

**myspace blogs**  
the first 30 blogs on myspace/dailowe

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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](http://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.

**2. Box Room**

Books, they say, do furnish a room. Well, they also do clutter a corridor and, packed in piled-up boxes, do so somewhat uselessly. For our first eight months in residence here in Scotland I had to scrabble around through piles of cartons whenever I needed to prove a point.

But, until recently at least, the shelves have been made of the substance which paves the road to Hell. Well, there were just so many other things to do.

Having said that and sitting here right now, I'm bugged if I can remember what. The mind goes blank rather than dredge up details of the few small things that would have the reader exclaiming, "What?! That took you eight months?"

It's not as if it's our own place, in need of decoration, fumigation or the attentions of Laurence Llewellyn-Boring. It's not as if we've had to buy bed linen, towels, or furniture. Most of all it's not as if I have a job. No job occupying me from nine to five or whatever ludicrous hours 'normal' Brits work in offices these days. No job leaving me too knackered at the end of the day to do those DIY chores. No job, let's face it, bringing me any income to spend on sybaritic distractions.

Of course, it would be easier without the little setbacks that plague any settling-in process. For instance, *La Ninfa Celestial*, for the love of whom I am translated to these Arctic climes, managed to pull down the hanging rail in my Ikea *Rakke* wardrobe. The few 'bookshelves' that were already in place were cantilevered (*La Ninfa* is studying architecture; expect technical terms to creep in: have a dictionary handy) and thus more decorative than functional, as I found when I put books on one, only for it to crash down onto the landlord's outsize tv (no damage done and nothing a few more holes and rawplugs in the support bracket wouldn't fix).

Among those things not directly impinging on the present author's time was said *Ninfa's* project, carried over from her previous term, when illness had prevented her giving a full eight hours a week to her studies at Edinburgh College of Art (you can tell it's an arty institution by their disdain for the upper case). It's always so much more tempting to help someone construct a cardboard model of an abattoir than it is to do your own work.

So that was how we lived for some time. But now things have changed ... pics will follow to prove it.

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### **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 ramblings 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.

### **4. Shelf Life**

According to Roland Barthes (yes, let's get real highbrow on here), the Author is dead. Like some others I (less of a highbrow icon, let's not deny it) think the novel has been dead since about 1940. The plethora of identical magazines, some even desperately calling themselves things like Not Another Magazine, suggests another format whose post-post-modern time has just about come. The end of history? Maybe not, but the end of a few cultural artefacts to be sure.

So why not shelves? In fact, as more and more of our reading and listening matter migrates onto our laptops, phones and mp3 players, do even the few of us who actually read books need to have these archaic frameworks cluttering the walls of our dwellings?

I admit it: these are all attempts to find excuses for not getting on with the job. Let those philistines and dumbed-down lovers of our culture of stupidity take note. There are practical everyday uses for structuralism, post-modernism and un-re-deconstructionism, not least in the justification of doing bugger all. You don't need to read Heidegger, Foucault or Derrida (especially not Derrida); merely pick up a few key concepts. Simply say you're deconstructing the textural discourse of whatever you're supposed to be doing and questioning the hegemony which has been accepted as foregrounding the need ~ string enough of that together and you can chill out on the sofa while engaging in discourse with a beer or six.

Not that it works on everybody. La ninfa celestial was neither convinced nor impressed by a pile of roughly sawn planks, lying on the floor, accompanied by my claim that I had deconstructed the idea of shelves, that these planks, even neatly piled as if by Carl Andre, encapsulated the essence of shelves. Unacceptable. Apparently, "the essence of shelves is that you can fucking put books and stuff on them!"

So it was back to the drawing board ~ though maybe one day even that will be an archaic phrase and we'll have to explain to youngsters that it was a primitive form of CAD ~ 'back in them days when people had books and stuff'.

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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.

Ah Myspace! Ah Humanity!

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**6. The Mad God's Ambulance**

The usual items are already plopping into Myspace's mailbox. Anyone daft enough to expose themselves on one of these sites for all the world to see has to expect it, I suppose.

*La Ninfa Celestial* has already been hit on by every bloke "just looking for friends" in a 23.65 kilometre radius of Edinburgh from her presence on "non-dating site" WAYN (Where Are You Now?). It might as well be called AYUFIT (Are You Up For It Today?). There are some disgusting blokes out there. She's loving it!

I on the other hand being less afflicted with youth and pulchritude get hit mainly by people wishing to sell me their services or, more often, pictures of somebody's services, being enjoyed by someone else while I pay and ...

At least it's not like my mailbox, full of offers of stuff to make the little todger bigger, harder, longer-lasting. Or telling me that the bank I don't even have an account with needs me to enter my name, address, credit card number and holiday dates on their site now. Or offering me loans, degrees and the chance to meet Christians (why???). It's wearisome but somehow worth it.

But religion has reared its head in a rather intriguing way this week. Someone has looked on the Lucidity Ltd website and the quality thereof has suggested to them that I'm the man for them, on account of I'm not likely to charge much for my services.

The thing is that they are a religious order that makes Opus Dei look like a local tennis club that's desperate for members and the Priory of Sion almost credible. For about a century they've been keeping their membership to a few, carefully-chosen specialists and their activities a closely-guarded secret. But now, for reasons I hope I can soon make clear, they have decided that they should 'go public' and enlist the help of the wider population of the planet in their task of saving mankind by their special relationship with God.

Oh yes, they believe in God. Which god? All of them, apparently. And their basic premise is that God doesn't need worshipping ~ He needs therapy. Ladies and gentlemen, allow me to introduce (with their permission) The Church of God, Lunatic.

I shall tell you more anon, assuming they're cool so far. Watch this blogspace ...

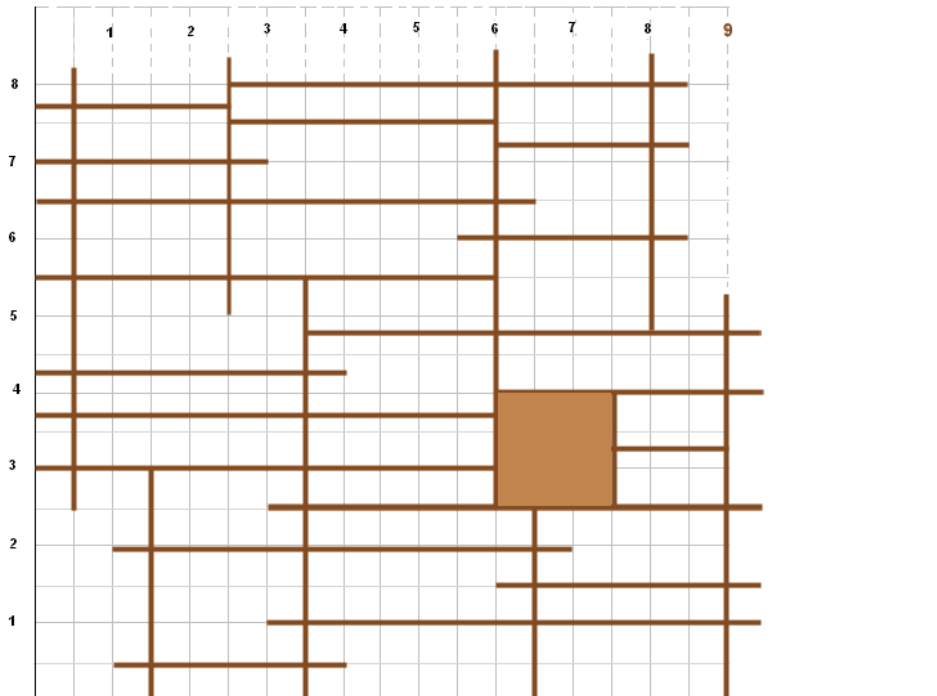
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**7. Waste and Pine**

Let us pause a while and consider the concepts of false economy, only the rich being able to afford to buy cheap, throwing good money after bad and all that sort of rot. Let me meditate on looking before leaping and the fact that when resources are available at home one really ought to use them before stepping off cliffs, especially when funds are limited and 'income' but a vaguely remembered historical term. Consider the sheer irritation brought about by the phrase, "I could have told you that", especially while one is looking at a hundred pounds' worth of twisted softwood planking.

Instead of twisted we should really have say *cupped* (you were warned there'd be technical terms). I should not really have bought cheap pine planks, even those claiming to be kiln-dried, without checking whether they'd been rip-sawn, quarter-cut, whatever it's called when the grain doesn't run across the ends of the planks in neat vertical parallel close lines. Apparently *La Ninfa Celestial* could have told me that a cross-section which looks like a load of 's will almost certainly change its shape when it comes in from the Scottish cold-and-dampitude to a centrally heated tenement.

Despite this I started blindly cutting slots into the planks, as per my wonderful design (*see diagram*).



For the word 'slots' an inserted explanation ~

When I was a child, as the apostle says, I took a nerdy delight in the little self-assembly plastic toys oft found in packs of breakfast cereal. Equally fascinating (oh how dull seem the gifts of today) were the cut-out models on the boxes themselves. "Insert piece P into piece V by sliding slot Q into slot W" had an almost Freudian resonance, as towering structures were erected, without the use of glue, tape or welding torch. And just as post-modern architecture betrayed the imprint of the Lego sets on its practitioners' young minds, so does my approach to shelving pay *homage* to these *cartons du petit déjeuner*.

~ but when the wood ain't straight, the slots don't fit ~ which isn't an old saying but ought to be, surely there's a whole load of metaphorical potential there. But little shelving potential. Even though it did give rise to the thought, "Why *do* shelves have to be flat? Do they have to be horizontal? Do they have to be made?"

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**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, ...

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**9. Mad Gods and Englishmen**

I believe it was the giant panda that started it all off. That and salmon swimming up waterfalls to fight, shag and die. And Penguins that stand for months with an egg on their feet in the howling Antarctic winds. But mainly the panda.

I mentioned, a few blogs back, the Church of God, Lunatic, who have been asking me if I can set up a website for them. Its members are not worldly men, being almost monastic in their dedication to a cause that would strike most of us, including your humble blogger, as pretty lunatic in itself. But they are aware of all that and happy enough to trust me to put the basic ideas across to you while we thrash out the design and content of the new site.

They're even happy with my none-too-serious tone. Apparently you need a sense of humour to be a CoG-Loon (we'll be trying out various nicknames, abbreviations and sobriquets here: do let us know which you like) and not go as loopy as ~ well, as a god.

So a history lesson. The Church of God, Lunatic was the brainchild of one Rheinhardt Krebble (1874-1953), the child of Austrian immigrants to the English Midlands, who stereotypically followed Freud, Adler and Jung into the study of psychoanalysis.

Many scientists of the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries, caught up in the exciting advances in such areas as evolutionary or psychological theory, were content to abandon religion wholesale. Its explanations were seen as irrational and its impositions harmfully repressive. Sometimes the loss of faith was difficult and painful but any lingering doubts, any pieces of the newly disassembled puzzle that didn't seem to fit were easily brushed into a drawer, marked 'for later consideration'. But Krebble couldn't just file away the nagging doubts, sure that better understanding would allay them all one day.

And his main problem was, how on earth does an animal *evolve* to look like a cuddly toy? Why does a fundamentally carnivorous animal suddenly seem to have abandoned its main food source and moved to live off un-nutritious bamboo, as if the whole species had suddenly converted to Buddhism? Put simply: *Why* giant pandas?



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**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?

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**11. The Laughter of Elves**

I just noticed that if you remove the initial essences 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 ...)*

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## **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 one's 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?

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](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](http://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.

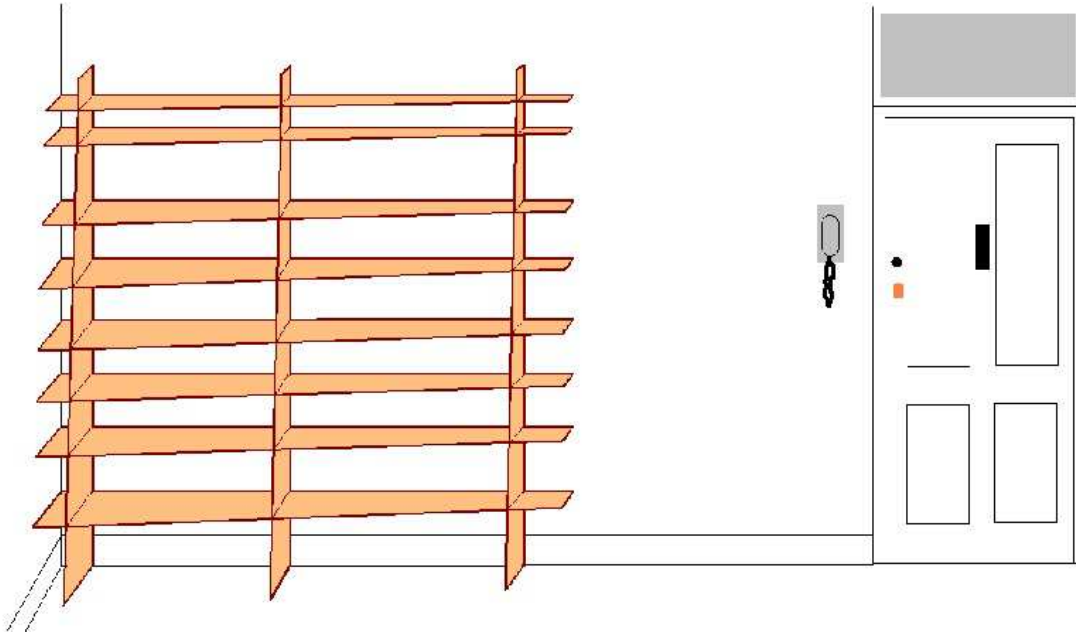
I've simply started wagging an admonishing finger at any passing gas guzzler, backed up by an appropriately tutting facial expression. I don't do stationary vehicles, of course, that's stupid if they're unoccupied and risky if they aren't. Yes, I know ~ this is unlikely to have much effect: one man wagging 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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**14. Come the Revolution**

Long suffering readers, was it not shelves, rather than fickle lovers, crazy deities or eco-criminals that inspired this series of blogs? What matter that you are but few in number, you exist and you deserve to learn more of my bibliotechnological progress. And so you shall (though how empty it all seems now).

Before I started cutting up warped and crappy bits of knotty pine (see blog 7, Waste and Pine, October 29 2006) I had of course had to move in, stack boxes and sort out where stuff was to go, all the while giving *la ninfa celestial* (sob) somewhere to get on with her stuff. So, being readerly types with a number of heavy tomes, it's no exaggeration to say I'd been phenomenologically, deconstructively and even just plain piss-aboutly exploring the wider concept of shelves and storage.

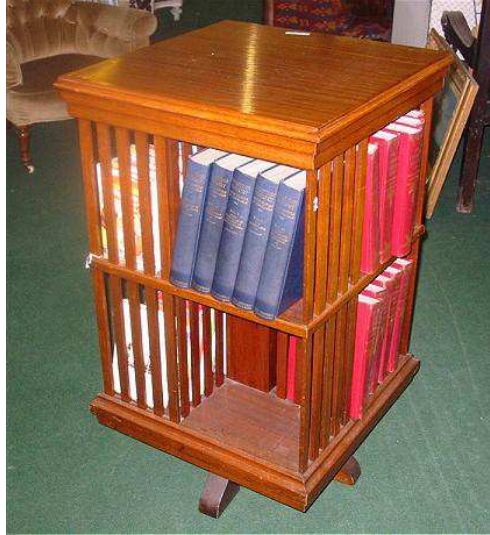


My wedge-shaped design looked so cool, like a set of shelves had tilted and was appearing to disappear (if that made sense) into the wall at its top right hand end. But, though its shelves would in fact be horizontal, it did have the distinct disadvantage of having long strips of very narrow shelving, whereas most of my books are more than an inch or two deep. The gentle, rippling sine wave of my other design was more practical but was a bugger to cut as a balsa strip model. No way was I, a man who has trouble cutting a straight line with a pre-set machine-saw, going to attempt anything so ambitious and, let's not deny it, stupid..

Meanwhile there were other spaces and options to consider. In the window alcoves of the Abode of Stone are spaces fit to put wee shelves in. The living room is sizeable and though *la ninfa's* commandeering of the box room meant I needed a pooter desk in there (until now ~ the inner sanctum is mine, d'you hear me ~ none can touch me here, manic laughter etcetera), there were still spots for rustic magazine racks and the like. So what to put there?

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I'm a modern kinda guy, a cool dude, a forward-thinking chap. But I have nothing against retro. Mother Nature only gave us the past so we could plunder it and create post-modernism. Antique shops and stately homes provide heaps of inspiration. I love the old library chairs that turn into stepladders with a shinbone crunching flip (<http://www.designboom.com/history/transformer/library.html>). And while looking round Pollok House in Glasgow, I also came across some revolting ~ sorry, that should be *revolving* shelves ~ though for the type illustrated, either term would suffice.



Wondered if it was worth picking up a pair to slip under the window sill. Then I worked out they weren't all that economical in space on account of needing room to swivel (don't we all?) ~ and they are also rather costly in terms of the elusive spondulicks. So we were soon to be seen staggering up the road from the local Barnardo's Second Hand Charity Furniture Emporium, lugging a simple set of slatted items which fit perfectly under the bedroom window and on which my almost complete set of Coronet British Edition Peanuts Cartoons now sits neatly beneath a crust of piano music and song scores (soon to be removed to a new location: *sob*).

It'll do. And it was a start.

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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?"

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**16. The Gods Must be Crazy**

I have been gently reminded with a pointed stick to the backside that some time has passed since I addressed you good people on the subject of the Universe and its supposedly insane First Cause (see Blogs 6 & 9 back in October). We left the founder of the Church of God, Lunatic pondering the sheer unlikelihood of creatures like the giant panda.

As a psychologist, Reinhardt Krebble knew that, even when at their most withdrawn, neurotics leave clues to their concealment, wanting always to be found and helped. His recent involvement in the case of Lord Ponsonby, possibly the earliest example of 'profiling' was still fresh in his mind. The 'Marquis of Murder' had escaped justice for some years by hiding behind a false bookcase in the library of his ancestral home but was found when Krebble spotted that all the books on those particular shelves were splendidly produced fakes with titles like *How to Hide in Libraries*, *Fake Bookcases for Dummies* and *You'll Never Find Me Behind Here*.

Although conventional theologians might also reason that apparent oddities like pandas and penguins might indeed be deliberate clues to God's existence (*a posteriori*, rather than *a dementi*, as it were), the nature of these beasts, the difficult conditions and precarious diets, were too unpleasant for Krebble to reconcile with the notion of a loving, compassionate deity. But not a loopy one. Seeing in them all the hallmarks of neurotic or even psychotic behaviour, he now turned to the study of philosophy and theology for further clues.

One of his first questions was this: if you were omniscient, how would you *know* it? How could you feel sure that there wasn't something, somewhere, even popping into existence in the Universe you created (or think you did)? A corner you couldn't see, not as it really was, something metaphorically *behind you*? Yes, the old paradox of omnipotence was well known ~ an all-powerful being can't create something over which it has no control and therefore can't really do *anything*. There's a simple answer to that ~ why would I *want* to, dick-brain?! (Well, come to think of it, a psychologist might reason that it would be a good way to relieve yourself of all that responsibility). But the crushing doubt of omniscience ~ this was a good place to start.

And that's before you get to the loneliness and boredom bit. Which we will one day soon ~ without the necessity for any further applications of sharp sticks to sore buttocks.



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**17. Litter in the Bathroom**

Obsession ain't what it used to be. In a more romantic age than ours, it had a certain *cachet*. Seven centuries ago, blokes like Dante and Petrarch could build whole careers on their unrequited adoration of women they'd hardly met, writing sonnets and divine comedies and founding a renaissance or two in the process. As far as I know history fails to record anyone saying to them, "Did you get a shag? No? You just saw her in the church? You never even *spoke*? You sad bastard!"; and phrases like 'plenty more fish in the sea' are not common in their collected *œuvres*.

Things have gone so far the other way now that I recently heard a lass expressing her *disgust* that her parents have been together 26 years and never slept with anyone else in their lives (that's what they tell each other, honey). So everlasting love, despite the song, is no longer anything to boast about. To say, for instance, that I have no choice but to keep a flame alive in my heart, to let memories of what we had continue to illuminate and give an illusion of meaning to my life and inspire my work, is merely and pompously to invite derision. What value constancy to those who don't want it, what price a muse who ain't there to musify?

*So she left you flat,  
You're a total prat,  
Wasting time on that  
Everlasting love*

But we still have our obsessions. The poets of the modern age now put their genius into their lives ~ instead of penning sonnets, they collect comic books, instead of writing *Il Paradiso*, they stalk celebrities and, more creatively, kill them too. What would the world be like if a crazed Dante had assassinated Pope Boniface instead of consigning him to a tersely rhymed *Inferno*? Or, for that matter, if Mark Chapman had written some songs instead of gunning down a Beatle? Imagine.

But there are lesser obsessions, socially more acceptable, that also have their uses. In the armoury prepared against the threat of ever getting anything done, obsession is the WMD of choice. The Abode of Stone had a very cool bathroom: tiles, mirrors, designer washbasin ~ but no waste bin. And it'd be sacrilege to spoil it with a cheapo plastic bucket, right? Obsessions fired by vague memories are great ~ such a v.m. of the dinkiest little white domed bin in a friend's apartment in Montparnasse, Paris, Franceland, gave me the excuse to spend *days* searching household boutiques, catalogues and every imaginable website, and all in vain. Yes, I know, I could have called said friend right at the start to ask where they bought it but then those same hours would have to be spent making bloody shelves. But ask I did, eventually, and they not only told me which French store sold them but even brought us one back as a present.

So that's the result ~ one obsession tidily gratified, another left to inform my remaining years, though, for fear of society pointing the finger of derision in my general direction, totally in secret (I trust to your discretion, gentle reader).

As Mr Keats didn't quite put it ([http://www.romantic-poems.co.uk/john\\_keats.htm](http://www.romantic-poems.co.uk/john_keats.htm)):

*And that is why I'm sitting here  
Alone and barely littering  
Though all unvarnished stand the shelves  
And no phones ring*

[By the way these blogs are getting longer than I ever intended ('if brevity is the soul of wit, I'm fucked') and most hits seem to be on Sundays ~ so from now on the regular midweek blog will cease and the words of wisdom and bullshit will be a weekend thang.]

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**18. Shelf-centered Modern Man**

You may recall, gentle reader, that I left myself at the end of blog 7 (Waste and Pine, October 29 2006), with a large pile of cupped timber of no use to man nor beast. But men and beasts are not the only creatures that lurk on ebay! There are strange beings there who will buy almost anything if it's cheap enough.

Incidentally, isn't the advertising for ebay a bit weird? Surely one person's, "I picked up the dinkiest retro crockery really cheap" is another's, "I sold my late mother's favourite tea set to pay my debts but got diddly-squat for it". Doesn't convincing folks to shop there for bargains warn the rest of us not to sell there for peanuts? Apparently not. After all people buy lottery tickets too. A mad world, my masters.

Then again, rubbish disposal is another story. It's a darn sight better to flog a pile of useless wood for a fiver, than to pay someone even more of the elusive spondulicks to take it away for you. In fact it's given me a great idea about the slots I cut out ~ maybe I'll tell you all about that another day.

Meanwhile (the same meanwhile as, or slightly meaner than, that mentioned in blog 14: Come the Revolution, Nov 22 2006) I had found a woodyard who could deliver the requisite lengths of timber in the form of pre-cut 'Craftsman's Pine', despite that profoundly inappropriate name. This edge-laminated product may cost twice as much and not look so rustic but it does have the oddly comforting property of staying flat; a property which la ninfa had just about convinced me was a Good Thing.

So, for a week or so, one end of the kitchen-diner looked like some conceptual art installation ("Lowe's work encapsulates the dichotomies of life in those between the warped and the straight wood; while the nascent, even expectant qualities suggested by the pre-cut lengths, waiting for assembly, for completion, for their apotheosis as it were, explore the nature of aspiration, expectation and, perhaps ultimately, failure and death ..."). But eventually the useless wood was taken by someone who did have a use for it, an adjustable workbench was borrowed from a friend, the trusty electric scrolling saw unleashed from its cage (all right, box) and ready to do its stuff, ripping almost neatly into pine, trousers, flesh ...

Worry not, dear friend, no limbs were completely severed in the making of these shelves and the few spots of blood, like the uneven edges and snapped-off corners of the wood were all cleverly hidden against the wall or beneath a number of weighty tomes.

Well, eventually they were. Just because everything was finally ready to roll, it didn't mean there weren't still excuses to be found ...

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**19. Who Man Would Destroy (He First Makes Gods?)**

The Church of God, Lunatic: an introduction, part IV (see blogs 6, 9 and 16)

Less than a month ago, we left the good Doctor Krebble, whom God preserve, of Uttoxeter, pondering the possibility of an omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient being, alone in the universe, clinging to anything remotely resembling sanity. The Judeo-Christian scripture claims that Yaweh/God made the world for his own Glory. Krebble thought he more likely did it for something to do ~ or maybe so He could have some company.

Of course, with an eternal being you cannot apply the traditional methods of delving into a patient's formative years. "Let's talk about your childhood childhood childhood" is hardly applicable to someone outside time, is it? The deity obviously presented a very special case. And yet, clinging to the possibility that some metaphorical truth lingered in the idea of making man in His own image, Krebble tried to imagine the effect of cosmic loneliness and what neuroses may be engendered in an all-powerful but lonely intelligence. He reasoned that mankind must indeed have been created by some god, beset by the conflicting mental states deriving from this loneliness and the 'omniscience-doubts' mentioned in blog 16. And though His instability often caused Him to act 'capriciously' with us, His creatures, to help Him was our duty, our responsibility and indeed our best hope of a less shitty life.

If mankind, reasoned Krebble, could find a way to help God to a greater awareness of His condition and thus to what he called the Great Cure, surely all the tribulations that face us will come to an end, ushering in an era in which man, God, nature and even the smelly family at number 23 will live together in blissful harmony.

To this end, he began to gather together like-minded people, initially from colleagues in the young but lucratively-growing field of psychoanalysis, as the priest-therapists of his new church. They conducted regular sessions, in which their 'prayers' were designed as attempts to increase the creator's awareness (if He was listening) of his condition and to offer, with all due humility, support and guidance. This initial approach has remained the template for modern CoGL 'Sessions' but, as will be explained in future instalments, has changed along with the more usual approaches of counselling and therapy.

But before we sign off, a reader has asked about how the Loonies (as she dubs them ~ better than 'Morons' or Jehovah's Witlesses, I guess) celebrate the Festering Season (as I call it).

Apparently, pretty much as most folks do, giving gifts, decorating the house, eating and drinking far too much in the company of all the annoying relatives one tries to avoid for the rest of the year. A spokesperson says: "What many call Christmas has long been a season associated with religious festivity, such as the feast day of the sun god, Mithras, a turning of the year dedicated to Janus or Saturn, and now the birth of the Saviour of the Christians. We see all these as manifestations of the same disturbed God, a form of multiple personality disorder, if you will. Although these largely man-made festivals and holidays are, at most, tangential to our theories and practices ~ a feast day may for instance provide a theme for a therapy session ~ practically and fundamentally, as with Diwali, Easter, Wesak and Id al-Fitr and many other feasts which we also observe, it's just one more bloody good excuse for a piss-up!"

Suggestions are invited from our readers for Christmas Carols suited to the Church of God, Lunatic. As for me ...

Christmas is cancelled, the geese can all go free  
Stick your cards and pressies by another old man's tree  
If you haven't any pressies, love will have to do  
If you haven't got a lover, join the sodding crew!

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**20. 3 Steps to Limbo**  
humbug

**Dec 24** mood bah

Standing here over a year ago it occurred to me that I must take steps ~ or even buy steps ~ to get this place sorted out, turn it into a home fit for shelves. This is what I thought as I considered the fact that Edinburgh tenements have fiendishly high ceilings and concomitantly unreachable light fittings. Bad enough that my landlord has fitted five different obscure sizes of halogen bulb everywhere, irreplaceable at the average high street store (thank heavens for online shopping!), but the fact is that they're unreachable without long stilts or a trained giraffe.

A high spot of this summer's Edinburgh Fringe Festival was *La Clique*, a late night burlesque cabaret, to which I repaired with *la ninfa celestial* and *la polaca loca*. And the star of the show (unless you count the hunky guy who rolled greasy tyres over his naked torso, which my lovers assured me was pretty hot) was Captain Frodo, 'the incredible rubber man' from Norway. In part one he passed his body through two (unstrung) tennis racquets and, as a finale, brought a large metal drum onstage. From this he produced a slightly smaller drum and then from that another. Perching the second on the first, he clambered on to the resulting towerette. And produced a fourth, even smaller tin ~ you get the picture, I'm sure. As the tower got higher and the tins got smaller, his ascent became more precarious and comical, until he was perched way above us on something like a family sized baked bean can, pointing out that if that ragtag bunch of contortionists, acrobats and chanteuses can make a living doing their stuff then nothing in our dreams should seem too weird. Follow your dreams, ladies and gentlemen," he concluded: "follow your dreams!"

Well my dream was to change a light bulb in the kitchen ceiling and I was wondering why, in a flat with five-step high ceilings, I had just invested in a three-step aluminium ladder. Maybe because that was all the shelves should need? Or just plain stupidity?. And I thought of Captain Frodo as I balanced a collection of phone directories on the top rung and tried to balance first one foot and then the other, without dropping the new bulb. On tiptoe and at full stretch I could just about reach the screw-threaded monster with my finger tips and start it turning. Fortunately back then I had my charming assistant handy and she could at least hold the ladder steady and tell me to be careful.

Once upon a distant time, when I and *la frisada* lived in the Treetops of Hampingstead, a surveyor came to check out our roof. Our predecessors had bequeathed us a fitted loft ladder that for reasons unknown was also two rungs too short to reach the floor, to compensate for which, they provided an old plastic milk crate. But this proved none too steady as the large man was climbing into the darkness and down came the ladder, surveyor and all, necessitating a moonlit burial on the Heath and many denials of ever having seen the poor guy. We soon invested in a better and of course longer replacement. But we never learn.

And now the bulb has gone again, for the fourth time in a year, after a prolonged period of flickering and I begin to suspect a loose connection. I need once more to don my mountaineering gear, stack the phone directories as high as they'll go and set out for the snowy peaks. But this time I need to take screwdrivers and who-knows-what else in breast pockets and between my teeth. Scary.

So if these blogs suddenly cease without warning it could be because I'm lying broken on the kitchen floor while *la ninfa*, having called round for her things, is in the box room, digging out my will. Or I might just ask Santa for a longer set of steps. Much as I hate to admit it, it is Christmas.

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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**22. Impatience Does Become a God That's Mad ...**

**Jan 7**

... as Shakespeare almost said. Yea, and also a Church that's keen to come out into the open. As is my usual irritating wont, costly in terms of readers (and lovers?), I have not been letting brevity get in the way of waffle. Even this introductory paragraph itself ... oh, stop it, Dai!

So, my history of the Church of God, Lunatic (blogs 6, 9, 16, 19) needs to move on. Enough, for now, of the history of its foundation. Where does the Church stand *today*, what is it doing *now*, on the brink of its historic bursting forth into public consciousness, at least among my many tens of readers?

*Pace* my new, believing colleagues, I have long suspected that the Roman Catholic Church, home to some of the greatest minds of the last two Millennia, worked out long ago that there simply was no God. Like Voltaire, they, in their authoritarian/well-meaning/power-hungry\* way (delete according to taste), decided it would be better for the human race if this were not common knowledge. Unlike Voltaire, they didn't go against their own logic and publish the bloody idea. Like, d'uh, Françoise-Marie! "If God did not exist, it would be better to keep shtumm!"

Despite this, the Vatican also keeps, for appearance sake at least, an up-to-date catalogue of all reported occurrences that could be called miracles. The Loonies, on the other hand, keep their own lists of proofs that the guy is off his nut. The *Psychotic Episodes Directory* in which number 1 is our old friend the giant panda, aims to reveal and list the inanities in an otherwise intelligent design.

(Incidentally the name Loonies seems to have stuck though some members have suggested *Gloonies*, on the grounds that it's God that's crazy and not them ~ this remains a matter of opinion)

Fish that have to leap up waterfalls to fight, fuck and fall dead; penguins that spend months standing in a blizzard with eggs balanced on their feet, waiting for a film crew, and wasps that lay eggs in caterpillars to start their offspring off with a live snack, these were well known in Krebble's day. But every year, science gives more glaring and scaring examples that make a cuddly toy in a forest look sensible.

There is a parasitic worm out there somewhere, that preys on a particular species of fish. Not for this little chap the simple and common expedient of living in a gut and sharing the passing morsels like a tapeworm. Oh no, this guy prefers its food fresher than that. So the first thing it does is eat its host's tongue, to which it bears a remarkable resemblance. Nice, eh? Then it attaches itself to the chewed-off stump of that organ and takes its place, using the hunting skills of its landlord to bring it regular and tasty snacks. It shares these with the host of course, can't have the happy shopper dying on us, can we? Gotta keep it alive and swimming.

The whole catalogue is just one of the things they're thinking of having on the website. And that last entry has got me thinking ~ they might not just be getting a web designer but a new convert.

Gloonies it is, then.

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**23. Shelves: vt puts aside, postpones**

Once upon a time, in a reality long, long ago, these *blogs* were going to be just that. A web log, stardate whenever, all about settling into the new home and, in particular, the no-doubt-symbolic tale of building shelves.

And, though it would have been a (symbolically) sorry tale of (symbolically) slow progress, with much waffle about other subjects to disguise the truth, the procrastination and the excuses which delayed their completion; it would have also been jolly and light and maybe even entertaining, informed as it would have been by the feeling of having found at last the true love that brought light to my life and gave, even to a disillusioned nihilist, that pleasant illusion of meaning and a point to it all. Months would have passed and you might have begun to wonder, amid all the laughter, if there would ever be anywhere to put the Lowe/*ninfa* collection of erudite tomes, hyper-cultured musics and subtitled art-house dvds.

I would have done my best to illuminate the design process that led to the final idea, a brilliant, post-modern tribute to 50's style, based on two identical, interlocked rectangles. You may have already seen the picture, featuring the then happy couple in blog 7. If not, go back and look at it now (you know you want to!). See if you can spot the original, subtly broken rectangles. Shelves at different heights for cd's, dvd's, videos, assorted books and even, the *pièce de résistance*, the dinky cupboard, in contrasting mahogany stain.



Eventually, you might have been treated to this collage, showing, as best one can with a small camera in a narrow corridor, the finished and part-stocked buggers thems(h)elves (pre-staining, so imagine the wee door a darker hue). What a sense of completion, of achievement, I could have shared with you all, how your hearts would have soared and what inspiration you might have taken from the tale, what deeds might have been done in those optimistic days!

But procrastination is not only the thief of time and the waster of woodwork but also the buggerer of blogs. I have already spoken of, or at least hinted at, the excuses, the need to administer tlc to *la ninfa celestial*, the need to bum around being a dilettante... They even delayed my blogging about the delay.

But, one fine day the planks were measured, slots were cut (see later blog), edges were sanded and all was put together (see above). My architect had already raised a point of doubt about the bending moment at the left hand end and, indeed, despite a slight modification to the plan (can you spot it, reader?), when full of books there is a slight sag. But the only effect of this is to make it hard to get the cd's out of the middle of the lower left shelf. At least nothing looks like breaking.

Obviously symbolism only goes so far.

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**24. A CAD and a Bounder**

I believe it was Mr Edison who told us that genius is one per cent inspiration and ninety-nine per cent perspiration. I sometimes wonder if in the post-post-modern 21<sup>st</sup> Century it might be one per cent appropriation and the rest automation. Nick an old idea; tart it up with a computer.

Even before spending time with a budding architectural genius, I knew that her great Catalan predecessor, Antoni Gaudí i Cornet designed an amazing crypt for the never-completed Church of Colònia Güell. The domed ceiling is supported by a series of columns, all leaning at crazy angles and yet all supporting the roof with perfect efficiency. The design was developed by hanging weights, corresponding to the roof mass, from chains, stretched into and attached to the model's roof at the required points. By viewing this in a mirror, or photographing it and turning the picture over, Gaudí could specify the layout, knowing all the stresses to be exactly right. No automation, just inspiration.

But today it's all done by CAD. No, I'm not saying architects have become less principled people, I mean Computer-Aided Design. Programs that allow people to draw up designs, see them in 3-D from myriad angles, travel through them in animated style, fill in solids, analyse stresses and strains, on their buildings, if not themselves ~ believe me, architecture may not be the best course of study for *ninfas* prone to stress-related bonkersness: it certainly doesn't help their relationships along: I'm far from unique in my victimhood (incidentally, this very weekend, she is finally moving out her small but perfectly formed body and all the stuff that goes with it, once and, probably, for all; but let's not speak of such sorrows here ~ *sob!*). So, naturally, we had to get such a piece of software and, obviously, I, as an old techno-geek from way back, had to have a play.

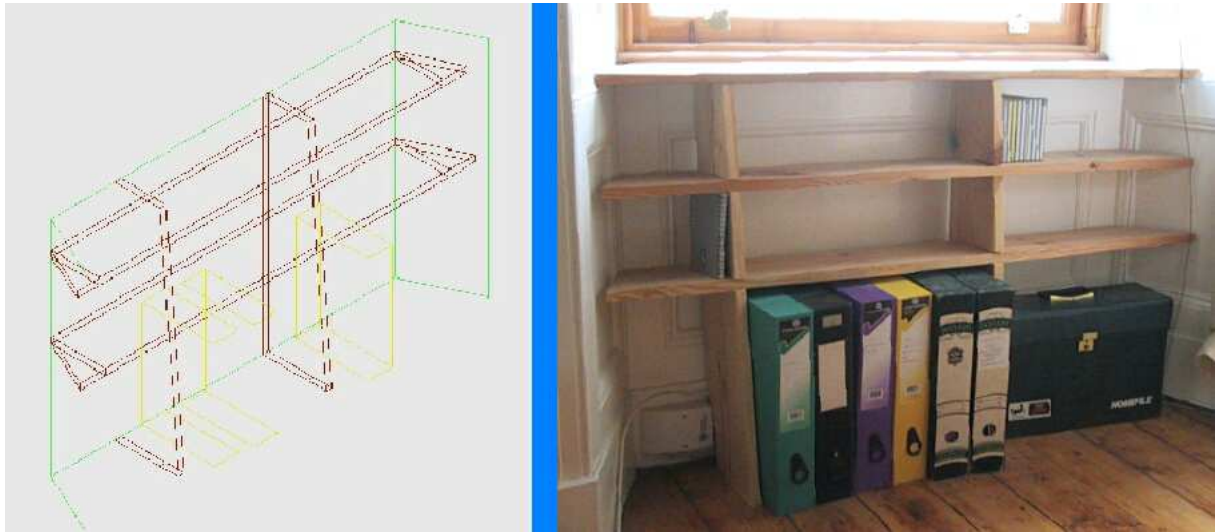
But I need practical examples, something to get my teeth into beyond drawing an imaginary floor plan and sticking in a few notional chairs and a hypothetical table, as per the misleadingly titled 'User's Guide'. As it happened, there was a space under the living room window just begging for a small shelf unit for cd's and files. Not only that, I had a few bits of reasonably straight wood left over from the earlier debacle (see blog 7). So why not use our lovely new tool to design said unit? Because it's a bloody stupid idea, that's why. But, while *la ninfa* was far too busy with drawing board and pens trying to get through her second year design project, that's what I did.

The phrase 'learning curve' is now a popular way to describe the initial period of familiarisation and the getting of, if not wisdom, at least some level of competence. So I can confidently state that we old dogs *can* be taught new tricks but that we face something that would be better described as a 'learning cliff'. So it's hardly surprising that the complex shelves described in the previous blog and many others, like those I had designed and built in my previous abodes, had taken up a lot less of my time than the simple construction in question. But that's because, instead of CAD, they had used BOE methodology, where BOE stands for 'Back of an Old Envelope'.



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The design is based on slotting three horizontal shelves into two vertical supports, leaving space for cd's and small books at the top and room for some box files on the floor. Easy. But the bay window space is wider at the front than the back and I wanted the shelves to get shallower as they went up too. The sloping design, as well as looking cool (trust me!) is more stable, needs no glues or screws, is the depth of the windowsill at the top and of the box files at the base. And is a bastard to do in 3D CAD. Because the program easily draws planks with parallel ends but (unless what passes for a manual, translated into something vaguely resembling English by Afghans from the original Martian, deceives me) is not so good at bevels. I worked out how to draw planks and narrow wedges and stick the two together, which helped but left confusing extra lines where the two component shapes joined. Then I discovered that I could have done the offending lines invisibly when specifying the original shapes ~ but could I get the bastards to disappear once drawn? Could I fuck.



So, after many hours, during which time I could have made an ornate faux-Regency four poster bed and wardrobe from finest oak, including growing the tree from a sodding acorn, the rather feeble 3D drawing above was obtained. Sadly, at this resolution, you only get a vague impression of its glorious redundancy as some of the lines have gone awol. The green lines show the existing space, the brown the shelves (the top one is missing for some reason) and the ghostly yellow give an idea of a few of the box files *in situ*. The program also allowed me to fill in the shapes ~ render them, as we say in the trade ~ and shine imaginary lights on them from diverse angles ~ hours of mindless fun ~ but you'll be glad to hear it didn't let me turn that image into a handy jpeg. However a photo of the finished construction will soon be added to the photo for your delectation and delight ~ y'all come back soon, y'hear?

So let that be a (symbolic?) lesson to you. The good old ways are often the best.

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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 (google it) 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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**26. They're Free? I'll Take Ten!**

It has been suggested, by my putative employers at the Church of God, Lunatic (see blogs, 6, 9, 16, 19, 22, if you've just joined us), that we present you with a summary of a typical analysis by their founder, Rheinhardt Krebble (1874-1953). Why not, indeed?

The obvious choice would be the Ten Commandments ~ obvious because I and most of you, my esteemed regular readers, come from a culture steeped in Judeo-Christian traditions, even if I do stem from the apathetic wing of the Church of England. However the Church does wish me to emphasise that it views most, if not all religions, however contradictory, as founded under inspiration from the same deity. In this respect they seem to resemble the Baha'is but, whereas Baha-Ullah rather glossed over the apparent contradictions between various major faiths, the Gloonies revel in them, in their search for clues to God's malaise and a means of helping Him.

Another reason that the Decalogue would be most suitable is that it was one of the few samples of God's holy handwriting, and Gloony graphologists would just love to get their hot, sticky hands on the original tablets. Sadly, despite the best efforts of Indiana Jones, we don't have them to hand, so we have to work from the text alone. But that does indeed tell us quite a bit, according to Krebble, about the being that wrote it. It may well be that "the law was made for man; not man for the law," but Krebble still had his doubts about the maker of both.

It's almost a cliché to say that, even if God does not exist, the Ten Commandments still represent the best guide to living a 'good' life. To which Buddhist-influenced, humanistic atheists like myself reply, *bollocks!* Not only are there equally good, if not preferable ones out there (for instance, Buddhist rules that are down on killing, lying and 'sexual misconduct' in general and also dissing folks behind their backs: okay, it's ludicrous ~ where's the fun in life meant to come from? ~ but morally, you gotta admit, on slightly higher ground). No doubt the Big Ten are pretty consistent with the idea of a loving parent, warning his offspring against the consequences of letting their 'weaker nature' get the better of them, but Krebble asserts that some also show equally typical parental and personal angst. The general tone, with the implication that the rules may be there for our own good and that any punishment we endure as a result of transgression is gonna "hurt me more than it hurts you", is still arse-stingingly familiar to any kid whose Dad has just lost his patience and asserted his bigger-than-thou authority, reasonably or otherwise.

But, as Krebble pointed out even before Margaret Knight (*Honest to Man*), the rules given top billing relate to our relationship with the deity, rather than the way we live our lives in human society. And, in so doing, they show a pattern familiar to any Freudian: fear of being usurped (no other God but me ~ oh, so Kelly's Mom gives you ice cream? So why don't you go live with Kelly's Mom and get fat?), being sidelined (no graven images ~ you love your play station fighter so much, let's see it get you supper!) or being dissed by the kids (no taking My name in vain ~ what did you call me? Just come here and say that Mister!). Even the injunction to honour our fathers and mothers now begins to look like a transferred anxiety.

This is radically condensed from page after page of Krebble's typically thorough analysis ~ or, as some have called it, long-winded, abstruse waffle ~ but I think it gives a flavour of the way in which a determined Gloony, like psychologists in general, can find evidence of neurosis absolutely anywhere, if they just look hard enough. Another example soon ~ watch this space.

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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 CO<sub>2</sub>". How do you fill a container with *less* CO<sub>2</sub>? 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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**29. Shimmering Softly, Dressed in Blue ...**

At an early point in the online history of the Church of God, Lunatic (see blogs 6, 9, 16, 19, 22, 26), a correspondent asked about the Virgin Mary ~ what is her status in the eyes of Gloomies?

My initial reaction, not letting ignorance get in the way of pontification, was to say that she was largely a human construction, Churches, particularly Roman Catholics, having bigged her up, way beyond the original scriptures. Reasons for this are many and varied; such as the need to sell Christianity to folks whose old, pagan faiths mean they find the idea of a male God rather strange and who thus need a strong earth-mother figure if new ideas are going to have any cred.

But I was soon corrected when I next spoke to my contacts in the CoG,L. The direct influence of the deity has to be looked for everywhere, not just the 'revealed' parts of the 'mainstre' faiths, particularly in the religions people choose. Jansenism, the 17<sup>th</sup> Century Catholic version of Calvinism, held that God's miracles would always be capable of 'rational' explanation by the ungodly (quite a good get out clause, really). I suppose the Gloomies have a similar view but, for 'miracles', read 'psychotic episodes'.

Given time, all religions seem to split into sects and subsects, as typified in Emo Phillips' great joke, or the fact that Islam, which has no sects according to the Holy Qur'an, split into two factions, intent to this day on beating the shi'ite out of each other (sorry, couldn't resist), within minutes of the Prophet's death. Even this apparently very human tendency is seen by Gloomies as a manifestation of the deity's own doubts, identity crises or just a fondness for fucking with our heads.

And in the case of Mary herself, those of you who recall Krebble's analysis of the Ten Commandments (blog 26) might already have an idea where this is going. Yes, we all know that the angel said, "Be not a Freud", but we won't let that stop us.

It seems to be a case of jealousy. They fuck you up, your Mum and Dad, as Mr Larkin tells us. But what if you don't have a Mum or Dad, never did, never will? Who you gonna blame? In particular, without a mother figure, how could you enjoy the luxury of a full-blown Oedipus Complex?

useful links :

title quote ~ <http://lyricsplayground.com/alpha/songs/o/onagainonagain.shtml>

Emo Phillips' joke: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/g2/story/0,3604,1580452,00.html>

Larkin poem ~ <http://www.artofeurope.com/larkin/lar2.htm>

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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 Skeptics, 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 30<sup>th</sup> 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](http://www.lucidity.ltd.uk), and link to handy .rtf files that can be read by any word processor and printed for easy reading pleasure. As a start <http://www.lucidity.ltd.uk/blogs/gloomies.pdf> is all the stuff so far about this somewhat esoteric faith. I'll update you on the webpage and stuff once it's there ~ until then, you could rightclick on that link and save target as if you like]