

Time's Up: How Soon is too Soon?

The Doomsday Clock was established in 1947, two years after the end of WWII. The instrument was instigated by the Chicago Atomic Scientists in response to the Manhattan Project's development of the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Its purpose was to metaphorically indicate the proximity of human-made catastrophe. The clock has been set back 8 times and forward 18 times. The time set at its founding was 7 minutes to midnight. Today it is set at 90 (89 in fact) seconds to midnight, the closest to imminent annihilation ever registered. While there may be something comically hyperbolic sounding about this endeavour, it wouldn't take much to concur that, even from a rational perspective, human extinction seems pretty plausible. Of course, the dire geopolitical circumstances occasioning such revelations means little to the liberal mind obsessed with its own immediate pleasures and material 'investments'. For such a mindset, any intrusion into the space of self-absorption and individual calculation must be forestalled at all costs.

In this crepuscular moment one might be inclined to hide, literally or psychologically. Yet one thing our age increasingly ensures is the impossibility of this desire. Widespread surveillance and human monetisation mean the freer we feel ourselves to be to 'do what we want', the more likely it is someone else is making a lot of money from our otherwise private peccadillos. Our personal habits are incessantly tracked to ensnare us more wholly within the vestiges of a decrepit global capitalism. Fleeing to that house on the hill, or house in the woods, might just turn out to be a nightmare of isolation ironically underscored by incessant virtual intrusion. The natural self, alone, is denatured, devoid of broader reference, meaning or purpose. Naturally, this lack of meaning can be darkly humorous, especially if we were to merge the proverbial 'house of horrors' with the amateur preoccupations of the hapless home improver. Psycho meets Grand Designs.

In 1843 Edgar Allan Poe wrote the story 'the Black Cat' in which the narrator's house burns down after he perversely hangs the beloved pet of the story's title. Anguished, but strangely emboldened by his deed, he intends killing his remaining cat. Challenged by his wife, the unnamed narrator kills her instead bricking her inside a basement wall. The narrator inadvertently reveals his crime while boasting of the solidity of the room. Nonchalantly tapping the bricks, an uncanny human-like cry issues from within. Aiming to flee his impending doom at the hands of the law, the subject reveals instead the abjection, not only of his crime, but of his mind. A criminal believing himself exceptional finds himself literally against a wall facing down his own self-deception. Here the law prevails. Today law is trashed to such an extent that mass murder is not only excused but celebrated by so-called 'normal folk'. The liberal strikes again in their furtive desperation to avoid any culpability or care for anything outside their personal spheres of interest.

So abject are these twilight times that children as young as six have begun transcribing their own wills to camera, victims of imperial (in this instance, Israeli/US/Western etc.) extermination. Typically, a child is immured to considerations of mortality. That comes later. Writing one's will might also be a projection of escape to somewhere else, 'anywhere but here'. How many tales are there of subjects faking their deaths in order to become what they're not, a 'new' person living a 'new' life, anonymously. Conversely, for the liberal imagination become no-one is the worst nightmare as anyone worth anything is 'someone', right? In 1923 Duchamp faked a wanted poster for himself and his various aliases. Everyone wants to be wanted. Still, it all depends on who wants and for what purpose. To be wanted for oneself or to be wanted, or hunted, for what one isn't are very different experiences usually with dramatically polarising outcomes.

Sometimes it as if we were talking inside a tube echoing thoughts of our own insignificance, neutered by a demos gifted to oligarchs. You hear another voice which seems to echo yours but remains distinct and separate. Is it my own voice in another register? Or another person? Atomisation becomes a contemplative experience of interiority reflected but unheard by others, like a chime resonating in empty space. It is like travelling through a tunnel moving predictably forwards occasionally released to moments of un-harassed experience only to be returned to the chicane. Am I going straight ahead or is every turn a repetition when the path forward always looks weirdly identical. Am I just cyclically turning back around again and again? Emerging into the open air, it appears everything is reliably as it was, and yet gnawing doubt burrows, making me think I'm always in the tunnel. At the conclusion of Andrzej Wajda's 1957 film *Kanal*, the surviving partisans simultaneously inhabiting and fleeing through Warsaw's tepid sewers pursued by fascists, feel a cool breeze against their skins. They reach an exit and finally glimpse the midday sun glinting over the river. The tunnel is barred and there's no way back.

In the end as the clock ticks down what is left to say - "I wish for you only that which you wish for those whose destruction you contribute to".

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