

Memories

By Zachary Alpers

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My psychiatrist says writing a diary will help. So, I have started one. Hooray, I suppose.

Mornings are the worst. This morning I woke up thinking I was a construction worker called Andrew. It took me half an hour to realise I was actually Susan, a drug addict. It wasn't long before I took my Forget-Me-Lots pills and became sane again.

My socket hurts. I think I sleep on it during the night and it's shifting in my temple. I don't want to tell the doctor though, as Moe says the surgery to fix it is really painful.

Today I have to swim a man accused of murder and arson. It might be fun, but probably not.

Well, I had better go to work now.]

Eleanor turned off her computer and put it in her pocket. She rubbed her eyes and looked outside at the early morning smog. The diffused light of advertising was casting pink and yellow rainbows on the faces of looming buildings. She got up, rubbed her scalp (careful not to bump her socket) and grabbed her coat.

Her car was speckled with dew when she went out onto her parking balcony. She unplugged the charger from the wall and got inside. Far below, she could hear the voices of other early risers and the hum of motors. She pressed her thumb to the activator and her car hummed in unison.

The air was crisp above the smog, taller buildings rising like white pinnacles from a grey desert. She joined an easterly skylane and the autopilot took over. As she watched, the sky brightened behind the hills and the sun appeared. It hurt her eyes, so she looked down. Below her, the sun's rays were dissipating the grey haze. The many levels of the city looked like a computer chip made of chrome, neon and concrete.

It wasn't long before she was gliding over the great glass monolith that was the district court where she worked. One of the Closed Mind protest platforms hovered next to it like a levitating brick. They had been a nuisance her entire career, always chanting "Your brain your domain". She descended into an opening in the side of the building, beyond which the carpark was situated. She manoeuvred her car into a bay and docked. The air inside the building was uncomfortably warm, so she took off her coat.

On her way to the staff room she passed a tour guide talking about the court. Its robotic voice grated on her ears like steel prongs on rough graphene.

"...And this is the transfer room where Memory Swimmers gain the memories they use to convict people. The transfer technology began in 2018 when neurologists used RNA to transfer training between snails. Now we have the..."

As the group went past Eleanor, a little boy pointed at her head. His mother hurriedly grabbed his arm before he could say anything, but Eleanor had seen. She grimaced as she walked away.

The staff room was simply furnished with spartan chairs and tables, and it only had one drink machine in the wall. A couple of lawyers were arguing about a case and a sanitation robot was mopping the floor. The lawyers both stopped and stared at her before resuming their own discussion, just like her family did at Christmas time. Eleanor made herself a cup of coffee and began writing on her computer.

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Every one of my memories has moments like this. Everyone has drunk coffee before work. It's at these times that I feel whole, but a whole of many different parts. Who am I if I have the memories of many? Am I myself, everyone or just a medium for many?

I don't know and the only people who could answer my questions are old white men in togas, but they all died years ago.]

Eleanor looked up to see a white uniformed man, one of the transfer technicians, standing before her. His serious expression belied the anguish he must be feeling. While swimmers were becoming more and more in demand, technicians like him were going to be extinct soon. Apparently a fully automated transfer processor had been installed in the Capital and there was talk about one here. She had recently swum many of her co-workers because of Drunk and Disorderly Behaviour and Damage to Public Infrastructure.

"Hello Brian, what's the matter?" she asked.

"The donor is ready to complete the transfer," Brian stated.

Eleanor nodded and walked towards the transfer room, Brian following close behind. When she got there, she paused to prepare herself.

The man she was about to swim was strapped to a mechanical chair. Head clamps with hypodermic needles stood poised to strike. His eyes had a strange glint to them and were constantly dancing around the room. He was scared. They were always scared. The big transfer processor stood between the man's chair and another empty one. On top of the processor a platform surrounded by screens and dials reared, waiting for Brian's expert hands. Four security guards in black armour stood in the corners of the room.

Eleanor moved to the empty chair and sat down. Instantly metal clamps restrained her. Brian entered the control platform and began to fiddle with switches and activate screens. A robotic arm connected a pipe to the socket in her temple. The accused screamed as the clamps smashed down on the sides of his head. The processor whirred and glowed as his brain cells were mixed into memory soup, soup that her neurons were about to drink. Eleanor shut her eyes and prepared for the...

Light. Light. Mummy. Daddy. A toy. A better toy. Fun. Joy. Love. Building. Building is fun. Bad boy. Do better. Sadness. Building. No more building. Sadness. Anger. Hatred. Stress. School. Must do better. Finished. Now time for building. Anger. He insults me. He must pay. Anger. Violence. No more building. Hello what's your name my name is donald jefferds and I'm. Angry. No, I'm happy she is nice and I feel love. Abuse. Why do you have no job I don't know don't know don't know. Know. Angry. Must kill. World must die it does nothing for me storms are nice. Storm. Lightning. Building. Laser makes sparks and maths ionised electronics makes storm make lightning suit conduct lighting will destroy. Storm coming and I will destroy. Cold and wet anger. Hum light beam rumble. What are you doing. Happy smile. Lightning flash point kill. Blast building. Blast drone. Blast world. Weeee ooooh weeee ooooh. Fear cops no I mustn't go to prison mustn't mustn't mustn't it's their fault no no no no no no no no. Sadness.

Donald opened his eyes. He saw himself in clamps. What is happening, he thought, where am I? Then memories rushed back.

Eleanor shook her head. She wasn't Donald, she was Eleanor. Wasn't she? Donald is sad, he doesn't want to go to prison, he's had a hard life, she thought. He is guilty, she thought. I'm Donald, she thought. No, you're not. She forced herself to focus. Brian was looking at her expectantly.

"Guilty," she said through gritted teeth. Her head had begun to throb.

Brian nodded and walked off. The security guards picked up the unconscious Donald and took him away. Eleanor leapt off her seat and rushed to the staff room. She clutched her head as she told herself she wasn't Donald, or Andrew. Tears formed in her eyes. She took a few painkillers, but they only made her feel numb.

She grabbed her computer and told the mainframe she was sick. She walked unsteadily to her car and turned on the autopilot. As it took her home, she stared at the extruder robots making a new building, mesmerised. The way the fluid oozed out of the needle-like nozzle. How the concrete flowed like molasses over the quickly crystalizing lower

layers. How slowly but surely a magnificent structure rose into the sky, like a ... Eleanor's eyes opened, and a gasp sprang down her throat as she sat bolt upright. She started typing on her computer.

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I have been trying to find out who I am when in actual fact I should have thought about what I am. I am like a building, with each of the concrete layers another set of memories. I am not one set of memories, but the whole. The memories gifted to me are now mine and I will enjoy them, not fight them. I am not just Eleanor, I am many.]

She sighed and put down the computer. As she looked outside at the beautiful series of illuminated pillars, she let the happy memories of her other selves fill her mind with golden light. She knew what she was. She was content.