

# LIMINAL



September 2022: Time  
Anthology







**For our inaugural issue,** we chose the theme of Time. We were inspired by Benjamin Worff's unpublished essay, 'An American Indian Model of the Universe,' where he discusses the Hopi language, which organizes time in an entirely different way than the Western mind is familiar with:

*The Hopi metaphysics also has its cosmic forms comparable to these in scale and scope. What are they? It imposes upon the universe two grand cosmic forms, which as a first approximation in terminology we may call MANIFESTED and MANIFESTING (or, UNMANIFEST) or, again, OBJECTIVE and SUBJECTIVE. The objective or manifested comprises all that is or has been accessible to the senses, the historical physical universe, in fact, with no attempt to distinguish between present and past, but excluding everything that we call future. The subjective or manifesting comprises all that we call future, BUT NOT MERELY THIS; it includes equally and indistinguishably all that we call mental—everything that appears or exists in the mind, or, as the Hopi would prefer to say, in the HEART[.]*



The Hopi understanding of time tends towards the quantum, where ours tends Newtonian. **This difference raises the question: what might our culturally-conditioned understanding of time elide?**

How have you experienced different kinds of time in your own life? Time as a child? Time waiting on line or trapped in bureaucracy? Time during love as opposed to empty time? Have you ever had a Proustian moment where a smell or taste suddenly catapulted you back to a different time? How does the question of time relate to other issues you want to explore?

The following seven essays explore these questions and, we feel, gesture towards insight and understanding beyond the commonplace. All pieces are accompanied by original artwork created by Reivin Alexandria using Midjourney.

**Daniel Pinchbeck, Arielle Friedman, Reivin  
Alexandria**



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# Used to Be

Daniel Pinchbeck



Used to be a literary bookstore on the next block with a winding wooden staircase, with tightly shelved science fiction paperbacks downstairs where I used to shoplift as an adolescent, with spasms of guilty joy, and never got caught.

Used to be an Italian cafe near Central Park that played opera, with red walls and fading pictures of opera stars everywhere, with a garden in back where John and Yoko used to go (they had a photo to prove it) and was one of my favorite places, although I never saw them there.

Used to be a Movie Theater over there, which held Woody Allen festivals and played Rocky Horror Picture Show at midnight on Saturdays, where I used to go with my friend Pip who was pale, thin, asthmatic, and there was a floor show but we never dressed up in costumes for it.

Used to be I thought a lot  
about death but not as much  
as I do now.

Used to be a gang of mostly Puerto Rican kids who sometimes menaced us and they followed me and my friends into the lobby one night where we had a standoff where I think one of them, the fat one, punched me lightly but then they fled.

Used to be our building on 89th and West End had an old doorman, Joe, who was really interested in Orson Welles' 'War of the Worlds' and I found a record of it and leant it to him and we often discussed it.

Used to be we had two cats, Zelda and Delilah, a mother and daughter, the mother was short haired and gray while the daughter was long haired and white. They used to live together in the service closet in the kitchen and became more reclusive, anti-social as years passed.

Used to be we would rent a small house in Fire Island during the summers and I would walk on the hot sand and



concrete paths with bare feet, got stung by a bee once, learned to pick the stalks of honeysuckle and suck out the sweet nectar they contained, and there was a whole group of us who played together.

Used to be my mother worked a full time job as a book editor and I was always home alone and addictively watched the 4:30 movies on ABC which included the whole *Planet of the Apes* series, *The Power*, *Soylent Green* and *The Omega Man*, which somehow indelibly marked my imagination with this dystopian tinge.

Used to be I could remember my babysitter buying Abbie Road when it was released and this tremendous anticipation as the plastic was unwrapped. That was when we still lived on St Marks Place.

Used to be that I loved unwrapping the sticky plastic cling from new records and the first ones I bought for myself — must have been with allowance money (how else?) — were Kiss's Love Gun and Peter Frampton Comes Alive.

Used to be we had a massive collection of jazz LPs from the 1950s that an ex boyfriend left with my mother after a bad breakup in the early 60s and she had kept ever since but then apartments got smaller and we eventually threw them out which I still regret today.

Used to be I thought a lot about death but not as much as I do now.

Used to be that I spent a very strange year in a children's residential hospital with an infection in my spine and made friends with many kids with bizarre physical conditions and the boys in my room taught me to masturbate and we would masturbate together when the lights went out.



Used to be I would take the Number 5 bus from Riverside Drive all the way down to Houston St in SoHo where my dad would pick me up and take me to his cavernous loft full of his giant paintings and sculptures of abstract, volumetric shapes where we had lived together before they split up when I was five.

Used to be we all wanted to  
be poets like Dylan Thomas or  
Ginsberg and played Dungeon &  
Dragons in binges, often  
bending or ignoring the rules  
or the rolls of the  
multi-color polygon-shaped  
dice.

Used to be punk / new wave clubs in illegal basements in  
SoHo and on the Bowery where my dad would take me  
after my back healed and I really loved those experiences,  
felt like something electric was happening.

Used to be we would go to Cafe Dante with his abstract  
painter friends and they would tell the same stories about  
Cezanne, Matisse, Picasso as if they were keeping some  
secret art brotherhood alive in enemy territory now  
colonized by pop and conceptual art, soulless dealers and  
wealthy collectors with no taste, although my dad admitted  
a fondness for Basquait.

Used to be it was actually dangerous to go to Alphabet  
City, felt lawless, primeval near Life Cafe and when I hung  
out with that trust fund kid heroin addict — son of famous  
art dealer — we would go to Ave C where a bucket would  
be lowered down by rope containing the white packets of

heroin from a bricked-up building and he sent the cash up the same way.

Used to be I would lie on the grass with my mother in Riverside Park near the Hudson and look at the blue sky dappled with clouds and wonder if what I saw as “blue” was the same as what she saw or other people saw and how could you actually know this?

Used to be the Watergate Hearings were on the television at my grandma’s house where I was staying and she watched all of them, while I found them totally boring but would watch and listen to them drone on and on.

Used to be I stayed in my mother’s old room at grandmas on 116th St, which was perfectly preserved with a small bed with old wooden furniture and there was an awkward painting of her at maybe 8 years old over the piano in the living room in pigtails and the apartment felt a bit like a mausoleum to me, like the 1930s, and I would have dark, semi lucid dreams of myself as a vampire able to fly as a bat to the windows of the nearby apartments of girls who I went to school with at Bank Street and for whom I must have felt the first awkward stirrings of desire.

Used to be I always knew something was deeply wrong but I didn’t know what it was — only understood much later.

Used to be that we wrote a musical based on the Hollywood Ten Trials, making up our own songs or changing the lyrics to hit songs of the past and I played the

evil Joseph McCarthy character singing, “Are you now or have you ever been/a member of the Communistic sin?” to a Cole Porter melody, and it remains a high point of my life. This was in fifth grade or what Bank Street called “10s - 11s.”

Used to be dark, huge Chinese Restaurants that seemed quite ancient which used too much MSG and we would meet my mother’s friends there who were other woman writers, editors or agents wearing large pieces of Bakelite jewelry and many big rings, with a great interest in literature who were generally Left Wing, and eat egg rolls and sweet and sour pork, and now those dear ladies are almost all gone.

Used to be that literature and art felt very important — something had to be said, had to find the words to say it, the world was trembling in its great impatience awaiting the new artistic truth that might change everything, who would be the vehicle, the messenger?

Used to be my mother edited Ron Kovic’s **Born on the Fourth of July**; he was a paraplegic, Vietnam vet, anti-war activist with a special car he could drive, and we would drive around with him while he ranted manically.

Used to be my dad had a lovely long-term girlfriend Maggie who looked a little like Patti Smith and was an artist making biomorphic objects out of plaster and was a WASP from New England, loved dancing at SOBs, but got



cancer and passed away while still quite young, maybe early forties, and I still miss her.



Used to be my dad was still alive and I would walk past his loft at 69 Green Street late at night and see his light was still on and know that he was painting, which was what he most cared about, and now SoHo is fancy boutiques and rich people and all the artists moved out. And I miss him.

Used to be my two best friends were identical twins a year older than me who lived in Chelsea and whose parents were legendary, mad actors but we were all too sensitive and

overweight and in high school we would go to Peppermint Lounge and The Tunnel and even Studio 54 during the Club Kids heyday where I would try to chat up New Jersey girls dressed in elaborate Goth outfits with a fairly low success rate.

Used to be I always knew  
something was deeply wrong  
but I didn't  
know what it was — only  
understood much later.

Used to be we all wanted to be poets like Dylan Thomas or Ginsberg and played Dungeon & Dragons in binges, often bending or ignoring the rules or the rolls of the multi-color polygon-shaped dice.

Used to be many of my school friends had gigantic, labyrinthine apartments on the Upper West Side you could actually get lost in.

Used to be Teachers, Teachers Too, and Joyous Lake around 80th and Broadway near a few bookstores and mom and I went to them all the time for dinner, really looked forward to that.

Used to be after dropping out of college I met Julie, my first girlfriend, at Teachers Too, she was our waitress and had dropped out of Hampshire after going to Bronx Science

with my childhood friend Phineas who dated her, and I met her in high school and had an enormous crush on her. And it was Saint Patrick's Day and she was wearing a shiny green bowler hat made of cardboard and I don't remember how I asked her out.

Used to be time moved at a slowly, steadily increasing clip until I rediscovered psychedelics in my late twenties, which slowed down time, changed my perception of time, twisted my understanding of reality so that for decades I never felt the slightest bit of nostalgia for anything in the past or even thought about it so much, as I am doing now.

Used to be rotary phones, cassette tapes, answering machines, record players, electric typewriters, manual typewriters, fax machines.

Used to be the Arctic wasn't melting, or warming four times faster than anywhere else.

Used to be we would never imagine the Amazon rainforest collapsing as a functional ecosystem in another decade or two.

Used to be my father made tape recordings of his precious punk and new wave record collection for me to listen to on summer vacation and in college and I still have those tapes on a dusty shelf for no reason whatsoever.



Used to be Spring St Natural, Jerry's, but some places still exist like Fanelli's and the Ear Inn, where I would go with my dad and Maggie, sometimes mom also.

Used to be Mike Fanelli running Fanelli's and he would give me a Shirley Temple and sometimes an Indian head nickel for coming in as a kid (actually don't remember this but was told) with my dad when that was the only place open in the neighborhood, where all the painters drank and I would order a Coke or Shirley Temple.

Used to be five or six billion people on the Earth, now it's more than eight.

It goes on and on, time.

# Microdose Lockdown

Reivin Alexandria



My last acid trip in 2020 was surreal.

Chao squirms at my feet. My poor dog is frantic. Her wet eyes weigh me down. Her eyebrows emote, *I want to come with you*. She is my single unit of chaos.

Heart in knots, my racing thoughts pour into the sky. I hide tears as rusted clouds trickle across the cerulean sunset. The



atmosphere is foreign. Frivolous splashes and drunken laughter disturb me.

My neighbors in the apartment complex are breaking quarantine at the pool. I wave politely but keep my distance. Lockdown is becoming more strict but not everyone cares. I should introduce myself, except I don't want to catch the coronavirus.

Even though the pandemic  
seemed to appear out of  
nowhere, I foresaw it for  
years.

The air is dense with quarantine gossip and vaccine predictions. My boyfriend Nick and I are somewhere in the middle even though we are not sure what the middle is anymore. We take the pandemic seriously, but we also question the corrupt authorities behind the operation. We worry that the propaganda is a distraction from something bigger; we **speculate** that it's aliens.

Nick unpacks his guitar equipment. His pedal board is a command module. Sonic blue chrome, moon-silver buttons, mystic purple fonts. A vintage TV loops Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* near an unfinished robot. His house looks like a mid-century modern spaceship.

“Star Trek is our tripping theme,” he announces as he hands me a mini dress.

“I must be Troi,” I muse as I wield the acid.

Nick’s upstairs neighbor and Polyphonic Spree bandmate Bri swirls a bundle of sage. “Is it that awesome green-gel kind?”

Smoke cleanses me as I hand her a tab, “You know it is.”

Bri tosses on a red Starfleet uniform shirt. Her eyes roll back in bliss. “I’m setting up my cello and pedals. We should jam.”

Our acid’s shape reminds me of an iridescent computer chip. I laugh at the people on the TV going overboard with the theory that vaccines are laced with microchips. In spite of the apocalyptic absurdities churning outside of our ship’s doors, our setting is conducive to a heavenly night.

My vata is out of control. I plug in my vocal pedal as the ether in my blood surges because of the pandemic scare. *I will play it safe and microdose*, I decide as I sliver the crescent under my tongue. Nick pops a little more than the recommended dose. He inputs our launch time on the back of the door.



“9:32 pm. And we look perfect.” He hands Bri and I the Star Trek pins that he DIY’d for the occasion.

“We are official now.” Nick’s mood erases my fear of uncertainty. The constellations prepare our consciousness. They overlook our ascent like star sapphire portals.

We were journeying light years into deep space while society plunged into darkness. Even though I was anxious as humanity’s skull cracked open around me, together my crew and I were eager to initiate ourselves into the 2020 lockdown at full speed.

Time fractures around us. Nick stands in a melting corner. I can't see his face. Bri's voice echoes and yet is too quiet, "Have y'all seen the ghost family that lives here?"

I don't want to see. Cosmic intelligence merges into my mouth. Pranic waves shimmer and crescendo on my skin. I meditate on the nagas Rahu and Ketu as the LSD unhinges my ego. The head and tail of the dragon swallow and spit me out. They are the psychedelic catalysts of revolution and renaissance. When untempered, the shadowy lunar nodes wreak havoc on society's mental sphere.

"You need to know this mantra  
for what is to come."

The room is a kaleidoscopic panopticon. Fractalized blues and reds project harshly through the mod window. The furious rays threaten my body's fragile infrastructure. I snake in a feverish trance—network fried. Rumors of martial law. Experimental vaccines. An impending insurrection. Biowarfare. Police brutality. Government falsehoods. Climate apocalypse. UFO disclosure. I fold into a sacred mound—vulnerable and crushed by my country's destructive fate.

Even though the pandemic seemed to appear out of nowhere, I foresaw it for years. Online conspiracies alluded to a major global event that was scheduled to ignite around 2020. I witnessed synchronicities and had dreams that also

confirmed that a huge paradigm shift would occur. The acid would not let me escape these frightening realizations. The ambulance sirens outside of the window must have triggered a negative spiral. Each wail an apocalyptic horseman preparing for battle in my head.

As I writhed with questions and speculations, my fellow officers of the USS Enterprise coasted on a smoother course. Not nearly as bothered as me, Nick and Bri were paisley ripples in the room. *I'm so sleepy.*

“You can go to bed.” Nick chooses a foreign film to watch as he comforts me from the couch. We’ve been tripping for hours.

I am drained but too paranoid to be by myself, “I like it here on the floor.”

Before facing my fears alone in the bedroom, I crawl over to Nick’s lap and whisper a secret Sanskrit mantra into his ear.

“You need to know this mantra for what is to come.”

I pray that those syllables are a weapon. Nick has already forgotten how they sound.

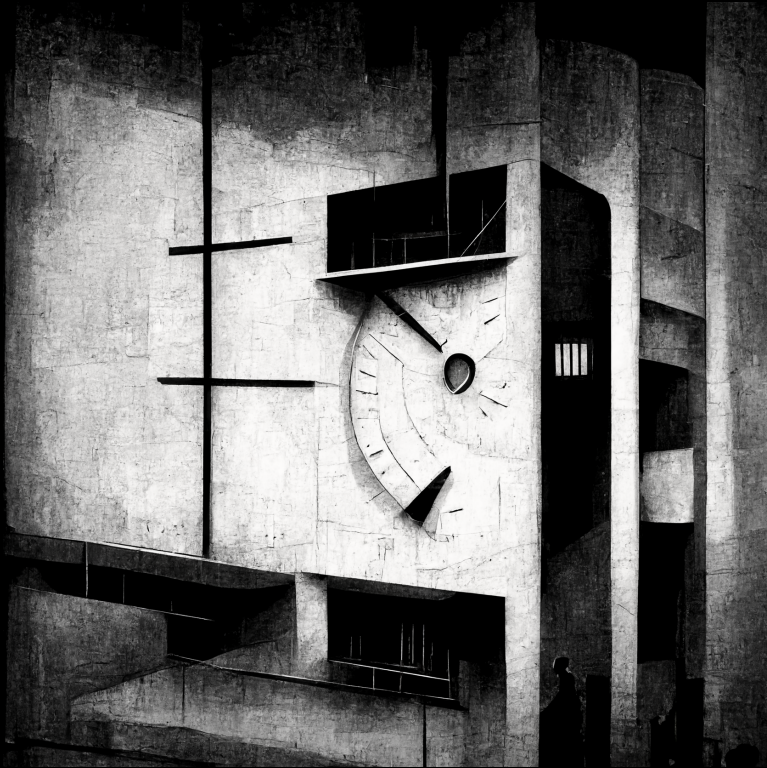
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# On the Clock

Arielle Friedman



The horizon was gleaming metal and glass, broken up by screaming construction projects, the smell of exhaust, and brutalist facades from the 1970s, when the city was torn down and rebuilt as a monument to the future.

I'd moved to Toronto as an experiment with capitalism. So far, it seemed I had little to offer. I'd gotten a startup job, with few hours and little pay, which consisted of combing

through spreadsheets, columns of figures, which, no matter how many times I went over them, never seemed to add up.

I began comparing my life's Actuals to its Theoreticals, who I was to who I could have been, I found myself wanting.

I'd been listening to Jordan Peterson. He believed that life could be meaningful, on a deeper level than I'd ever dared imagine, and the prospect thrilled me; the rhythm of his message seemed to match the logic of a spreadsheet:

“How many things do you do in your life that are fundamental? You have a career and your education. You have your friends. You have your family, your parents and siblings and so forth, you have your relationship, that's it. There's four things. Now, you know you can expand that to some degree, you can have, maybe you're creative, you make good use of your personal time, there are other things which aren't trivial—but those four things are canonically important. You miss one of them, and you're going to pay for it.”

I began comparing my life's Actuals to its Theoreticals, who I was to who I could have been, I found myself wanting. I had no partner, no children, and no career. I

regarded all three with various degrees of ambivalence, but their total absence felt calamitous.



I'd once lived in a different place, among a different set of ideas, where it was easy to believe in the value and dignity of every human being regardless of what they produced. This perspective now eluded me, at least when it came to myself.

I did Jordan Peterson's future authoring program, where you sketch out both your best-case and worst-case future scenarios. My best-case was vague, but my worst-case was

stark: myself, in late middle-aged, obese, with opinions about everything and nothing valuable to contribute, insufferably narcissistic. I'd still be living with my dad, but at this point he'd have gotten sick and I'd be taking care of him, so bitterly we'd fight all the time. I even wrote in a dog we both loved, which by this point would be dead.

I felt my life was over—that I'd missed some crucial inflection point and there was nothing left but slow decline. Some women lost their fertility at 33, and I was certain that fate awaited me. My youth became a metaphor for creative potential: my ability to attract people, to live with freedom and abandon, to generate new life, both conceptually and biologically. I felt crunched against that wall, beyond which time would slow and sink, my creative output stagnate, my life ebb into meaninglessness.

I joked and smiled as the technicians handed me paperwork, took my blood, prodded me with an ultrasound machine. I'm not sure why I felt so impelled to make a good impression with everyone.

I decided to donate my eggs. I told people it was for altruistic reasons, but it wasn't. Donating was a backup

plan—like if I didn’t achieve anything meaningful, at least I’d have preserved some part of me, passed the buck down one generation, to a person who’d be raised by someone whose shit was far more together than mine.

A woman from the clinic contacted me—let’s call her Brittany. She explained the process: I’d fill out an online profile; recipients would browse, and if anyone was interested, I’d go in for a medical assessment, followed by emotional counseling. If all that went well, we’d proceed to the donation: they’d inject me with high levels of hormones to induce hyperovulation, and then they’d use needles to extract the eggs.

Was the process safe?

“Absolutely.” They couldn’t guarantee anything, of course, and there was the risk of ovarian hyperstimulation syndrome, but that was rare, and she herself, Brittany, had donated six times and always had a wonderful experience. “There’s no evidence of long-term risk.”

I filled out the online profile: educational background, height, weight, career, why do you want to donate? Upload photos here.



Egg donation taught me that each of my attributes can be separated out and assigned a value based on its genetic implications. Some examples:

- BSc in something which sounds hard: good
- Dad has an autoimmune disorder: bad
- Three grandparents alive and fairly healthy: good
- Height of 5'2": bad

In Canada we don't sell our eggs, at least not nominally, as Canada prohibits the sale of body parts. We're donating, not soliciting, though donors get paid—\$5000 per donation, although, as Brittany explained, I could bill the clinic for donation-related expenses. “Girl, pamper yourself. The clinic will pay.”

I was surprised when, a week after making my profile, I got a call. Someone was interested, a woman. We weren't allowed to communicate directly, so all questions flowed through Brittany. The potential recipient wanted childhood photos, so I dug some up from my dad's basement: in one I wore an oversized sweatshirt and leaned against the fridge, smiling dreamily past the camera.

One of my conditions for donating was that the child be allowed to contact me when they turned eighteen. I pictured myself at forty-six, well into the bleak future I'd sketched out, except now a teenager showed up on my doorstep. He'd look like me, or how I used to look. We'd go bowling.

I went for my diagnostic appointment, to assess my health and fertility. Floor-to-ceiling glass, leather seats, curved and gleaming surfaces—a private clinic, rare in Canada. I joked and smiled as the technicians handed me paperwork, took my blood, prodded me with an ultrasound machine. I'm not sure why I felt so impelled to make a good impression with everyone. I suppose it was a place where everyone had a positive impression of me, and I wanted to sustain and augment the effect.





The dates for the donation cycle grew closer. Brittany took to pumping me up: “Lady, you ready for a cycle?” I sent back emails full of exclamation points, telling her how ready I was. She was like the cool girl in high school—I wanted her to like me.

I’d begun looking into the long-term effects of egg donation. It turned out there was almost no information. Women who undergo IVF—women like the recipient, older and struggling to conceive—are placed in a registry, their results closely monitored. This was not the case for donors.

In the IVF economy, donors are the limiting factor—the commodity clinics are selling, and there's not enough to meet demand. If there were to be a long-term study, and that study showed a risk to donors, clinics would be obliged to disclose this. As it stands, the clinic can tell donors not to worry—"there's no evidence of long-term risk." Even if that evidence has never been sought.

Meanwhile, there were worrying anecdotes. A lot of women who'd donated in their 20s went infertile or developed breast and ovarian cancers in their 30s. Without a study, no one could prove causation—you'd expect occasional coincidences of this type—but there sure were a lot of stories. And the hormones used to stimulate hyperovulation are known to cause female reproductive cancers in other contexts.

We went back and forth about  
the risks of egg donation.  
There's no evidence of  
long-term effects, he said,  
but if you have doubts, don't  
do it. Just don't do it.

A new worst-case scenario surfaced: myself, at thirty-five, with some horrifying health problem, wondering if the egg donation had something to do with it...

Whenever I thought of the egg donation, I began to feel sad. What did it say, that I was willing to do this to myself for people who didn't know me, and a child I might never meet?

I was at a grocery stall, picking out fruit in the open air, when the doctor called with the results of my diagnostic appointment. He had the air of a proud father going over a happy report card: these are the kinds of numbers we like to see, he said, referring to my hormone levels and what they implied about my fertility. Very nice numbers, we don't see numbers like this often.

I know you're probably not supposed to tell us this kind of thing, I said. But, if you could give me some kind of timeframe...

"Oh you'll be able to have kids till your early forties, no problem."

We went back and forth about the risks of egg donation. There's no evidence of long-term effects, he said, but if you have doubts, don't do it. Just don't do it. You're healthy, why do it if you have doubts?

But if you tell me it's safe...

There's no evidence of long-term effects. But if you have doubts, why take the risk, you're young, there's no need.



Against all odds (and against the financial interests of the clinic), the doctor did seem to care. He'd already given me one major gift: ten years of fertility beyond what I'd feared. But there was another, this one more subtle: he seemed to be saying that (a) aging notwithstanding, I was still full of potential, and (b) the donation would jeopardize that potential.

I told him I'd think about it. The next day, I got a terse email from Brittany: the doctor said I was dropping out, so she'd be canceling all future appointments. At first I was outraged—the doctor had stolen my initiative, had made a

choice I'd wanted to make myself. I considered pushing back—I'd asked for time to think, not a cancelation, I hadn't meant to drop out, the doctor had no right.

But I didn't. Instead, I went to a music festival. Late that night, high on mushrooms, I had a vision of the child I'd almost brought into existence. He would've fit right in, would've enjoyed the forest paths lit up blue and pink and green, the psytrance echoing through the trees, was one of those people who could enjoy a moment like this for exactly what it was, regardless of what it produced, or what it cost. He wanted to experience this world. He begged me to fight for him.

I'm sorry, I told him. I wish you could exist, but I can't give you any part of myself.

I've decided to keep it for me.



Generated by Midjourney, in the style of brutalism.

*Arielle is a writer based out of Mexico and Canada.*



# Just in time

Jeff Muñoz



As a child I had recurring dreams of floating in darkness. I saw a ribbon of light that seemed to wind nowhere to nowhere. A perfect sphere of light appears on the ribbon rolling on into the infinite. Until suddenly — the sphere stops — time freezes. I would startle awake in a fright.





I have wondered about the dilemma of time. Growing-old. What does that mean? I find myself perplexed by the programs of culture/society and the influence of family through ancestral myth and genetic inheritance.



We all are doing time. Cease doing, time  
suspends. Due to karma, action in the  
world is difficult to stop. Is the past but the  
wheel of time circling upon the hub of now?



The impulse to act is survival. Hungry, seek out food. Thirsty, find water. Tired, rest. Energized, run and play. Most of all survival of self-image. We all carry the burden of time upon our backs. I struggle forward into an imaginary future.





Can I slip through the spokes of present into  
no-time?



Images generated by Midjourney, in the style of William Blake

# Time and the Infinite Game

Guy James



*Infinite players cannot say when their game began, nor do they care. They do not care for the reason that their game is not bounded by time. Indeed, the only purpose of the game is to prevent it from coming to an end, to keep everyone in play.*

— James P. Carse, *Finite and Infinite Games*



I cracked a tooth the other day, eating cereal. There was no pain; the nerve had already been deadened a decade ago. An old filling had broken. I wondered if that dentist was still there, if he would recognize me now, with more white hairs in my beard; if his wife would smile at me when I came into the reception. Once I saw them walking down the street, a winter sun breaking through the chilly air, wrapped in baggy woolen sweaters, maybe from Argentina, where they come from, holding hands. They couldn't have looked less like a dentist and his receptionist.



The sea seems to hold such violence, each wave breaks with ferocity on the sand. Yet I can leave my towel just beyond its reach and be sure it will still be there when I come out of the water. The sand was once rocks; it has been pounded into something irreducible.

The purpose of a finite game is for me to win and you to lose.

The purpose of an infinite game is to realize that one is playing a game, and to go on playing.

"It seems like only yesterday..."

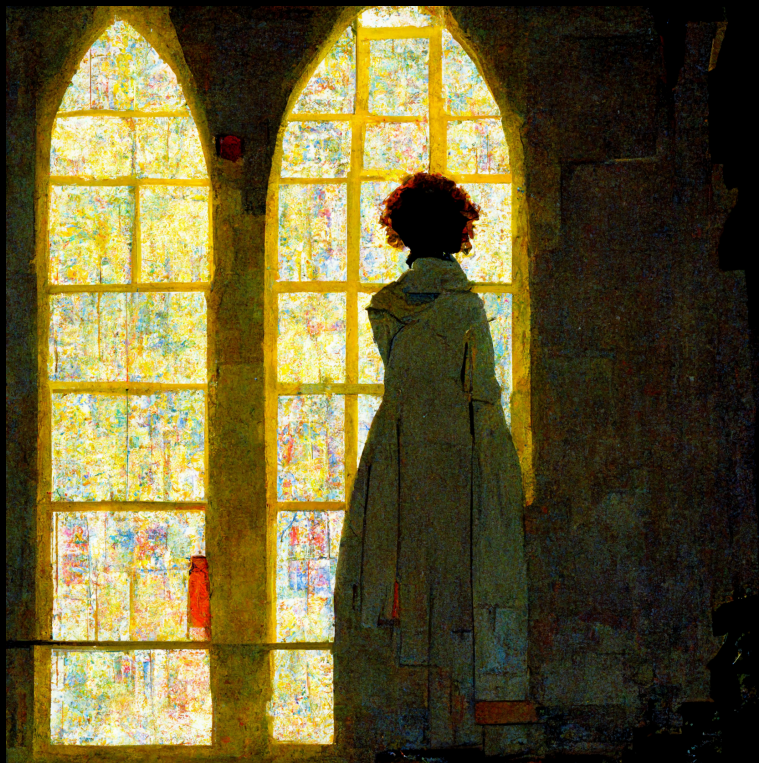
The crematorium chapel, like a low box, crouching at the edge of the city, seemed to give off a repelling force. She couldn't face going in there, yet knew she had to. This is the place where regrets linger, past the edge of society's gardens, where brambles grow, and what truly happened starts to be known.

She had to say 'goodbye', and realize that all the things that were unsaid would now stay that way. Her body was tense from the effort of holding back reality.

The neat poplars which lined either side of the white gravel path, immaculately tended by now invisible beings, told her that there was no running away. Once she got out of the car and started walking between them, she would be Seen. Maybe not by human eyes, but by the god of her



conscience, the eye that sees everything as it is, not as we would like it to be.



*The relative and the absolute meet like two arrows in mid-air — The Heart Sutra*

When one identifies with limitation, one enters into the world of time, and of death. What is unlimited cannot die, indeed has never joined the world of manifestation, has never been born. Yet to be incarnate is to live within limitation. Freedom is to realize this, yet to cease identification with it. This takes place in the body, the limited, dying, miraculous, body.

What does it mean to identify with limitation? It means to believe the thoughts, and the feelings in the body, that tell me I am broken and need to be fixed, and that there is never enough and never will be enough.

Once she got out of the car  
and started walking between  
them, she would be Seen.  
Maybe not by human eyes, but  
by the god of her conscience,  
the eye that sees everything  
as it is, not as we would  
like it to be.

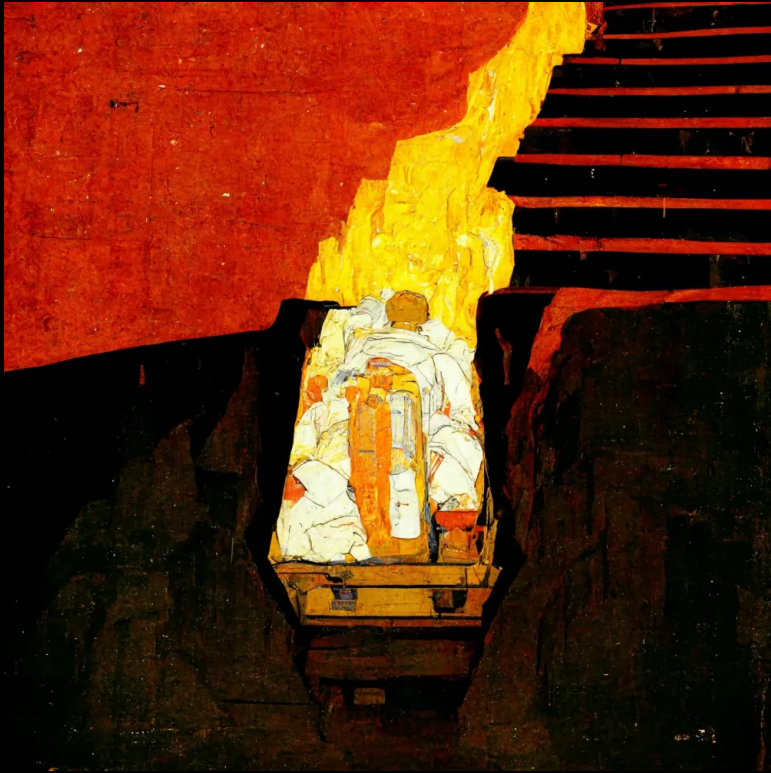
Consciousness has mis-identified itself with the embodied feelings of limitation. I have taken myself to be problematic, troubled, broken. The infinite game has taken itself to be finite. God has forgotten she is playing a game with herself, and thinks she, as little ol' me, is losing to an 'other'.

My tongue keeps seeking out that broken tooth.

*A junkie runs on junk time. When his junk is cut off, the clock runs down and stops. All he can do is hang on and wait for non-junk time to start. A sick junkie has no escape from external time, no place to go. He can only wait.*

— William S. Burroughs, *Junky*

The metal doors opened, and there was a mechanical whirr as the conveyor belt carrying the coffin started moving. It passed through the aperture and the doors began to close behind it. The flames beyond, already springing up greedily to devour it, were just visible to the congregation before the doors fully closed. The brutal profanity of the real, penetrating the smooth surface of ceremony.



She felt vertigo, a disbelief so profound that her body could not contain it. This could **not** be happening, for Christ's sake. Her baby... going into the flames... was this even real? What the fuck had happened, how had we ended up here? It

was his fault, that fucking piece of shit, giving her fucking drugs... and now I'd never see her smile again. I'd never see her lazing in front of the TV, foot hanging off the sofa down towards the floor, head on an orange cushion, on a summer's day, ignoring my pleas for her go to outside... Or coming home from the pub, a bit tipsy, smelling of fermented hops and malt, giving me a messy hug and saying sorry for being a bitch earlier.

God damn that slimy fucking vampire, he stole my baby, he stole my whole fucking life.

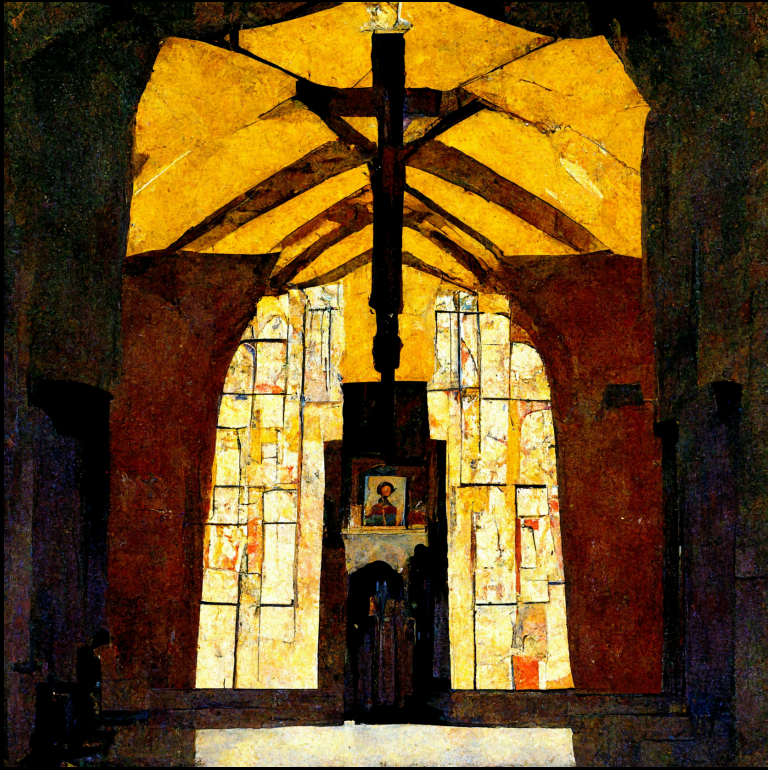
She let out a scream in the chapel which split the heavens. Christ looked up from his cross as if waking from a slumber.

*“Their profits depend on aquifer depletion. In other words, there is a multibillion-dollar corporate interest to prevent regulation and to pump the water until it’s gone.” —from the book Running Out, about the Ogallala Aquifer*

When we identify with the finite game, with limitation, we align ourselves with time, with scarcity, with the need to win, to have power over others, to do it to them before they do it to us.

When we play the finite game knowing it is within the infinite game, that game which is outside time, outside limitation, in what is called eternity, we can enjoy the sense of reality generated by limitation, the knowledge that this is

going to end, but we know this world of form is not all there is.



The fact that everyone is going to die gives a sense of the sacred to life. If our forms were immortal, like the mythical vampire's, we would only experience boredom and nihilism. Yet life itself is eternal. That which never began and never ends has produced scarcity, limitation, and mortality as a way of expressing its own sacred nature.



She never knew how beautiful she was. She will always remain that way; I will never see her as old, she is twenty-three forever.

Far in the distance, she could hear church bells.



Generated with Midjourney, in the style of Egon Schiele

# A Familiar Path

Jason Stern



*I have traveled a good deal, in Concord.*

*—Henry David Thoreau*

Walking a familiar path through the forest with a friend, we come to a pond. It's called Duck Pond, though I have yet to see any ducks. Together we look for the copperheads that sometimes sun themselves on the dam pilings above the stream flowing out of the spring-fed tarn.

From a distance, I see what look like sticks, but on closer inspection, I notice that they are snake skins. A mosaic sheath rests on each of the two pilings, and I envision the two snakes undergoing the ritual of skin-shedding together.

By association, I remember a line from a Leonard Cohen song, and recite it to my friend:

*I heard the snake was baffled by his sin  
He shed his scales to find the snake within  
But born again is born without a skin*

One rich experience follows another, past the pond and up a steep hill, traversing open fields of clover and milkweed and sumac. We walk this path in every season, and in each season the journey reveals new meaning.

We walk at dusk when the sun casts a stark light from the edge of the sky. Everything is illuminated. Dusk, as well as dawn, is the time of day that the Vedic tradition calls *sattvic*, signifying a quality of dynamic balance and charged stillness. The motionless point at the apex of a pendulum's swing, the minute pause between the inhale and exhale of a breath, the regenerative quality associated with clear awareness.

Walking the path in early June, we hear the sounds of innumerable insects and birds. We walked the same route six months earlier, in the middle of winter, the morning after an ice storm, trees and grasses sheathed in ice.



Nothing stirred, save the wind playing the icy trees like a flute. The life that is now on the surface was sleeping then.



I have been coming to this forest long enough to notice the trees grow larger and new growth springing up beneath the canopy. The impression is something like a Hudson River School painting, not copied from a photograph but composed over weeks or months of sitting in one spot, condensing impressions received over time onto a single deep and living canvas.

As we walk, we speak about *noumena*, the Earth upon which life is born, lives, and dies, unchanging and yet subtly transformed by the processes unfolding on the surface.

What is arising now will  
change or disappear tomorrow  
or perhaps in a thousand  
years. In this long view,  
there is no need to react or  
hold opinions for or against  
anything.

In touch with this reality of an expanded present moment, cycles of time in the aggregate, my woolly garment of attention is not as caught by the burrs of short-lived phenomena. I see that what is arising now will change or disappear tomorrow or perhaps in a thousand years; that each arising in myself, in nature, in human society is a brief gamut within a larger cycle. In this long view, there is no need to react or hold opinions for or against anything.

Arriving home from the walk I am greeted by my partner of several decades. I see in her face the 12-year-old girl that I met in the nearby village 40 years ago. I see the radiant and intense 20-something, the pregnant mother-to-be, the perimenopausal beauty coming into her power. All her phases, her ups and downs, joys and sorrows, gains and

losses are present in this being whose deeper nature is revealed in an eternal instant. In the face of a fleeting vision, I feel no lack and no gain, nothing to lose or attain, only completion, and love.

# The Bench Coin Gold and Swords

Ana de Portela



It has been written that when Picasso painted *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.K.)* he had the Four of Swords affixed to his studio door. I read tarot for amusement and follow some astrology. The card at my door would be a sculptor at his work bench surrounded by eight gold coins. Depending on interpretation It could mean advancement or

bad speculation. Bench could mean jury or verdict. Apparently the early Italian merchants conducted business on benches in the open air. Sometimes I worry about not selling enough art; will I be reading tarot cards on a park bench some day??

They were playing jazz. Which could be good but, it was smooth jazz. That was the first omen. "So whose playlist are we listening to?" I asked the teller, "Nobody from around here, it's from corporate, we have to listen to that all day."

At the end of every month when rent is near due you see on the curbs of New York discarded lamps, couches and mattresses. My mother had a faded Victorian couch in the garage where she secretly stashed extra cash and her gold jewelry. She worked a full time job and went away one weekend for a break. My older sister Sierra (*Cierra la Puerta* as I called her) came in from college to look after me. Ever industrious she had a yard sale to make some extra money. There went the gold with the couch. My mother wailed. What good is your college education? You should just drop out now and pray you marry rich!!!

My first bank in New York was on the corner of Spring and Lafayette in Little Italy. It had a beautiful soaring interior with dimly lit arched walls of soft mellow marble with hues of gold and rose. It has since been replaced by a big pharmacy chain with bright fluorescent lights. They push high volume prescriptions and flu shots. My new bank is spotless. Clean and well maintained windows with green carpet on the walls and fake marble on the floors. Real green ivy is planted throughout. There was a machine where children could trade in their pennies. Lollipops for the kids, dog treats for the pets and free ball point pens available to everyone. A uniformed police officer with a badge was stationed at the door with a real gun. The bank felt clean, safe and transparent. They were playing jazz. Which could be good but, it was smooth jazz. That was the first omen. “So whose playlist are we listening to?” I asked the teller, “Nobody from around here, it’s from corporate, we have to listen to that all day.”

Slowly things began to change. What really alarmed me: they started playing country and western music.

Corporate made some attempts at being sustainable. I was impressed when the Union Square branch partnered with a local landscape company and installed vertical gardening in the entry. The smell of fresh earth and barnyard filled the vestibule. But I was a little unsettled by taking my money from an automated teller that was disguised as a tree. The

message was, “Yes your money does grow on trees and it's falling from the sky and blowing in the wind!” Then there were a series of unfortunate media campaigns. One was a four year old girl with crazy eyes pushing an empty grocery basket. Why was she alone? Where was mom and dad? Was the message that banking was so easy even a child could do it? Then there was a video. A clean cut man approaches another man and tussles him from behind pushing him into a pool, they tumble forward smiling and splashing. The tag line was “No surprises from behind. We are in This Together. Your Money is Safe with Us!”

Slowly things began to change. The windows got sooty and the ivy wasn't watered. It turned brown and was never replaced. There was no air conditioning in the summer, and it was cold in the winter. The stand-at-attention guard was replaced with a zombie that stared at his cell phone. The family-friendly coin machine was taken out. Apparently a class action lawsuit determined that the bank was making a profit from the children. Then the homeless began camping out and people with no accounts were demanding bills in exchange for their coins, waving socks filled with nickels, dimes and quarters; they were grabbing pens and lollipops and eating the dog treats and hurling insults as they stormed out. The bigger omen, what really alarmed me: they started playing country and western music. The message was loud and clear. Somebody did someone wrong and there were tears and heartbreak. I was getting skeered.

On a recent Saturday morning I received a call from the bank. A voice told me that this particular branch was

closing and I needed to remove or transfer my safe—immediately. Was this a prank?

I was aware from the space weather report that Venus was about to move retrograde, which astrologically could translate into foundation shake-ups and great sorrow. I thought my money and gold were okay in the bank. I looked at my tiny apartment, mentally arranging what I could do without... I rushed to my branch and met with the manager, who was dressed sporty and corporate. Green velvet sweats and a hoodie. It was thirty minutes to closing. “We gotta pull this off quick,” he warned me—

“Sit tight, I have Fidelity on HOLD.”

I had no idea what that meant but I had a twisted image of Fidelity hoisting a piñata above Venus as she swiped left to right, and sliced up and down with her wings. She was blindfolded, with a bunch of grapes clenched between her teeth. The manager jiggled the keys in front of my face to bring me back to reality and then tossed them to a teller. “C’mon girl we got this.”

I had fifteen minutes to empty the safe, my gold and cash would be secure. I had all of Saturday afternoon to find a couch.

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*Ana is an artist based out of New York.*



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