

## Time Ravel

### Rosmarie Waldrop

With the mind's eye. We see against the light. The way we see the dead. My father reading at his desk. Read, road, door. Remains unclear how my brain chose to store this image rather than another. Or how it veers toward the surface. Ulysses fights his way back to an Ithaca with four-lane highways. Where serfdom has been replaced by alienation, anomie, anxiety. Returns, reverts, replies. A borrowed book, the sword to its scabbard, in recompense, response.

The assumption is that the sirens have drowned in the alphabet. And been replaced by warnings, war, warp. My father's stopped reading to watch a magpie rising black and white against the sky. Memories are many. Glitter in the brain, ready to be pilfered. Does this fit my image of the real? Where the norms of social interaction have multiplied, and spontaneous acts come back as mistakes? Or combustion? Natural feeling, temperament, disposition, impulse, energy all lashed fast to the mast. The rubrics of the dictionary meaning business.

Columbus' crew were afraid they would not come back, unable to close the loop time won't permit, but sometimes a ghost or shifting winds. Or the memory of a big slab of ice that a man with leather mittens splits across the middle. To reveal the time hidden within where I might not find my body for the cold. And though my mother wraps the slab in a rag before putting it in the icebox, it would not warm me enough to have a self. Same, identical. Interest, confidence, esteem, reliance, respect. Skin, though it takes pains to remember caresses, is marked by the roads that pain takes.

I can't hear my father's voice, moored as if among antipodes, articulation hindered by head hanging down and a spill of oceans. Spell, sperm, spatter, splash. If the mechanisms of subjectivity are disturbed it requires total restructuring of the world. As when I first learned that the earth turns on its axis, that spleen, n., is a highly vascular ductless gland which serves to produce certain changes in the blood. Merriment (obs.), caprice, spite, anger, malice, moroseness, melancholy. Most marked in complex civilizations where the pace of events and cordless voices exceeds all the running one can do just to stay in one place. Though silver, on clear days, is the light.

Names multiplied in the wake of caravels, clippers, communicating vessels. The spelling capricious (see spleen) as the winds. Track itineraries, track vanished and erased, track how many pages between Circe's island and Charybdis. It is not that our sensations need to match images in the brain, but that the brain needs a body for frame of reference. No matter if it be square or cant, short, squat, parts fitted together to enclose a window, door, picture or disposition of the mind. Just as emotion shows if we're ready for the future hovering at the edge of our eye.

Great beginnings too can end up a small world. Whorl, old. Set sail on the power of imagination for hearsay geographies and real dangers. With greed as secret motor. It drove them back home to cities crazy for spices and gold. In between, waves and more waves. When I think of my mother I am heavy in the pelvis with the children she wanted, and begin to sing. A complex song of if and though I never had a voice. To introduce an exclamation, condition, stipulation, untenable argument, or wish. On condition, in the event that, allowing that these long-term memories are abstractions, a different mode of thought from short-term ones. And that their differences shape my sense of time. A violet's blue as a sign of distance.