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Some Theories of Awakening

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Dream Idyll (A Valkyrie), Edward Robert Hughes

Somewhere in the depths of years to come, in the taiga around a moss-covered den, will gather people with flowers in their hands, fruits in baskets and nervous smiles on their faces. What emerges won't be a bear, nor even some divine being making its umpteenth return to the world, but merely a maiden of mystical disposition who, for whatever reason, hasn't fancied waking up from whatever dream—hasn't fancied it for so long that her underground kip could be measured in years, thousands, millions, or perhaps billions of seconds, depending on how one prefers to reckon time.

The crowd will be doing what crowds do best—chanting, clapping, paparazzing, orchestrating and cacophonising a randomly sparked emotion, until one of the leaders of this spectacle raises his hand, calling the gathered legions to order. They will freeze in anticipation of words, and an existential silence will fall.

Though everyone'll know the figure before them's human, few'll be able believe it. Her hunched body covered in dirt and moss will be shivering either from cold or from excess attention, and her eyes will be shut tight against the aggressive light show of varying brightness.

—Ah, risen at last, have we?—the leader of the gathering will say and pat the den dweller on the shoulder.

Still coming to her senses, she'll flinch and eye the leader with incomprehension, a cocktail of surprise and freshly-brewed anger.

—Risen at last, have we?—the deputy leader will say and also pat the den dweller on the shoulder with the sweaty hand.

—Risen at last, have we?—the president of a very important country will say, next up to give her shoulder a pat.

—Risen at last, have we?—the president of a country that is also important, but a bit less so, and thus got a worse spot in the queue, will say and also pat the shoulder.

—Ah, risen at last, have we?—someone from the following little humans in the seemingly endless queue will say and do the same as several patters before, and millions of patters after.

(“Bloody hell,” the den dweller will think, “no way I’m waking up...”)
she’ll grimace and present her shoulder.

—Ah, risen at last, have we?—her mum will say, patting her shoulder, treacherously open the thick curtains and leave the bedroom where, after an eternity of fame as the most well-slept person in the universe, her daughter will find herself alone with dismay. She will shed the pink veil from her eyelids, lie for another couple dozen minutes, have porridge with hazelnuts for breakfast and, led by parents on both sides (“Like a blind bat, I swear...”) will toddle off to first grade, after which falling back asleep will be impossible, after which life will go downhill along well-worn tracks.

From some abysses will emerge a substrate called Time, which our

heroine will have to reckon with. Funny thing is, it differs from the time that lives in clocks and ticks or pours like sand or falls as a shadow from the sun onto the dial, or rather, it has nothing in common with that time at all, so much nothing that it wouldn't hurt to have a new separate word for it. ("I'm sick of your language games," the lethargic heroine will think," don't call different things by the same name!"). Course, one can ignore this "Time" and pay it no mind, but at some point it, like everyone else, will pat you on the shoulder and say:

—Ah, risen at last, have we?

—Sod off, let me sleep some more!—the awakened one will snarl at Time, burrowing into the blanket as if into a mossy den.

—Risen at last, have we?—Time will repeat itself, grinning with all thirty-two (or however many teeth personifications of concepts are supposed to have?)

—I have a temperature,—she will theatrically proclaim to Time, plug her ears, hold her breath and lie like that until her face turns pale.—I'm not feeling well. Head's spinning. cough-cough

—Risen at last, have we?—Time will repeat itself again, grab her by the ankle and pull her out of bed onto the cold linoleum and drag her along the corridor while her nails will sketch long feline tracks.

At some point she will clutch at the doorframe and squeeze her eyes shut to either wake up faster or perhaps fall back asleep, but neither will

happen. Time will keep pulling her leg, slowly, without particular effort, but with particular persistence and stubbornness, for such is its, Time's, nature. All of human existence is nothing but resistance of a heroine to Time, and Time to heroine, be it love or hate.

The logic of life in dreams differs from the logic of life in life; in dreams something always happens. In a couple hours, one can be born, go to school, leave one's native City N, stop a zombie apocalypse (or start), plant a tree and immediately see it grow, maybe even wake up into a new dream, all while in life nothing happens, so much nothing that there will be naught to remember later, and everything will seem so quick and rapid, as if it's not a memory but a dream, and not just a dream but a flash, a temporal anomaly, like the one you fall into for a couple of minutes during the most boring university lecture at nine in the morning on Monday. In the world barely an hour has passed, but inside, in the sleepy chambers, first all existence ended, descended to the most nothingiest "Nothing", and then consciousness spread like mould across the universe, and it's as if you were born again ("My head's banging..."), but some professor will want something from you:

—Ah, risen at last, have we? —he'll say.

Everyone around will giggle. The professor will smirk craftily.

—Perhaps you can help us... when we talk about realising something significant, what's the most terrifying thing about such an awakening?

The professor's spectacles and two dozen young eyes will stare at our

heroine with a thirst for knowledge and answers, and she'll go and straighten up in her chair and blurt out with all her ironic might:

—That the alarm keeps ringing.

What's been realised can't be unrealised, can't be rerealised, or as grandad used to say, "can't push a turd back up your arse". Impossible to carry on, impossible to stop. Don't want to sleep anymore, want even less to get up, move limbs, wash up, cook, breathe, trudge off to some jobs and slowly stew in their capitalist cauldron, play silly with some atlantic planktons until the end of time from its very beginning when Atlas took a sec to scratch his arse, and Atlantis went straight to the bottom. Now there's some fiasco for you. Beautiful, ineffably beautiful it looked even in those moments when every piece of its magnificence was hiding in the dark waters of the ocean named after it by the ancient Greeks. Sad, ineffably sad, but more epic than ever looked the sinking world, when the queen of Atlantis, finding herself on the highest building, was sinking with it and refused to swim, though she knew she could. All she needed to do was lie on the water's surface, didn't even need to do anything. Water's salty—you won't sink. But nah, she claws onto the tower's top, doesn't want to leave her native expanses.

—Ah, risen at last, have we?—our heroine will say to her cat cling onto the scratching post.—We'll be catching mice in the new house, you little shitter ("That's what grandad called us both often.") Mum and dad promised loads of them mouses. Or mice. We're taking the scratching post with us too.

The heroine will clutch the cat under her arms and drag her to their old family car, smelling of machine oil and air freshener's attempts to fight it. Departing from their native harbour, they will together with the cat watch the diminishing wooden house until it drops off the horizon and sinks. Surrounded by unpacked boxes, together with the cat, they will lie on the fresh, but also cold linoleum of the new flat, and read the works of great anarchists absorbing the great anarchist vibe, so close, as it will seem to our heroine, to the feline one, so close, as it will seem to our heroine, to herself. Together with the cat they will swear that they will always walk on their own, do their own thing, choose their own cigarettes and energy drinks and booze, learn to play bass on their own, shave their temples clean on their own, start the most avant-garde and indie punk band and record their best hits on cassette in basements, stairwells, abandoned manufactories, where the ground is strewn with syringes (be it basements, stairwells, or abandoned manufactories), choose their own fiancé or fiancée, such who will also choose them on their own, walk until dawn on their own, be sad and merry with but a couple of notes, infinity of broken rhythms and rough screams, invent intoxicating, and then sobering mixtures with modicum of unwonted levity ("My head's banging"), meanwhile engaging into all sorts of risqué and indecent things that even the most libertine cat shouldn't see.

—Ah, risen at last, have we?—the fiancé will declaim and gently kiss her forehead and offer breakfast in bed, which the heroine will have to decline, for it's improper. Anarchism is anarchism, but teeth should be brushed first, and anyway it's some posh twaddle. Normal people don't

leave their bed not to have breakfast there but have a few minutes to bask in the rays of sun tickling skin through the blinds, lethargate, dream, watch tiktoks, musicate with fingers various broken rhythms on the plastic wood of an IKEA bedside table.

Best way to stick two fingers up at Time's authority is either to forget about it or to wait for something else, something grand, cathartic, striking, best of all written in dactylic hexameter. Then the ordinariness of "eternal now" will turn into a reel of moments, similar to how childhood looks in memory, an album of old, overexposed photographs of people either rehearsing or practicing happiness, an album that's both cool and cringe and nostalgic to look at. Then new events will simply stop happening. Time will stretch out, and from a fast river that doesn't freeze in winter with rapids and whirlpools, the heroine will suddenly find herself in a deep lake in some temporal solitude without skills for overcoming those bottomless and boundless waters.

—Ah, risen at last, have we?—sadly or merrily from afar will sound the voice of the latest ancestor.

They all will have lined up in a queue to look at our heroine: all from parents to paramacia, soulless cosmic dust, or divine spark.

—Risen at last, have we?—the next one will ask.

—Risen at last, have we?... Risen at last, have we? ... Risen at last, risen at last, risen at last, risen at last, have we? ... have we? ... have we? ...—
And so on and so forth into the depth of generations until our heroine

will stop understanding a word in their ancient and lost in time languages.

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