

He experiences a mild sense of unease as he carefully starts to extricate himself from the tangle of intertwined arms and legs, gently swaying to the background beat of a Motown song. The other men continue to dance, yet their steps appear slightly out of sync. One man holds an almost fully burnt cigarette between two fingers that are resting on another man's shoulder.

The ashes threaten to fall, compelling him to deftly maneuver between the fingers to retrieve the cigarette. Now holding it, he balances a fragile tower of ashes between his thumb and index finger.

The dancing men hardly take note of this.

In a corner, another man has sunken in on a chaise longue, stripped down to his briefs, and he seems to notice him. The man asks him if he is alright. But as he maneuvers through the room, cigarette still in hand, he hears the unfamiliar voice as if listening from outside his own body, and stays quiet, unable to respond.

He reaches for the ashtray. One of the men must have placed it on a pile of printouts on his desk. Before he reaches the ceramic vessel, the column of ashes collapses onto the white sheets. With a final drag from the cigarette, he puts it out, while his eyes skim over the printed letters on the top sheet.

He reads:

*The moral rhetoric passes swiftly between two poles.
On the one hand, apostrophes (HESITATES) to the brevity of the mortal span, when placed beside the certainty of Judgement.
(READS FAST) On the one hand, apostrophes to the brevity of the mortal span, when placed beside the certainty of Judgement.
Thus Heywood's Meetness for Heaven (1690).¹*

As he exhales, the smoke from his lungs unfurls onto the paper sheet forming a ring-like shape that is bounced off the white surface, dissipating into small clouds that drift back towards his face where they linger for a while.

Colon, followed by stylized italics as a quotation:

Time lasts not, but floats away apace; but what is everlast...
(STARTS AGAIN) *but what is everlasting depends upon it. In this world we either win or lose eternal felicity. The great weight of eternity*

2 Thompson, E.P., *Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967

hangs on the small and br... br.. br (HAS DIFFICULTIES PRONOUNCIATING)
the small and...(STOPS AND RESUMES READING AFTER A MOMENT)
the small and brittle thread of life... This is our working day,
our markettime... O Sirs, sleep now, and awake in hell, whence there
is no redemption. ²

Full stop.

He flinches momentarily as he lip-syncs the text. He is irritated by its archaic language causing him to repeatedly pause where the meaning of individual words seem to shift beyond his grasp.

He blows the remaining ashes off the sheets and turns to the big window on his right, his eyes briefly gliding over a pile of clothes stacked on the armrest of a chair.

The pale white light of the grey sky vertically dissipates into the narrow passages between the houses, offering little indication of the actual time. From his perspective, he follows the closely meshed blocks of buildings until they blend into each other. As he glances through the grainy, pollen-dust-laden window, he momentarily comprehends the totality of the city's horizontal distribution of buildings in front of him.

Reflections of the two dancing men behind him in his half-shaded apartment penetrate the view, animating areas on the glass surface as their silhouettes mimic their slow motions. His gaze follows the flight of a group of sparrows gliding with seeming effortless as if submitting their bodies and their open wings to the dynamics of the air. They descend into a steep cavity between two building blocks and then ascend again, in elliptical form.

Unaffected by the vertical space occupied by the buildings in the area, the air lifts them over a line of gray rooftops. A vague fear silently unfolds in him as he scans the horizontal line the sparrows had plunged into, his eyes drifting and then coming to a halt at a crane looming behind the rooftops. Without fully grasping it, the swaying bodies reflect in the glass window, amplifying a diffuse nervousness that is slowly taking over his body.

From this perspective, the crane construction appears distorted and he can't seem to recall it in particular among the horizon of cranes he had memorized from his way home from the train station nearby.

2 Thompson, E.P., *Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967

From its south exit all the way left toward his apartment building, the assembly of cranes form a roof-like structure of the quarter around the station.

*They've come to characterize the neighborhood's face. Due to ongoing delays, and indeed complete halts of construction, even before and certainly throughout the pandemic, their initial tentative presence has gradually given way to a one more concrete, monuments witnessing the constant reshaping and restructuring of the area. A feature that has been going on, and off, and on, since he remembers, moving in 10 years ago, which now seems almost like a small lifetime.*³

Without looking, his right hand seizes a glass that one of the men had set down on the window sill. The sweet and intrusive odor of Vermouth pierces his nose and infuses with the expansiveness of time his musings had unfolded in his mind, even though he remains entangled with the landscape before him.

It is as if he was still only facing that space around him, deriving the units of time—minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, and years—from it alone. Having only a fractured collection of moments, experiences, coincidences and stories to compensate for it, he has felt neglected by time. It is as if he had no proof for when he had existed, proof of when he exists.

Prompted by this thought, he moistens his lips with a fraction of the sweet liquid before stepping a few paces backward, then slowly sinking into his bed.

As he leans back and sinks into a stack of cushions, he observes that from this shifting perspective, the buildings vanish from the window's frame. He gazes into the aging morning's dull white that now hurts in his eyes.

As he closes his eyelids, he remains uncertain about the presence of the other men in the room. He is briefly concerned about being left so vulnerable but eventually reverts to his previous thoughts and the paradox they had crafted. Somewhere in the back of his mind, for an undetermined period of time, he hears the men murmuring in the room. He feels disoriented, losing his sense of time passing as he registers the sounds of wooden floor tiles squeaking in the room, legs tiptoeing over a carpet, and the soft brushing noise of fabric being drawn over another. The sounds eventually fade before he seems to hear a door falling into its frame.

He remembers a winter's night in 2012 or so, about ten years ago. He and his lover couldn't sleep and instead of lying awake, or lying around, decided to leave the flat. It was around midnight. The calm sounds of their voices next to each other as they were walking, the endeavor to align their steps. Behind an abandoned warehouse, as if through a hole, they stepped into a dark path. The spacing between the pale reflecting grey birches seemed to suggest a direction. He can't remember the texture of the ground. A moving silhouette. A noise between the moist leaves.

His partner's hand grabs his elbow and simultaneously they slowly quicken the pace. Their voices suddenly lower, mirroring an obtuse yet intrusive presence. An ambivalent arousal. A cruising ground?

The exact place of this linear movement remains cut at both ends of his memory. Repeated walkthroughs, soundings, and the growing familiarity of his attachment to this scene have gradually located the space in his knowledge of the environment. Such replays slightly gravitate towards this moment of entry, as if the space itself was constructed around it leaving some sort of demarcation line—pervaded by old rail tracks, pieces of timbre, scattered leaves and debris—that continues to allow him to recognize it intact, unobstructed, raw, and located within “here.”⁴

He recognizes the purring sound of his cat Bergson long before he fully awakes from his sleep. It seems he solely exists within this sound for a while. Prompted by the oscillation of the cat's vibrating muscles, the extracellular fluid in his ears bends the hair cells, causing small neural impulses. For a while, they both seem to persist in this perfect symbiosis of exchanged vibrations.

Upon opening his eyes, he notices the faint outlines of the furnishings in his apartment and senses that it is already dusk outside. When he looks over to the rolled-up ginger cat resting on the other end of the bed, he briefly attempts to reconnect with the transmission. As he regains his senses, he listens to the cat's purring sound for a moment, questioning how this silent emission could have roused him from sleep. He is puzzled, thinking about what else could have woken him up.

Unable to gauge the length of his slumber, he decides to make coffee and turns on the electric water kettle in the kitchen. He hears the gentle humming from his living room but within a short span of time, the hissing sounds drown out the street noises that are filtering through the walls.

His gaze returns to the pile of printouts on his desk and he remembers the men from this morning, shrugging internally, feeling ashamed about their whereabouts and his ungraceful departure. While perusing the writing, he encounters the paragraph he read before, stylized as an italicized quotation. Next to it, several drawings and notes that he had overlooked before catch his attention.

One of them reads:

Talk with Barbara.

Colon.

A drawing of a column.

In upper case:

THINK ABOUT.

Colon,

History from below.

Full stop.

Drawing of a column, broken.