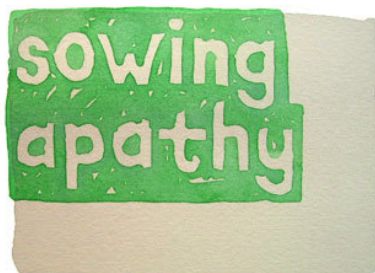


Story for performance #998
webcast from Sydney at 07:14PM, 14 Mar 08



Source: David Blair, 'Hardliners split in Iran poll', *Telegraph*, London in *Sydney Morning Herald online*, 14/03/08.

Tags: dystopia, Africa, tattoo
Writer/s: Tim Etchells

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To a lot of people it felt like the end. Some said months or weeks, some even said it was only a matter of days. The big clock is ticking. That is what an asshole yelled out the window of a speeding vehicle that sprayed dirty water from a puddle all over her dress, its stupid Versace sirens scratching the air. The big clock is still ticking. Yeah yeah yeah.

To her it felt different though. More like a beginning in fact than an end.

Sure. People were packing up all their shitty fucking stuff in a hurry and pushing their crying kids onto any available means of transport, with the banknotes, gold microchips and diamonds stitched into their clothes. Just like '39 or '42 or '84 or '92. Sure. Sure. The global temperature was rising and then falling horrifically in an obvious but not-exactly-provable correlation to the Stock Exchange, which in any case was pegged directly to an inverse of the coalition body count. You had to be a trained economist or borderline schizophrenic to understand that shit. People were dropping like flies. The fucking flies were everywhere except where the rats had eaten them. Everywhere was a mess. Sure. It all felt like ending. Of course it did. There were kids aged 8/9 on street corners handing out those strange photocopied flyers with the stolen Africa slogans—riddles and circular stories whose main purpose was to tangle you in a web of bad energy then leave you there—as much spells as they were promotional literature for anything. Sowing apathy. That's what the kids at the corner said when she tried to ask them what the fuck they were doing. Sowing apathy is all.

It felt like an end. Sure. A computer virus was making almost everything run slow—the stars were out of step with the landscape, and when people spoke it took too long for the visuals to catch up with the sound. Sure.

Sure. A biological virus was making people break out in lurid rashes and a Word virus had infested a huge number of teenagers to the point where all they could say were the words SHIFTFLESS and HANG/GRENADE. Sure. The organisations that still existed had issued complex edicts to the general population proclaiming shit that could barely be comprehended. Sure. Yes. Yes. The big clock was ticking. They even had the Mayor on TV on all the channels every night doing his whole fucking crying routine. He was holding hands with an Elvis impersonator and a Michael Jackson impersonator and a Gloria Estefan and some bloke from the Transport & General Workers Union and they were praying to God together in any of his manifestations to bail their asses out of the shit.

Sure. It felt like an ending. But to her it felt totally different. More like a beginning in fact than an end. She had a new apartment vacated by some guys down the hall that had left on an ambiguous passenger transport to Europe. She had a new view across the city. She had looted clothes. And best of all she had a new lover.

Her lover (this girl from the Urals, a tattooist) had

dark eyes. Dark eyes. So so so fucking beautiful.

When all the shit was going down outside they would sprawl on the flatpack bed they had dragged from a burnt out IKEA and she would stare into those eyes. Oh Jesus if that did not feel like a beginning then there never was a beginning in the whole history of the whole World. There would be sounds from outside—predictable Fall of Rome bullshit with Extra Helicopters but she didn't care about it at all, not in those eyes. After sex they would lie in each others arms like they were shipwreck sailors floating on the debris of Eternity.

Shot of her lover coming back to the bed. Cats loose in the apartment—shadows tangled in shadows. Exterior shot of Building with all the lights going out.

Sure it felt like the fucking end was coming down but to her it was a beginning.

Late night her lover would go to work. She had the drawings, inks, and needles. Pressure/pain. Writing and a gentle collapsing. Didn't need anything more.

The work grew, by night and day—her body soon a patchwork of pictures, loose words, phrases. Sprawling picture book in skin.

Outside they are cutting the heads off the collaborators with a Marc Jacobs kitchen knife.

On her shoulder an ocean. On her left arm a tree. On the nape of her neck the view of her city, as seen from above. Her belly a fire. Her hand a network of roads. Her throat a train line.

Outside they are riding the streets in their Missoni Jeeps, stopping only to shit on the putrid corpses, their faeces a radioactive waste.

Her foot a garden. Her thigh a cave, a mountain, a flock of birds, a desert, a hilltop, a lake of flame. Her fingers, wrists and ankles ringed with words. And everywhere on her skin—people. Walking, running. Fighting. Fucking. Eating. Dancing.

Each day and long night the work of her lover continued. The world/city of her flesh getting fuller, its sky ribboned with words, her city growing even as the one outside emptied slowly of its morons with their Gucci Kalashnikovs, their Energy Drinks, their death star eyes, the opinions they chanced on by Google and their miserable lies.

View from above—her whole body covered in ink. Her lover standing naked at the window just glancing at the city outside as the first of the Meteorites hits. It feels like the end is coming but really it's just the fucking start. Just hold it for a long time. Nothing happens.

We need Mark E. Smith/The Fall doing *Leave the Capitol* on the soundtrack here—can we get the rights?

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Tim Etchells.