

THE DANCEFLOOR IS A THIN PLACE

MAGIC CAN HAPPEN THERE

I'm sorry.

The last lesson you will ever need to learn is about how to become something that disappears. (The first lesson is about how to conjure something up, but we'll get to that soon enough.)

Anyway, I said I was sorry. I'm supposed to tell you that you are cosmic and infinite. That you were born in a cloud of dust and that there are no limits to what your consciousness is capable of understanding. It's true that the remit of memory is theoretically infinite. But in practice, its capacity is limited to just three generations. The fourth generation back might as well be the fortieth. So, yes, you are cosmic, you are infinitely capable space dust, but you are also limited. You are stuck. We are all stuck. We are stuck because our consciousness is incapable of accurately perceiving our place in history.

Memory is a border and, like many borders, that border is patrolled. The expanse of time that lies beyond the border, well, that border could be one mile away or it could be one thousand. Beyond the limits of memory, absolutely everything is out of reach. There is a collapse. We become unable to process our place in time. Time becomes immeasurable, a problem that cannot be solved.

The distance past the horizon could be the length of infinite space, or it could be the horizon plus one footstep. Our own embodied past, too, we imagine it to extend infinitely far backwards into time. Our perceptions on this are deluded and screwy. One thousand years is about 38 generations. Thirty-eight. About 165 grandmas ago, they invented writing. Did you know that humans have been wearing eyeliner for longer than they haven't?

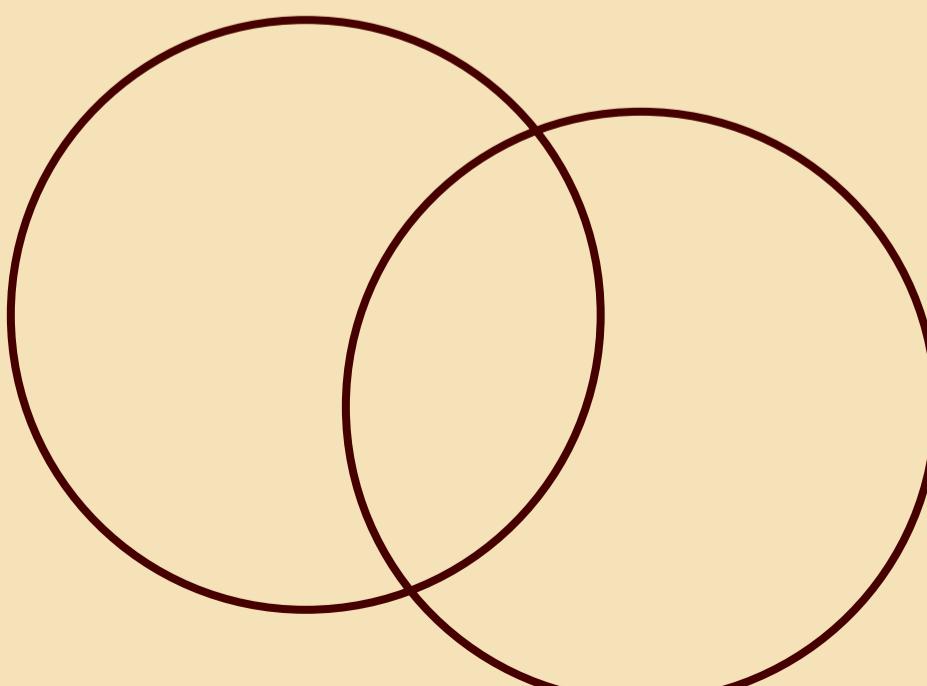
And if we are unable to understand time, we are not much better at space. Our geolocation of the concept of home is wonky, and subjective. It is possible, it turns out, to hold on to a sense of "back home" that refers only to a place you have never been. What if you were already at home? The empire, it turned out, was an unreliable narrator. I know, I can hardly believe it.

If you concentrate really hard, you can manifest a place. You can make something real out of thin air. You can make yourself a home.

Being Anglo-Indian, not quite English, not quite Indian, meant you had been conjured up yourself, by the Empire. It had manifested a thing that it had wanted to happen, and that thing was you, whether you liked it or not. When people have historically tried to describe Anglo-Indian culture, they've often alighted on the phrase "east meets west". A slippery by-product of imperial violence, maintained by gaslighting and false promises, only reimaged as a soundbite.

The location of east and west are understood to be fixed points, in relation to the magnetic north and south of the poles. Obviously.

But a body is a moving target, so when east meets west inside a body, and that body moves through space, and then ultimately it moves through time too, the location of the east and west halves of the body are constantly going to be spinning, flipping and swapping over.



Dark
Cir-
cles



Sometimes the east will be on the left side, supposedly the analytical and logical side of the brain. Sometimes it will be on the right, the side of intuition and creativity. The earth's magnetic poles are moving too, by the way. They'll swap over eventually. But your position is always subjective. And from the point of view of the subject, their left is your right - sinister - and their right is your left - dexter - so neither east nor west could be said to be wholly logical, or wholly intuitive. We are in this constant state of perception flipping, of confusion. We come to embody the confusion. The nature of who we are and where we fit in is only as solid as a beam of light. And in any case, we forget the details.

What about when you try to remember the worst things that happened? A traumatic memory disappears in a very particular way. The sharp edges of a memory disappear first. The jagged bits. Then the contours. You forget details; or, to be precise, you forget those particular details that you have not revised and revised and repeated to yourself over and over again. When pressed for the details of the trauma, which will happen more often than it should, by the way, you can't quite reach them: someone asks what happened and sure, you can tell them the basics. But that is all you can grasp at. The basic location of the pain; the people who did harm, the people who helped and did and not help.

This forgetting is your way of protecting yourself. To cover up the traumatic memory. It is like hiding a statue by throwing a sheet over it. The statue is now covered by a sheet. But you can still see that there is a statue, right there, under the sheet. It couldn't be anything else. And it takes up the same amount of space. The trauma is no smaller, and no less present. It's just got a sheet over it. And that sheet is not fooling anyone. What if it is you that the sheet needs to cover, though? What if you are someone else's trauma?

We can't perceive where we are supposed to be. We are unable to be here now. We are constantly living in the past or the future. We indulge these anachronisms, unable to deal with the present in terms of either time or space. And we break.

It was a whole century of subtext, where everything had a subtext, even this. I might as well tell you. The subtext is that I couldn't put myself in it, because I could not give an account of myself where I stood still, where I was not a constantly moving and flipping target. The legacy is uncertainty, unwitting complicity, proximity to trauma.

The room you are standing in contains anachronisms, ruptures in time, things that should not be here. You can linger in the uncertainty, if you like. We can use these ruptures to conjure something up here but then we need to release it back into time and space. We need to allow it to move on, to disappear.

Sometimes you just need to know when to be quiet.
Do you know what I mean?

SOMETIMES
HAUNTINGS ARE
SOMETHING TRYING TO
APPEAR



BUT SOMETIMES THAT IS
WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO



BUT SOMETIMES

HAUNTINGS ARE
SOMETHING TRYING
VERY BADLY
TO DISAPPEAR

IT IS A LITTLE
EMBARRASSING TO
CONJURE UP A SPIRIT
AND HAVE TO SEND IT
AWAY AGAIN



SOMETIMES
DISAPPEARING IS AN
ETHICAL POSITION