



Three Notes

NOTE TO STUDENTS

When I do not give you straight answers you are confused, when you have to think for yourselves you are cross. We are not in agreement about how to learn or why we are here in this room. You have not done any preparatory reading but are prepared to pretend and give discussion a go. And you would like to blame your phone along with the college computers for not printing out what you need. No-one wants to research a subject, everyone asks what they actually need to know, and do not like it when I say 'depends'. But it does and always will, will always depend on what you want to say, to do, and who you know, how you spend your time and if you asked or are about to ask the right questions, have begun to think for yourself. It is not easy learning how to learn, but if you can life gets easier. There are no exams to revise for, no tick boxes, and no lists of facts, you just need to argue and wonder, to embrace and value confusion. There will always be too much to read.

NOTE TO SELF

Remember there is a narrator in the poem, as well as an author, that stanzas do not have to be even and you can end with a half-line. Resist the urge to tidy up, a little sprawl intrigues the reader and holds their attention as they navigate the words

laid out on the page. There are still colours in the darkness, but they take some searching for. When I first read Dean Young I was on a New York hotel bed. 'Listen to these,' I said to Neil and read several poems out loud. I did not want, still do not want, to call it surrealism, there is more reason and connectivity than juxtaposition and products of the subconscious suggest, but perhaps I am confusing it with Dada or the idea of chance. You can see colours in the darkness but only if you persevere, force your eyes open and look. I sat in the Ad Reinhardt retrospective and stared until his black paintings went blue, then red: dark squares with fuzzy edges. And then I sat and watched other visitors walk straight through, not choosing to engage. How I willed them to, although I must remember there is an author as well as the self, a narrator as well as the I.

NOTE TO ALL

Remember it used to be better, when we were younger, before it began to get worse, before it got to this point. I never asked anyone about the meaning of life, but probably should have, it's too late now, they're dead, all information lost. Trace material and knowledge slowly fade and disappear, books go out of print and no-one listens to those records anymore. As we age we turn nostalgic, as we turn nostalgic the past becomes a better place, our future something we must try

to avoid. Time travel is wonderful:
everything has a rosy glow, everything
we thought was gone comes back,
the people we miss say hi, we get
another chance to make amends
and do things right; well, only in
our dreams. Back in the real world
it's raining, the roads are flooded,
the train tracks under water, and
hardly any students made it in.
I'd like to go home and hug the cat,
read, watch TV or the rain. Damp
shoes and socks, wet hats and coats,
make seminar rooms smell funny;
and my desktop computer is dead.
The beautiful sky will not be back,
sunshine belongs to the past;
it is time for the seasons to change
all over again. How will things evolve?
What will the future involve? And how
will you navigate our legacy, the rubbish
piled high and a world led by leaders
who believe in greed? Jessica says
she will buy a canal boat or campervan,
Natasha a much smaller house abroad,
but they may not have enough money
or permission to travel, now we have
stopped talking to our neighbour states
and each other. We hope it will change
for the better, become like we wanted
it to be, but that seems highly unlikely.
Dark energy is two-thirds of everything
and we still have no idea what it is.

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