

myspace blogs
on blogs, life, whatever

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1. If you can't beat 'em

As Jimmy Joyce once (almost) put it:

And the all sighed in with the shoutmost shoviality. Agog and magog and the round of them a blog

Ah my dreams of a syndicated column in newspapers round the world, what became of them? My one foray into journalism, an article in The Big Issue, was so hacked about by subeditors (a moan I shall doubtless return to) that if my prose even began to match my aspiration, no one would know. But laziness is the main enemy, that and lack of confidence. One rejection letter is enough to convince me of crappitude, despite the assurances, despite the fact that Enid Blyton papered a wall with hers and many famous books were chucked out by any number of publishers' readers. —So are the crap ones, says the little voice; most stuff is rejected because it's shite.

So when I wrote a weekly article about my life in sunny Spain back in 2000 I did try to interest the old Hampstead and Highgate Express in it, as my UK base was in the treetops of North West Twee. Good intentions of trying other papers dissolved as the weeks went by without a reply from the Ham and High (heaves a sigh). So I mailed it to chums and eventually stuck it on my fledgling website, where they still sit to this day, rarely if ever visited (though my Carnival pics are viewed almost daily by Spanish speakers, no doubt due to fortuitous searchable keywords). Since you ask, yes you may ~ www.lucidity.ltd.uk/camaronehome.htm.

So okay, I'm no Giles Coren, let alone Victoria or Alan (non-Brits, insert members of your own local journalistic dynasty of varying quality). But here in webland it matters not. No quality control, just people read you or they don't. So I shall try to blog twice weekly if not weakly, largely about the life here in the Abode of Stones in Auld Reekie (Edinburgh). But being me I probably won't tell anybody much about it. So if you are reading this you could be one of a very select few...

If you have friends, tell 'em.

3. Liz Jones's brother's partner's daughter's boyfriend's diary

You may not have heard of "the most neurotic woman in Britain" (not my words but a broadsheet reviewer). I suppose I should plug her book now I've mentioned her. If it's still available. To quote our good friends at Amazon: 'Liz Jones's Diary (how one single girl got married) is a hilarious and often heartbreakingly honest account of one relationship, from being stood up by the love of her life on Millennium Eve, to when she first meets a much younger and highly unsuitable man, through falling in love, getting married and finally, living together.' Who am I to disagree?

As implied above, this Liz Jones is the sister of the guy who lives with the (earthly) mother of La Ninfa Celestial with whom I have the extreme pleasure of cohabiting* and at whose twentieth birthday bash I met the eponymous Liz and her notoriously 'unsuitable' autre demi (now a tv star in his own right). So I was kind of hoping to pick up a bit of vicarious notoriety by naming these incoherent rambblings after her tightly-written ones, much as they in turn had intertextually referenced Helen Fielding's Bridget. My intentions, the reader will quickly realise, inhabit a very different universe to the one where actions can be found. In that plane, these finely-honed essays are already in book form ~ highly successful book form at that, having initially appeared on my own (Lucidity Ltd ~ that's Lucidity Ltd) website, from whence they were pimped around various editors and publishers and the rest is history. In that universe.

They were to be a blow-by-hammer-blow account of the construction of the shelves, the settling into the flat and the anything else I could think of. Copious notes were made, scribbled on the back of any passing tee shirt in my sadly illegible handwriting. But a team of graphologists, archeologists and doctors are even now working hard, burning the midnight oil at both ends, to extract any pearls of wisdom or nuggets of wit for your delight (and my surprise). I shall attempt here to give you the results, even if not as originally envisaged. After all, they were most definitely going to be essays. Articles at the very least. Just not, under any circumstances, blogs.

Oh well, as they say up here, the best planned lays of Micean men ...

*stop press: at least I have had said pleasure until now but that may soon change for reasons unknown but who can tell. Boo hoo.

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5. Blog and be damned (with faint praise?)

Mr Quentin Crisp anticipated with delight “that great party at the end of the world, where *everybody* will be talking and *nobody* will be listening.” I doubt if he had the internet in mind but it looks like that may well be the venue of choice. Even now, my spies tell me, over eighty percent of Korean social interaction takes place online. Now I am not told whether this is eighty percent of the people doing everything online or everybody doing eighty percent of their interaction thus. But it’s a strange thought. In terms of blogs and bulletins (let us ignore for the moment the perilous intimacy of the chatroom), it’s rather like the poor late-night announcers on the BBC’s arty-farty Radio 3, who must sometimes wonder if their words are being addressed to anyone at all. At least the garrulous guests at the Crispian *craic* of doom can see, hear and *touch* their fellow revellers. Do Koreans party online, each bringing their own snax to their own bedroom, raising a glass of OB to their webcams while tumbleweed blows through the deserted streets of their Seoul-less cities?

Who cares? If a blog is created and no one ever visits the site, does it make a funny little whimpering noise or a faint, pathetic scratching? If a tree falls in a forest when no one is there to hear it, can I sneak it home and make shelves from it?

Do I care if no one reads my blogs? Wouldn’t I rather have a book published and storming the best-seller lists? Wouldn’t I rather have a column in a small-circulation magazine than a blog which nobody has the attention span (okay, patience) to plough through? Yes, of course; but those, I finally and reluctantly accept, are not available options to a man of little talent and less drive. So here I am, giving in and joining the groaning overblown edifice that is yourspace, ourspace,myspace; just one of a zillion wafflers. If you can’t beat ‘em, hide amongst ‘em.

At least I can see how many, or, rather, how few myspacemen have had a sneaky peek at my worms of wisdom, even if nobody passes a comment. But low numbers are so depressing ~ zeroes maybe less so. Why? Because if somebody has looked but not told all their friends to check it out, ... The one thing worse than not being noticed is being noticed and ignored.

But I have no desire to be the Bartleby of the unread blog (if you haven’t read Bartleby by Melville, you must ~ check out <http://www.bartleby.com/129/> ~ do it **now**). I am a man who needs shelves for his books, paint for his canvas, wine for his thirst, caviare for his general, sweets for his sweet and love for his soul. But most of all, just now, readers for his blogs. Which will, in the Universe of Intent, appear at least twice a week.

Ahmyspace! Ah Humanity!

8. Smother of Invention

Ideas, that's my *forte*. Well, it's more likely my *mezzopiano*, but it's louder than anything else I have to offer. I'm always having them. And a concept is not without profit ~ save in my own apartment. I have already confessed to the yawning chasm that separates my good intentions from any semblance of action. A numbing shyness and no-bloody-idea-what-to-do-ness prevents me from ever achieving anything beyond scribbling a note in a small book, which I subsequently mislay (there are many of these small books about the planet, each with one illegible page of prose, verse or musings and a wodge of coffee-stained blank sheets). Novels, novelty household items (see my arse in blogs to come), shelves (of course) and even (mock not) comedy. Jack of all trades, crap at the lot, that's me. But it seems sometimes the ideas ain't so bad, cos they have a habit of cropping up in the so-called real world ~ starting with my classic school *Rolo Sensation* sketch which somehow appeared on *The Goodies* back in the Sixties, just weeks after being inserted into a school play 'ad-break'.

I once wrote an article about The BBC Proms for London's homeless persons' paper, *The Big Issue*, which included a brilliant joke about people who don't know their Arne from their Elgar. Not only were any sparkling qualities in my prose flattened out by subeditors but the names in said quip were replaced with the alliterative but dull 'Mozart' and 'Mahler'. Then, a week or so later, there's Rory Bremner on Radio 3 saying ... guess what?

No one has yet nicked my idea of a book ~ not a novel, a whole new narrative concept, you understand ~ about a naked woman walking the length of Britain, Land's End to John O'Groats. The idea came from a (rejected) motion at the Conservative Party's Scottish Conference in the 70's, saying something like "We call upon Her Majesty's Government to recreate the conditions in this land, whereby a young virgin can walk from Land's End to John O'Groats unmolested, even if she be naked, accompanied by a small child and carrying a bag of gold." but some sod called Stephen Gough has actually done the sodding nekked trek, thus removing the apparent originality from my sails. How long before somebody uses the innovative narrative technique? No, I'm not saying what it is: d'you think I'm that stupid? Shut up.

I should search my home for hidden mikes. Just because you're paranoid, as they say, ...

10. Critical Backlash

I was waffling recently about the way that other people seem to run with my best ideas well before I get round to it. Part of me simply accepts that the idea's time has come, it's amazing nobody has already done it, the *zeitgeist* was right so somebody would get there first ... ~ while the paranoid side of me wonders who is bugging my home, which of my friends is getting rich, whatever. In fact at one point I became convinced that a group of cormorants (or 'flight', to use the proper group noun), that frequented both the Thames by my office and the Hampstead pond near my home, were listening in on my conversations and selling on any gems they picked up. I could tell they were the same ones cos one had a mottled white breast ~ they can't fool me. But my therapist has all but convinced me cormorants don't do that.

But no one seems keen to duplicate my ideas for TV programmes *per se*. Okay Anne Robinson did get the flabby vehicle *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*, which bears some resemblance to my rather more raucous *We're Going Down the Pub*, where the guest chooses six drinking companions from history, literature or celebrityland with whom to get royally ratted. And as for *Desert Island Dicks* ... (Josephine Baker was my first choice, in a vat of banana custard).

One of my favourite such ideas, back in the Nineties, was based on a couple of BBC shows. After the success of *Around With Allis*, in which golfer Peter Alliss played a round of golf (*geddit?*) with a celebrity, while interviewing him or her, they tried *A Frame With Davis* where Steve 'Interesting' Davis bored someone to death while playing snooker against them ~ less clever title, likeable but less skilled host. My idea was the far more scintillating, *A Bout With Bruno*, smart *and* alliterative, where Britain's loveable heavyweight boxing champ got to interview some famous person, while knocking seven kinds of shit out of them.

Why that didn't get nicked I can't begin to understand but I do have a new idea along the same lines. *A Duel with Sewell* is a weekly arts discussion programme in which some celebrity, preferably highly skilled with firearms or pointy implements, after a token chat about life or something, gets to fight our most notorious art critic at dawn with their weapon of choice,. Yes I know the 'series' would probably only last for one prog ~ but it'd get great viewing figures ~ and wouldn't it be worth it?

11. The Laughter of Elves

I just noticed that if you remove the initial esses of 'self-slaughter', you get 'elf laughter'. Don't know why that amuses me. Desperation, maybe.

We nihilists know that "Life's a bitch and then you die." Buddhists, on the other hand know that, "Life's a bitch and then you die ~ then life's a bitch and then ..." *ad infinitum*. The First Noble Truth is that all life is suffering. While young, comfortably-off folks may protest that theirs isn't so, this is only because they (a) don't understand what the statement really means and (b) haven't lived yet.

But one of the places you can go, according to some schools of thought, where life is not so much of a bitch, is the heaven of the *Apsaras*, or Celestial Nymphs. They have various other names, including the Tibetan *Kardomah*, which to my generation was the Starbucks of the 1950's. A person who has led the right sort of life (whatever that may be) may find themselves reborn into this heaven, where he (or, I suppose, she) can spend a long time in the company of these delightful goddesses of sensual and sexual pleasure and where nothing he gets up to with them will count as bad karma, on account of they live only for pleasure and are up for anything (what makes me think this doctrine was thought up by a bloke?). But the real lesson is that all things must pass and to depart this heaven after hundreds of years of well-earned joy must be such a huge and painful wrench.

I don't know quite what I did right in this or previous lives. I've tried to be nice to people, even if it hasn't always worked, but quite what I did to merit the attentions of my very own *ninfa celestial* is anybody's guess (see my pics to hammer this point home). But three years is not what I understood from the leaflets and I'm equally in the dark about what I've done wrong to make her leave again. Maybe that's just what such whimsical creatures do, who exist only for pleasure. Maybe it was just a foretaste of the pleasures waiting for me when I pass to the next life. More likely, as the nihilist in me knows, it was just one of those things, the presence of which gave the illusion of meaning and whose departure just makes this pointless existence seem, despite the linguistic nonsense, even more pointless.

Or maybe there's just some loopy higher power out there who doesn't like being called crazy in public. I hope I'll be meeting him soon ~ sod therapy, I want to give him a piece of what's left of my mind.

(to be continued ...)

12. Hang On A Second, Cruel World

As usual, anything you can say about it has already been said by old Bill Shakespeare. The question even a happy nihilist often gets asked ~ why don't you do away with yourself, then (and stop bringing the rest of us down)? ~ is covered pretty well in *Hamlet*. "Thus conscience doth make cowards of us all", indeed. And cowardice keeps us conscious. But, as he also points out in *King Lear*, things aren't as bad as it gets, while we are still able to say "This is as bad as it gets." Very consoling, our Bill ~ "You think this is bad ~ just you wait."

Of course not all of us go round wishing that "the Everlasting had not fixed His cannon 'gainst self-slaughter". Come on! If I had a *cannon*, self-slaughter would be a piece of piss! And I could take a few others with me. What? Oh, *canon*, with one 'n'? Sorry.

But it's an odd thing. Suicide is quite a popular pastime, perhaps increasingly so in these troubled times but it's very hard to find any advice on the web on how best to go about it in the comfort of ones own home. Isn't it strange that I could probably find instructions for a million ways to maim and mangle my fellow man but so few to relieve him of my own depressing company, quickly and painlessly. Oh yes, we can find advice on where to go for assisted departure for the terminally ill but what about solo flights for the terminally healthy?

For the fear of dying is nothing compared to the fear of surviving. To wake up in a hospital bed, with sad-faced relatives all around, knowing that phrases like "cry for help," and "didn't really mean ..." have been filling the air ~ it's enough to make you want to end it all. Not to mention the anguish, turning rapidly to resentment, of those who might (albeit wrongly) think themselves responsible. And that's if you haven't caused yourself some permanent physical damage on the way. I've even heard of folks who've shot themselves in the head and lived! While some healthy, happy kid is probably falling off a low wall somewhere for the last time as you read this. Life, eh?

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But I suppose the reason is pretty obvious really. Popular pastime though it may be, it's not one anybody does (successfully) more than once, is it? Pace the Buddhists and their ruddy Celestial Nymphs (he said, without a trace of bitterness), let's assume life is a mercifully one-off bitch. So there's nobody who can endorse their suggested method with, "Well, it worked for me. Never felt a thing." Oh, well ...

[PS Don't worry, I am only joking ~ I think ~ if only because the force of cowardice is indeed strong in this one ~ and even Celestial Nymphs can change their minds ~ the last thing one wants is a *Romeo & Juliet* scenario where a returning *ninfa* bursts into the Abode of Stone to find a bloody corpse in the bath]

Afterthought:

I remember an unusually smart and clever joke from an old Nottingham Rag Mag ~ a man who wanted to kill himself read that sealing the car in the garage with the engine running was a good way (not so good for us non-drivers ~ you can pedal a bike for hours and you just get knackered!). So he did this but in fact it had the opposite effect. Having to walk everywhere instead of driving made him feel fitter and healthier ~ the only negative change he could discern was that it did seem to be affecting his brain, as he could no longer remember why he wanted to kill himself in the first place.

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13. The Moving Finger Wags

Life, such as it is, goes on. But, while waxing cynical about love, loss and the smell of cheese, I thought I'd put in my *dos céntimos* worth on the popular topic of globular warming. When even oil-rich billionaires like Al Gore (<http://www.robnewman.com/question.html>) feel moved to warn us all the way to the bank, maybe the rest of us really should be doing something. The Canute in me sees the futility of trying to hold back the tide, especially when it has a melting ice cap or two behind it; nonetheless, there's sardonic fun to be had in trying and it fills the time.

Child of the 60's that I am, I'm a fan of the writings of Ivan Illich (1926-2002: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ivan_Illich) Well, not the writing, which makes mine look lucid, but his ideas. Fundamentally these say that when society tries to solve problems using 'non-convivial' tools, they often serve only to make matters worse. Thus he argued that education makes us stupid, medicine makes us sick and that transport technology slows us down (factor in the total time you spend earning the cash to buy, maintain and run your car and hardly anyone averages better than 5mph). But when this happens, we just throw more of the same 'solution' at it, making it worse. My fellow Brits, consider the ever-increasing tests and tables imposed on the fruits of your loins and their teachers, taking up precious time, while the kids get dumber and dumber.

I'm not sure if he covered social order in this way but it seems a prime candidate. I'd be the last to advocate lynch-mob justice for anyone, except maybe antisocial mobile phone users, but letting 'the authorities' take away *all* the responsibility has all but removed the greatest force for social order: public disapproval. When I were a lad, if we so much as farted in public, some old codger would say "Now, then!" and everyone else around would nod in agreement. If it had even occurred to us to swear at them, much less attack them, we knew we'd be 'for it'. Now kids can retaliate with language, knives or tactical nuclear weapons, while everybody else hides behind a newspaper and pretends not to notice (thanks, guys!). Somebody here in Scotland the other day was beating up his girlfriend on a station platform, when he saw a passer-by merely *looking* at him. So he boarded the busy train, found the guy ~ and knifed him to death.

Trouble is, these convivial tools only work if they're also consensual and I don't know how we get back to that. Even so, I'm trying to revive them in the case of one small but highly offensive (and, let's not deny it, less likely to knife me) group, the owners of 4x4's, SUV's, call them what you will. Cutting through all the crap in their fake arguments for owning these status symbols (all dealt with on www.stopurban4x4s.org.uk), I wish to make them feel the weight of disapproval from those whose kids, as well as their own, they are depriving of a future.

I've simply started wagging an admonishing finger at any passing gas guzzler, backed up by an appropriately tutting facial expression. I don't do stationary vehicles, of course, that's stupid if they're unoccupied and risky if they aren't. Yes, I know ~ this is unlikely to have much effect: one man wagging a finger is a loony. But if enough of you join me, if mums can't jam the half mile of road between their bijou residence and the local school without having to answer embarrassing questions from their little darlings, then together we might make a difference. Never underestimate the power of denial ~ but it's nothing to the power of "Mummy, dearest, why do all those people despise you so?"

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15. A Moving Story

The sale of homes is like the course of true love (*as in 'never did run smooth' ~ come on, try to keep up*). Before leaving London and the Treetops, I'd dreamed of setting up home with *la ninfa celestial* in a cool top floor tenement in an area like Marchmont, beneath a tiled and pointy turret, from the tiny window in which a mad woman, preferably called Emily, with long white hair, would scream obscenities at passers by. My ex (my previous ex I should now say, *sob*), *la frisada*, told *la ninfa*, "One year with him and you'll be the mad woman in the attic!" Maybe that's why she went.

But 'twas not to be. As my London buyer led us into more and more complications I didn't think I'd be here by Christmas, let alone Edinburgh's famous Æstival Festival (*look it up*). And when I finally did have a date to move, it was on us like the proverbial steam train and I had little or no time to come and start looking. *La ninfa* had college work to do and nowhere to do it and the great the good and the totally insane were descending upon Auld Reekie in arty-farty droves.

But help was at hand. A good friend and ex-colleague has a wife who comes from the charming market town of Ludlow, where some of us go each July, to see a Shakespeare play performed in the ruins of the Castle and to eat and drink far too much. She in turn has a cousin, who sometimes joins us there and he was managing a large store in Edinburgh. At the same time as I was planning to move myself here, his company was planning to move him to Leeds. Just as he finished doing up a nice little apartment to the southwest of the city. He didn't want to sell it and was looking for a tenant. Symbiotic serendipity, Batman!

Edinburgh tenements have plentiful storage space in the form of presses (cupboards to the English) and box rooms. But many a box room makes a pretty neat study and ours was especially tempting to a budding architect, with its shelves, its electric sockets and its space for a desk and drawing board. So a certain *ninfa celestial* earmarked it and we were soon to be seen staggering up the road from the local Barnardo's Second Hand Charity Furniture Emporium with a perfect-fit desk, to place before the revolving office chair brought up from the Treetops. But box rooms can be used for other things ~ there's a clue in the name ~ and all the crap we'd brought up was stacked in there awaiting sensible distribution ~ and of course, the construction of shelves. But inspiration needs its space, her needs were paramount, as deadlines loomed over her like a teetering mountain of cheese and the creative mind cannot be cramped. So boxes of books, boxes of cooking pots, boxes of painting things ~ even the open boxes of CDs which had been stacked against the wall as a form of *ad hoc* shelving, soon found themselves turning the living room into some form of game-show obstacle course. All shouting at me in their cardboard voices, "When are you going to make those shelves, you lazy, lard-arsed bastard?"

The end of a year that started so high and ended so low. Indeed, 'tis time for taking stock and not made cheaply from a cube either. Bones will be boiled and souls shredded. But you don't have to be subjected to all that, gentle reader.

I used to think I had a symbol stamped on my arse, that, like the arcane 'washing instruction' icons on clothing, could only be deciphered by women. My particular birthmark said 'dispose of after 13 years'. Perhaps unfortunately ~ for me, he said gallantly, being a perfect gentleman ~ *la japonesa*, whose guides to London must enliven many a 'wrong whore fright' (think about it), lasted thirteen *months*. Language barrier, maybe. She certainly had even more trouble than most folks do in reading from my tone of voice how far into my cheek my tongue was thrust at any given time. So we devised a simple system, whereby I made a letter 'J' or 'S' shape with my hands (hoping I wasn't inadvertently insulting her in Kanji) to signify 'Joke' or 'Serious' respectively, whenever I thought there might be some doubt. Which, I learnt slowly ~ and painfully ~ was most of the time.

On diverse websites and message boards it would seem readers have similar trouble with my modes of expression. Perhaps I tend to write in longer sentences and use longer words than is common in an age of txt msgs, perhaps I tend to write in a pseudo-literary style, sometimes for misjudged humorous effect, sometimes just cos I like it. Perhaps I'm just a sarky bastard whose charming smile and jocular tone narrowly avoid a thumping in face-to-face chitchat.

When I first had the foolish dream of being a writer, folks pointed out that I wrote as I talked. Then they realised that what I actually do is talk like I write. Too much. Logorrhea is the technical term.

But I won't resort to emoticons. Jane Austen never needed emoticons. *Pride and Prejudice* doesn't begin, "It is a truth, universally acknowledged ;o) that a single man in possession of a large fortune must be in want of a wife, lol!" Then again there are people who never get the jokes and see it as chick lit romantic fiction, so perhaps it should.

Gallows humour, the sardonic grin of the skull 'neath the skin ~ that may be a problem for you. For some reason many people don't think talk of broken hearts and suicide all that amusing, no matter how wittily presented. Can't understand that myself. No, it's not that I'm dissembling, right now that's really how I feel a lot of the time ~ maybe it's the old "you gotta laugh or else you'd cry" stuff ~ but I do both and rather more of the latter, so I can' say it helps. It's just that I can't help seeing the funny side of things, especially when I'm the victim (it's rude to laugh at others' misfortunes, much as you might want to ~ like the poor old lady who had her cat rescued from a tree by the fire brigade, gave them all a cup of tea and waved gratefully, as the truck reversed down her drive ~ straight over the recently rescued moggy). But it doesn't help to cope ~ if anything it throws the agony into even sharper relief. But I won't let that stop me. I shall continue to tell of my now-lost domestic bliss, introduce the world to those who think the gods are crazy and narrate the no doubt symbolic story of the creation of the finest bookshelves ever to carry te works of Tolstoy, Proust and Joyce. And hopefully to entertain those of you sick enough to find it amusing.

Happy New Year, I suppose. May love prevail, gods get better and carbon emissions reduce.

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25. We just got here!

La ninfa celestial, light of my life, loss of my loins, has a new project. One of the options for her second year work, one she favours at the moment, is to design a Buddhist retreat for the Scottish Highlands. Yeah right. Like, people really want to sit and meditate in the cold and rain, surrounded by smelly long-horned coos.

It got your humble blogger thinking though. Why are there no *Nihilist* Retreats? Especially in this part of the World? Yes, there is the fact that for a nihilist to be bothered to go there would be rather inconsistent, if not blasphemous. But most of us stay alive, if only out of these stupid 'instinct' and 'fear' things; we need to fill in time between the cradle and the grave and, living our lives in a constant state of despair, we may need more than most to get away from all that stress and bustle that we, unlike the deluded 'hopefuls', know to be utterly pointless. Even *our* batteries need recharging now and then ~ misery can be tiring, you know.

Okay, so what would such a place look like? Dour stane walls like an old Highland castle (or an Edinburgh tenement block)? Perhaps towering walls of dullest black, sucking all light and hope into their symbolically unreflecting surface. As a nod to the Existentialists, I thought, where Buddhists might have a carp pond or a neatly raked Zen garden of gravel, we could have an abyss for people to sit by and contemplate (subject to health and safety approval ~ they seem to have a downer on abysses without adequate railings and warning signs these days). Obviously such things are rather costly to construct (or even deconstruct) but there must be some sites up here already fitted with the odd crevasse or ravine, just begging to be adapted.

Quotes could adorn the walls ~ that's quite trendy in architecture generally, yer quote-adorned wall. The greatest of nihilist writers, Mr Shakespeare himself, could provide a few ~ "*The rest is silence*"; "*Thus conscience doth make cowards of us all*"; "*This cannot be the worst while we can yet say, 'This is the worst'*". Or paintings. Mark Rothko's huge blocks of bloody red or matt black on sombre maroon, originally intended for a posh Manhattan restaurant of all places, look wonderfully gloomy in their room at London's Tate modern ([click here to see](#)) but his greatest wrist-slitters are the walls of the chapel named after him in Houston, Texas (<http://www.rothkochapel.org/>). Subtle dark greys, tending to blackness, draw the viewer in to their own personal pit of doom. Brilliant ~ it worked for Mr Rothko, who shed his own blood not long after painting them. But his is a chapel for people of all faiths ~ my retreat would be for people with none, to assuage any doubts they may have about the utter futility of their existence. Any who do arrive with hope in their hearts should certainly have none left by the time they leave ~ even if it's not in a box.

Because we obviously need to make allowance for visitor suicides. Though departing that way would probably be a reason for rejoicing, a drink, an orgy ~ shuffling off the mortal coil deserves some sort of certificate, only all such things are as dust to the true disbeliever. A tall tower, free razor blades and practical advice ~ maybe a few spikes at the bottom of the abyss? Design features worth considering. Its own cemetery perhaps?

The accommodation needn't be unpleasant though. In fact the more I think of it, the more I wonder if the whole place shouldn't be more of a holiday camp. There's a long tradition of nihilists saying, "there's no point, the end will come soon enough, so let's go crazy while we wait!" Enough of this angst, Mr Sartre ~ of course there's a fucking abyss but, until we fall in, let's party on the edge ~ just deal with it, man, and pass the *vino*! But then there are plenty of places like Amsterdam and Vegas for that sort of thing. Some nihilists like a quiet life and even us party people need a quiet break now and again. And we might as well have warm, comfy rooms, good food, plentiful drink, beautiful scenery, naked Thai women (sorry ~ that last one's a totally different subject to which I may return one day ~ forget it for now or check out [this old Spanish blogette](#)).

But I got other stuff to do. A week in Polandland coming up and if I'm thinking of religious or even irreligious retreats, maybe I should be thinking of one for any deity who needs more than just a rest, or I'll have the Gloonies on my case again ~ so more on them next week, probably posted on Friday ~

One day I'll fly-y-y-y-y away ...
Take my dreams of yesterday.
Can't cope with you dumping me:
When will love stop thump-i-ing me?

Sorry ~ came over all Randy there ~ as in Crawford!

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27. Keeping a Lowe Profile

Among the diverse, not to say motley collection of creatures accumulating in my friends here, is a small (but highly talented) choir from Manchester. This is because their web presence is managed by a 'real world' chum of my kid sister, from her uni days. One of her less web-savvy co-choristers had already expressed some doubts about adding their details to something associated in some minds with heavy grunge thrash metal or the like. Even worse was the popular worry about 'the sort of people' we might find ~ or worse, who might find us ~ in cyberspace. Indeed, a few of my friends on here, of a younger, more female and, let's not deny it, far hotter persuasion, know only too well the attentions of creeps and perverts, most of whom, while not quite as gross or imaginative as Yours Truly, lack also my style, my charm and my gentlemanly consideration and restraint (or cowardice, if you prefer).

Even so, I have apparently all-but confirmed his worst fears, merely on the basis of my profile. Within days of their arrival on myspace, he announced to my friend that the only interest being shown (and obviously of the unhealthy variety ~ *is* there such a perversion as chorophilia?) was from some strange American called Tom and "an ageing bisexual swinger in Scotland". I'm not sure which of these qualities he finds most unsettling but it has got me pondering the choices one makes on personal profiles. Particularly the manner in which these are limited by the available options.

I can't be alone in looking at questionnaires and drop-down menus, wishing for a none-of-the-above button ~ or rather a not-quite-one-of-the-above ~ or even a some-of-this-none-of-that-bit-of-the-other combo. But there seems to be no such orientation as "predominantly straight but open to offers". Nor was I able, before my recent tragic loss, to be "largely monogamous by nature but working out how open we wanted our relationship to be and therefore open to offers". Now I'd click, were it offered, on "single, heart spoken for, bits anybody's" (I have never understood the utterly inappropriate term, 'private parts'). "Complete tart" would also do, but even that isn't up there. Thus I settle for Single, Bi, Swinging Male, which is only slightly less misleading than Abandoned, Straight, Unappealing Thing ~ and where's the "Butch Bastard/Has Willy But Is In Touch With Feminine Side" option when you need it? Oh well, it'll have to do. Leaving 'Dating' off your *raison d'être* may not save the lasses from harassment (on behalf of my sex, I apologise) but I can at least kid myself it's the reason for a lack of erotic interest from the 154,884,126 people in my extended network.

Of course one can lie ~ for fun, profit, shyness or naughty reasons. I'm pretty sure that my (lapsed) friend Nigel is not quite 82 years of age nor a dead ringer for Father Jack Hackett (though if he ever shaved the beard off ...). For all you know, gentle, unsuspecting reader, I could be a 14 year old girl living in Ecuador with two nuns and an armadillo. For all I know, you are that armadillo.

It's the start sign bit that bugs me on here. I know of religious folk that find the idea of astrology at least as offensive and diabolical as I find it bloody ludicrous (well, as a Libran, I obviously want to leave some room for doubt). But that's the one thing we can't leave out ~ in fact it's calculated and put in for us ~ in bold type yet. Why? What about my ascendant (**Libra** too, as it happens)? Do Chinese mspaceers get their year signs (I'm a **Dragon**, if you're interested). What of other systems? Why doesn't it point out that I am a Monday's Child (thus blowing a whole nursery rhyme out of the water of credibility)?

I hereby request a change to the myspace profile programming to allow the replacement of Star Sign with **Astrology is a Load of Bollocks** for the use of rationalists.

But then as Joe Orton said, "You can't be a rationalist in an irrational world ~ it isn't rational!"

By the way, the Nuns say ¡*Hola!*

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28. Yesterday Upon the Stair ...

A short blog this week with some work for you to do to stretch it out a bit. Oh laziness, thy name is Dai.

Not so much upon the stair actually; rather, while writing in Edinburgh Central Library, I spotted a notice directing me to the Thomas Keith Negative Collection.

I like the idea of a negative collection but I wonder exactly what it's not a collection of? What part of the word 'no' does it not deal with?

And just a few weeks ago, on a railway platform in the chilly North West of England, I watched as a long line of freight wagons passed by, each blazoned with the legend "Less CO₂". How do you fill a container with *less* CO₂? Do you fill it to the top and then let a bit out? Conversely, if less is more, how do you get it all in?

Okay, that was an advertising gimmick, trying to convince me that Tesco Supermarkets were not really evil scum but were reducing their 'carbon footprint' by using rail rather than road freight and I can't do my customary anarchic-critical rant here on account of I'm writing this on a lo-cost flight back from Warsaw in Polandland. Hey, I'm a nihilist, I've failed to breed: you can unplug your computer if you want the planet saving.

I love signs, me; serendipitous little beauties, a lot of 'em. A plaque I spotted on a building in Manchester proclaimed the presence of the "Broad African Development Council" and immediately filled my head with images of huge Mamas, queuing two abreast in single file in their brightly patterned dresses, to apply for grants and assistances in setting up restaurants, child care centres or detective agencies. And then I felt sorry for the Skinny Africans who are surely in greater need of development.

Got any similar observations of your own, gentle reader? Over to you.

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30. Crumbs of Comfort?

We nihilists, we who have already abandoned all hope, take solace in amusement at the logical contortions of those who refuse to accept despair as their friend. Yes, this is the one 'faith' to which one should never wish to convert others, except out of a deplorable, deep-seated bitterness. Only those with no true appreciation of the absurd should stumble upon such a path ~ but even the most compassionate of us can hardly resist the odd derisive snort at humanity's attempts to ignore the sordid evidence all around it.

If God did not exist it would be necessary to invent him, said Voltaire, in a patrician frame of mind, meaning that the plebs needed some carrot other than the wealth they were obviously never going to attain, and a stick bigger than anything the state could shake at them, or else they'd never behave themselves or tug their forelocks in the appropriate, servile manner. Others merely worry what possible moral framework there can be without a terrifying but somehow loving deity, even for the most civilised and intelligent of the chattering classes (ie themselves).

If the Gods don't exist, said the Greek Sceptics, on similar lines, we're at least less likely to be beaten up by a braying mob of plebs, if we pretend we think they do. If we can't be sure God exists, said Blaise Pascal, more mathematically, we have to weigh the odds against the consequences. If God is nuts, say the Gloomies (*see below), what can we do to live with him ~ how do we do 'care in the community', big-time?

Pascal's Wager was of course, not a totally serious argument. For those dear readers that don't know it, it can be summed up in a matrix as follows:

	<u>God exists</u>	<u>No God</u>
<u>You believe</u>	Eternal bliss	Nothingness
<u>You don't believe</u>	You're fucked	Nothingness

No contest then. Except for the flaws in the concept. It may not be such a simple table; even if He isn't potty, he may be more capricious or just more fussy ~ which sect do you go for on this basis? Obviously the one with the most vindictively vengeful God ~ no point being a Quaker, for instance, as, if they're right, you're probably okay anyway. And of course it's just not all that likely that God will be impressed by a devotion based solely on the principles of gambling and damage limitation, any more than He's fooled if you repent with your fingers crossed behind your back.

But existentialists are the most entertaining. At first glance, Miguel de Unamuno's maxim seems appealing: if all we have to look forward to is nothingness, we should live so as to make that appear an unjust fate. Lovely, thanks for that. I mean, I'm not one of those nihilists who says, "we're all gonna die and be forgotten anyway, so I might as well go round stealing, seducing and slaying, right, left and centre. Okay, I do kill the odd person now and then but that's just being a plain old psychopath, not a philosopher. But even I have to ask Miguel what the basis of his idea of 'unjust' can be based on. Or simply reply to his idea with an incredulous, "Why, exactly?"

Okay, so there's no point to anything. Ultimately, this is true. Something just *is* and what just is, is not for a reason. But *within* the system, the parts that just *are*, there can be a point, or at least the illusion of one. I'm treading carefully here, so as not to get all sentimental but I guess I am talking about *lurve*, be it for mankind in general or that oh-so-rare creature, our soul-mate. Many non-believing thinkers have drawn on the best bits of religious thought and said, yeah, we can apply them to life ~ even if we already had an idea that killing folks might not be a good thing, nicely put Jesus, well-argued Buddha.

So, from a personal point of view, maybe I can use Señor Unamunamuno's basic idea and apply it within my personal vale of tears. My version would have to be: if I have to live the rest of my life without my beloved *ninfa celestial* I should try to live so that everybody else thinks she must have been a complete twat to leave me.

[* Hey ~ my 30th cheery blog! To help folks who arrive late and want to catch up on key issues (it could happen!), I thought I'd put an archive page on my own site, www.lucidity.ltd.uk/blogs/home.htm, with links to handy .rtf files that can be read by any word processor and printed for easy reading pleasure. One of those files contains all the stuff so far about this somewhat esoteric faith. Go look.]

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32. Fancy an 'Orrible Time, Sailor?

I'd make a shit pimp, me.

Being of an older generation, I was always taught that it was very bad form to blow one's own trumpet (or for a pimp to blow his own strumpet, ha ha! Sorry), and life has taught me that those who bray loudest about how wonderful they are usually turn out to be mediocre at best. A friend who was once a publisher's reader tells me that a covering letter promising the greatest gift to literature since Shakespeare usually covers something best left covered. On the other hand, those who hide their lights under bushels are destined only to have well-lit bushel bottoms.

There are exceptions in arrogance of course but the mistake to which your correspondent is repeatedly drawn is to imagine that modesty will as frequently prove false. ~ or that others will make the same assumption, checking out the self-effacing writer, rather than shrugging and passing on to grease the next squeaky wheel.

I'm told my blogs would get more readers if I mailed enough random folks each week or that I'd get more comments if questions were raised and directed at the audience. At least, I'm told, I should end with a "what do you folks think?" Well, I already expressed my aversion (see blog 21, *Janus Envy*) to making up for deficiencies in my expressive ability with emoticons and acronyms ~ anyway, I don't want folks to 'lol' so much as to react by 'saws' (smiling a wry smile) or at least 'fma' (feeling mild amusement). They could even add 'ibtsioyw' (intrigued by the semiotic implications of your witticism) but that's downright silly and as likely to catch on as *la ninfa celestial's* suggestion that estate agents (realtors) should use 'ps' to describe properties as phenomenologically satisfying.

But it goes equally against your 2h4hog (too humble for his own good) blogger's grain to badger people to read or comment. Maybe I just have unfounded pretensions to literaritude which don't suit the blog form ~ is it any use to point out that Hazlitt never ended his essays, nor Dickens his chapters by soliciting the readers' opinions? "Who do you think is Pip's mysterious benefactor? Should he get off with Estella? Write to us here at *All the Year Round* ..."

Of course comments are welcome, be they good, bad or abusive and there have already been some very nice unsolicited ones. So please bear in mind that all blogs carry the tacit proviso of imho and an equally unspoken invitation to praise or pillory as applicable ~ anything welcome, from death threats* to marriage proposals (rich widows and celestial nymphs only need apply).

But if you don't speak out, or you only speak out in a quiet corner of a lonely field and don't let anybody know you're there, who will hear you? Well, maybe a few sheep ~ and sheep need entertaining too of course but it's a cold day so I shouldn't have come out in a kilt and a tee shirt and I don't think these sheep are interested in bookshelves, psychotheology or anything apart from munching grass and where the hell am I going with this?

Sorry, I've not been sleeping well. Where was I? Oh yes, I guess there's sometimes a problem in recognising the boundaries that separate informing from pestering, pestering from stalking, stalking from brutal axe murdering. All boundaries I've had trouble with from time to time ~ but then, haven't we all?

And now I'm working on various art projects, at least one spinning off from shelves, from the joys of love and the pain of broken hearts, which will need some serious pimping if it's to succeed, since it consists largely of an ebay auction. More will be revealed in future blogs. But will I have the *chutzpah* to get more folks than my 55 regular readers on board? Can I get the big art dealers to read about it? Should I change my style? Should I change my socks? What should I do about the sheep that just ate my notebook? What do **you** folks think?

* "Being Loved can never be a patch on Being *Murdered*. That's when someone really has risked their life for yours" Quentin Crisp

PS (*post scriptum*, not phenomenologically etc) ~ anyone who found the collected blogs to be an excessively large file might like to know I've replaced pics with links and it's now under 300k

33. The Ballad of Perve O'Really

I'd make a shit poet, me. I can't do the concise and economical stuff, I can't take anything seriously long enough to condense a thought into a few telling words. Oh, I can knock off the odd comic verse, especially if it's a parody of an existing one, and I'm quite chuffed with a few of my efforts ~ check out www.lucidity.ltd.uk/pomes/ and see if you agree.

The other evening a muse attacked me with a burst of 'inspiration' in the street, where hopalong lines with infernal rhymes came at me too fast for me to find a doorway in which to cower from the cold and jot them down, resulting in me loping along reciting what I had, to try and fix it in my mind ~ cue nervous stares and rapid street-crossing from the good burghers of Edin. And even then, trying to pad it out to the full verse and shoehorn in the final contrived rhymes and names has had me sweating far too long over thesauri and rhyming dictionaries. Anyway, in tribute to the folks of a female persuasion on here and inspired by my previous blog and the ensuing comments I present *the Ballad of Perve O'Really*. ¡Disfruta, amigas guapas!

Of all the blogs by dirty dogs
There's one that you should know
The Life and Lurve of a sordid perve ~
That Limey guy named Lowe.

When his heart was broke this sad old bloke,
Done found himself in Hades;
But then he spied, on the Web (World-Wide)
A load of lovely ladies.

Franny, Rachel and Helen, oh they were all swell, an'
Kinky Trillian filled him with glee.
Mairi, Kathy and Suse could all banish the blues
Just like Julia (as seen on t.v.)

Evelyn, Pu, young M.J. too:
They set his eyes a-twinkling
And a gal named Sandi got him randy
With every Random Inkling

When all these birds perused his words
He set their hearts on fire;
And he went down huge in Baton Rouge
When they tried his jambalaya.

But which gal got his collar hot
With a raunchy fantasy?
No Eskimo Nell but a Southern Belle
By the name of Tits McGee.

Some of these dears he'd known a few years;
Captain and Shelley for more;
And Edward Wong? That's just plain wrong ~
It's the lass from the chocolate store!

But was precious Jules a trap for fools?
Was Jessy no more than a lie?
Did they all exist or were half of his list
Simply ghost-bloggers in the sky?

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Of Sleeping Trout he had no doubt
He'd met the girl once, face to face;
But was Kirstie a mad, bored, defrocked priest from Bradford ~
A figment of treacherous space?

But who gives a shit if the stories don't fit
With what some people like to call 'fact'?
If Starshine's a bloke or if Evelyn's from Stoke ~
Or if Mrs McGee isn't stacked?

Ontologic'ly speaking, reality's leaking ~
On here we can be anyone.
Outrageous distortion (if treated with caution)
Just adds to the over-all fun.

To *communicate* is the thing that's great
And being unheard is a curse;
But we know we ain't dead if our stuff's getting read,
At least in the cybervers.

So underwrite this pile of shite
(That's what 'sub-scribing' means);
Without *your* words these golden turds
Ain't worth a hill of beans.