the high cities - and left the encroaching marshes, to the sickened feral communes.

*To Cesium Estuarine Fever.*⁶



Religion had failed. Technology had failed - your ideologies had *consumed themselves*. Physical and psychological evolution - or perhaps, devolution - were swift.

And in this new landscape, while the oldest seemed to thrive and live beyond a normal lifespan, the children that did survive, were born with differences beyond your comprehension.

Boundaries blurred and the first *Significant Child* was born to the oldest fluid human.

You gathered around the artefacts of your old time prophets - The Kingdom of the Well and the Kingdom of the Sick⁷ - and the comforting certainty of a *Recipe for Humanity*.⁸

*You will die, you are alone
There is no god upon his throne
Impose thy will upon earth's mess
Else your life is meaningless
No hell below, no heaven above,
Live life now and act with love.*



Everything we do leaves traces

Time has moved and shifted and we cherish the petrified remains of your age.

We venerate your artists - celebrate their evolution, through the olden days and through the darkness.

What little artefacts we have - have inspired generations of our people in a deeper understanding of transient existence.

Where once your great city celebrated the bee⁹ as a symbol of its industry, we can only imagine that brightly coloured worker and instead cherish the mayfly,¹⁰ which in estuaries and towns thrives once a year - *a short lived wonder*.

Each day an Aubade¹¹ each day a Serenade.

Of delicacy and meaning.

Gender is not what it was - the sky is different now - our skin is different too - *each of us achieves menopause*.

Our artists expand our minds - our possibilities - philosophers of the common good.

We have no sell-by-date and throughout our lives plan and chose the manner and time of our dying, living out our collective days with deeper meaning.

Hospitals of culture illuminate new possibilities.

You had asked the wrong questions of your artists.
Counted out and measured their worth.

Loss of faith in the supernatural and blind belief in the invincibility of science was inevitable. Artists stepped into the void and reanimated the impoverished corners of imagination.

No longer ventriloquists puppets¹² - we are - the *Adorned Fathomless Dark Creation*.¹³ The rhizome¹⁴ that spreads through the earth giving boundless hope.

A shimmering miracle. **GLAD DAY**¹⁵

NOTES (micro-script)*

It's difficult to provide footnotes to this small work because of the danger of the notes becoming bigger than the work itself and oblique as it is, I hoped it would speak for itself. It's Fiction-non-Fiction and environmental public health. Still, there are great people I have knowingly cited - however briefly - and others who just hover on the edges of things. So I'm not going to beat myself up in this non-peer-reviewed-polemic - *it is what it is*.

Inspiration for this provocation comes from numerous sources and although I didn't use any of his music in the performative piece, the album by Leyland Kirkby (Caretaker), '*Sadly, the future is no longer what it was*' (2009) runs through it like the lettering in a stick of Blackpool rock. A beautiful and forensic review of this album by Mark Fisher is fresh in my mind too. The peculiar imaginings of Canterbury by Russell Hoban in his book *Riddley Walker* (1980) stay with me. That's the landscape I imagined. Scrabbling around the web searching out film and sound to cut-up for the work inevitably influenced me too, so while they're not part of the written words, interviews with James Baldwin, Quentin Crisp and Greta Thunberg provoked and excited, as did the films of Ingmar Bergman and Stephen Dwoskin. Finally - I am preoccupied with the last few albums of Scott Walker.

1. **William Blake** - around 1795 Blake painted an image variously called *The Dance of Albion*, *Albion Rose* or *Glad Day*. It's famous image, maybe an optimistic one and as the always superb Tom Lubbock described it, '*a hypothetical image for a hypothetical day*.' In mythical stories around the founding of Britain, Albion was a giant son of Poseidon, the Greek god of the sea. Albion founded a country on our little island. After his death the island (Albion) was inhabited by his giant descendants until shortly before the Romans invaded. In the second state of this work by Blake, this inscription was added: '*Albion arose from where he labour'd at the Mill with slaves. Giving himself for the Nations, he danced the dance of Eternal Death*'.

2. **Mel Baggs** - the blogger who describes herself as a disabled writer and artist wrote: '*There is ableism somewhere at the heart of your oppression, no matter what your oppression might be*.' There's a lot to digest on her website and she provoked a lot of thinking for me around what I'd describe as *ableist capitalism*.
<https://ballastexistenz.wordpress.com/2016/05/01/there-is-ableism-somewhere-at-the-heart-of-your-oppression-no-matter-what-your-oppression-might-be/>

3. **Sterilisation** of people deemed to be disordered or worthless by the state, is sadly not confined to the eugenic programs of the Holocaust. Lisa Ko writing for Independent Lens, reminds us:
"Coerced sterilization is a shameful part of America's history, and one doesn't have to go too far back to find examples of it. Used as a means of controlling "undesirable" populations - immigrants, people of color, poor people, unmarried mothers, the disabled, the mentally ill - federally-funded sterilization programs took place in 32 states throughout the 20th century. Driven by prejudiced notions of science and social control, these programs informed policies on immigration and segregation."
<http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/blog/unwanted-sterilization-and-eugenics-programs-in-the-united-states/>

4. **The Beatles** - just a song, *I, Me, Mine* from the 1970 album, *Let It Be*. I have to confess it was the more disquieting version by Laibach that I had in mind.

5. **Yoko Tawada** has written a profound little book called *The Emissary* (2018). It is a beautiful and tragic thing and in it, children poisoned by some terrible unnamed catastrophe do indeed lose their teeth *and more*. Older people live to a very, very ripe old age too. I can't recommend it enough. Alas, my version of events (but removed from my heavily edited film) takes it down an even bleaker path, imagining the Royal Family having regular blood transfusions utilising the blood of infants. Oblique as it is, imagine transubstantiation more in terms of vampirism.

6. **Cesium Estuarine Fever**. OK it doesn't exist - but remembering the evolution of viruses (HIV, Hendra, Ebola and the ever constant threat of Avian/Swine mutations) it only takes a small leap of the imagination to imagine that fetid swill from the Fukushima and Chernobyl catastrophes which seeped into the water-table and continues to flow into the ocean. The Japanese Times reported in 2018 that, '*More than seven years after the March 2011 Fukushima nuclear crisis, radioactive water is continuing to flow into the Pacific Ocean from the crippled No. 1 plant at a rate of around 2 billion becquerels a day, a study has found.*'
<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/03/29/national/seven-years-radioactive-water-fukushima-plant-still-flowing-ocean-study-finds/#.XMxpWNNKINy>

7. **Susan Sontag** - wrote that, '*Illness is the night-side of life, a more onerous citizenship. Everyone who is born holds dual citizenship, in the kingdom of the well and in the kingdom of the sick.*' She wrote an essay of the same name in 1978 exploring illness as metaphor.

8. **Grayson Perry** - cautious as I was to name any contemporary artist in this work, as ubiquitous as Perry is, I thought it useful. In one of his embroidered works, *Recipe for Humanity* (2005), he offers up some life-affirming doggerel which I imagined was fetishised in some distant time. A surviving grail or relic of significance.

9. **The Bee** - a symbol of Manchester and its industrious past and collective working.

10. **The Mayfly** - In the bleak future-scapes I provide, the bee's long foreseen demise has taken place and the more miraculous short-lived Mayflies are celebrated. Their transformation from aquatic nymph to fleeting adulthood, somehow offering a deeper understanding of impermanence and a different kind of beauty.

11. **Aubade** - one of the most beautifully written meditations on (and terror of) death is Philip Larkin's, *Aubade* (1977). The word aubade sits in harmony with serenade, one being a morning love song, the other sung in the evening. This is an attempt to introduce something meditative and serene into the landscape.

12. **Ventriloquists Dolls** - and if I've not lost or irritated you already, this is where I probably do. There is a remarkable and saccharinely sweet film of a man being 'awoken' from his experience of dementia, which many people have seen online. He's called Henry and the film is from *Music and Memory*sm. The makers of it are rightly thrilled to see expression, joy and animation in this man, but it causes me great consternation. I think of all the hours in life when Henry *isn't* animated by his music - I think - would you actually want to be 'awakened' all your daylight hours? The anxiety of knowing you have memory loss and that these moments are fleeting and fewer present something very disquieting.

Doesn't it make it incumbent on those working with people living with dementia to have breakpoint discussions with people when they are in that moment of heightened sentience? Or perhaps these are 21st century pacifiers for people who we don't have the human-resources to meaningfully engage with? What worries me more though, is that this man is being held up as an unknowing advocate for an organisation who have a 'standard mark' on their work - and like the lion at the start of MGMsm movies which has a similar standard mark to stop people from infringing their 'rights' - he's nothing more than the feel-good-factor marketing tool.

In no way am I suggesting that the burgeoning singing and music activities and research in dementia contexts are a bad thing: *that couldn't be further from the truth*. However, I think we need to exercise a little ethical caution in uploading everyone's moments of unbridled pleasure onto the web and avoid the assumption that one size fits all. Like the superficial and often damaging versions of the world offered up on Instagram to vulnerable people seeking human connection, the needs of people living with dementia go way beyond transient moments plugged in, pacified/aroused and commodified. The challenge and real potential perhaps, resides in connectivity and the imagination and systemic resourcing for social care. At the back of my mind when I wrote this provocation, I imagined that perhaps in the not too distant future, that everyone lives with memory loss.

13. **Adorned Fathomless Dark Creation** - a beautiful name for the black hole photographed in Hawaii in 2019 and named by an indigenous scholar Professor Larry Kimura. Instead of the usual numerical name for obscure matter in the universe, he named it *Powehi* which translates as *Adorned Fathomless Dark Creation*. This brought my thinking full circle to identity, to Albion and to indigenous communities whoever they might be; to myth and ecology, data and markets.

14. **The Rhizome** - soil, evolution, connectivity, possibility. The rhizosphere, symbolically illustrated in my film by the simultaneously fleshy and earthy fungus. The shimmering miracle.

15. **Glad Day** - begin again with Blake.

*Between 1929 and the time of his death the Swiss writer Robert Walser (1878-1956) lived in psychiatric care, where building on his poems, prose, dramas and novels he developed a way of writing which he described as the 'pencil method'. His microscopic work is beautiful and written on scraps, book pages and envelopes with each individual letter coming in at around a millimetre in height. Susan Bernofsky has produced a wonderful translation of his work with some quiet stunning reproductions of the texts. Below is an example.

Clive Parkinson 05/05/2019



Handwritten text in German, appearing to be a letter or a note, written in cursive script.

Main body of handwritten text in German, continuing the letter or note, written in cursive script.

Hilfenwege 41/I